

## ***Lessons in Tanya: Igeret HaTeshuva***

# Introduction

## Introduction

By way of introduction to *Iggeret HaTeshuvah* it should be noted that the Alter Rebbe is known as <sup>1</sup>“Master of the *Tanya* and *Shulchan Aruch*.” The Rebbe once remarked that “Master of the *Tanya*” means that the Alter Rebbe is <sup>2</sup>an arbiter in the esoteric dimension of the Torah, and “Master of the *Shulchan Aruch*” signifies that <sup>3</sup>his halachic rulings are authoritative.

Furthermore, the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe once stated in a public address<sup>4</sup> that the four parts of *Tanya* correspond to the four sections of the *Shulchan Aruch*. In this connection the Rebbe gives an explanation — both according to *Chassidut* and according to the revealed strata of the Torah — of the relation between the third part of *Tanya*, *Iggeret HaTeshuvah*, and the third section of the *Shulchan Aruch*, *Even HaEzer*.

According to *Chassidut* the relation between the two is clarified by a statement in ch. 4 of *Iggeret HaTeshuvah* — that the lower and higher levels of *teshuvah* (which together encompass all the degrees of repentance) are respectively indicated by the lower and higher letters *hei* of the ineffable Name of G-d. In terms of their spiritual personality, so to speak, these two letters are feminine: both are receptors, the higher *hei* (representing the level of *Binah*) being impregnated by *Chochmah*, and the lower *hei* (representing *Malchut*) being impregnated by the six emotive *Sefirot*. This feminine element connects *Iggeret HaTeshuvah* with *Even HaEzer*, which codifies the laws involving women.

As to the revealed plane of the Torah, we find that the Talmudic Tractate *Gittin*, which deals with the laws of divorce, *precedes* Tractate *Kiddushin*, which deals with the laws of marriage. In the introduction to his commentary on the *Mishnah*, Maimonides explains this order by quoting the verse,<sup>5</sup> “When she leaves his house she may go and marry another man”; here, too, divorce precedes marriage. Historically, as well, the *Midrash*<sup>6</sup> points out that the root of the word used by the Torah to say that G-d<sup>7</sup> *banished* Adam from the Garden of Eden ( ויגרש ) is the same as the root of the word for *divorce* ( גרושין ). Accordingly, the Sages compare his state to that of “a Jewish divorcee,” who is permitted to remarry her former husband. And indeed, when G-d later gave the Torah to the Jewish people he<sup>8</sup> “sanctified us ( קדשנו ) with His commands.” In the Holy Tongue this verb shares a common root with the word for *marriage*, or betrothal ( קדושין ). In this connection the Alter Rebbe said above<sup>9</sup> that G-d’s having “*sanctified* us with His commands” parallels what a man declares when betrothing a wife: “You are hereby *consecrated* unto me.”

This dynamic — marriage in the wake of divorce — is echoed in the spiritual use of these terms. The connection to *teshuvah* is thus readily apparent: A “marriage” is conceivable after a state of “divorce” only when there was *teshuvah* in the interim. For as the Alter

Rebbe stated earlier on, [10](#) “Indeed, it is impossible for the wicked to begin to serve G-d without first repenting for their past.”

In Scripture, too, we find repentance depicted as the reconciliation of a divorced couple, culminating in remarriage. For sin banishes the *Shechinah*, the Divine Presence, the Mother of all souls. In the words of the prophet, [11](#) אִמְכֶם שְׁלַחַה וּבִפְשֵׁיכֶם — “Because of your transgressions was your Mother *sent away*.” This is the selfsame verb that the Torah uses for divorce: [12](#) מִבֵּיתוֹ וּשְׁלַחַה — “And he will *send her away* from his house.” And it is repentance that undoes this spiritual divorce, to the point that G-d can ask His people the rhetorical question: [13](#) “Where is your mother’s bill of divorce?” — for as a result of His people’s repentance, the divorce is annulled.

In the plainly manifest levels of the Torah as well, there is explicit evidence in the *Gemara* that repentance resembles remarriage following divorce. R. Yochanan teaches [14](#) that repentance overrides a prohibition stated in the Torah, and cites the following verse: [15](#) “If a man sends away his wife and she leaves him for another man, will he return to her again?... Yet though you have strayed..., return to Me!” Thus, argues R. Yochanan, G-d is saying here that repentance overrides the prohibition that [16](#) “her first husband...may not remarry her” [if she married another man in the interim]. Here too, then, remarriage following divorce is a paradigm of repentance.

Thus, there is a clear correspondence between the third part of *Tanya, Iggeret HaTeshuvah*, and the third section of the *Shulchan Aruch, Even HaEzer*, which deals with the laws involving women.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) “Master of the *Tanya*” is the literal translation of the Heb. term, *Baal HaTanya*, meaning “author of the *Tanya*.” [2.](#) An arbiter...Torah: In the original, אין פוסק א, התורה פנימיות. [3.](#) His halachic...authoritative: In the original, א תורה נגלה אין פוסק א. [4.](#) *Sefer HaSichot* 5701, p. 142ff. [5.](#) *Devarim* 24:2. [6.](#) *Bereishit Rabbah* 21:8. [7.](#) *Bereishit* 3:24. [8.](#) From the liturgy, *passim*. [9.](#) Ch. 46; this is further explained in ch. 10, below. [10.](#) Ch. 17. [11.](#) *Yeshayahu* 50:3. [12.](#) *Devarim* 24:3. [13.](#) *Yeshayahu*, *loc. cit.* [14.](#) *Yoma* 86b. [15.](#) *Yirmeyahu* 3:1. [16.](#) *Devarim* 24:2.

---

## Chapter 1

תניא בסוף יומא: שלשה חלוקי כפרה הם

It has been taught in a *Beraita* at the end of Tractate *Yoma*:[1](#) There are three types of atonement, varying according to the different categories of transgression,

ותשובה עם כל אחד

and repentance [necessarily] accompanies each of them.

עבר על מצות עשה ושב, אינו זז משם עד שמוחלין לו

If one failed to fulfill a positive commandment and repented, he is forgiven forthwith.

עבר על מצות לא תעשה ושב, תשובה תולה ויום הכפורים מכפר

If one violated a prohibitive commandment and repented, his repentance is tentative, and Yom Kippur atones.

In this instance repentance alone does not suffice to secure complete forgiveness; it only guarantees that he will not be punished until the arrival of Yom Kippur, at which time he is completely forgiven.

פירוש: דאף על גב דלענין קיום, מצות עשה גדולה, שדוחה את לא תעשה

(<sup>2</sup>This means that though, in terms of fulfillment, a positive commandment is superior, for which reason it supersedes<sup>3</sup> a prohibitive commandment,

When positive and negative commands conflict, the positive command takes precedence and overrides the prohibition. (For example: the wearing of *tzitzit* made of an admixture of wool and linen, despite the prohibition of *kilayim*, or *shaatnez*.) Since observing a positive command thus appears to be of more value than observing a prohibition, why do we say that if one transgresses a positive command repentance alone suffices, whereas if one transgresses a prohibition forgiveness cannot be secured by repentance alone, and one must await the advent of Yom Kippur?

The Alter Rebbe will now address himself to this question. His answer will also enable us to understand the spiritual effects of the performance of a positive command and the spiritual blemish that results from transgressing a negative command. Insight into the *mitzvot* from this perspective will in turn enable us to understand why a positive command supersedes a negative command, and why it is nevertheless more difficult to attain atonement for transgressing a negative command.

Briefly, the answer is as follows: When one performs a positive command he not only fulfills G-d's Will, but also draws down a flow of Divine light into the higher spiritual realms and upon his own soul. The reason: each positive command is likened to a bodily organ. (Note of the Rebbe: "As our Sages, of blessed memory, have said:<sup>4</sup> 'The 248 organs correspond to the 248 positive commands.'")

This means to say that just as a bodily organ is a receptacle for the life-force which it elicits from the soul, so, too, is each positive commandment a vessel that draws down Divine effluence and vitality from the infinite *Ein Sof*-light. Moreover, just as the life-force of the soul is en clothed within the various limbs, so, too, does the life-force drawn

down through the performance of a positive command become en clothed (i.e., internalized) within the worlds.

Fulfilling a negative command — by not committing the transgression — is also a fulfillment of the Divine Will. As our Sages, of blessed memory, have said:<sup>5</sup> “If one passively refrains all his days from sin, he is rewarded (Note of the Rebbe: ‘but only’) *as though* he had actively performed a command.” However, since such performance does not result from any action on his part as in the case of a positive command — he merely fulfills G-d’s Will by not transgressing — its result is of lesser spiritual value. For the purpose of Torah and *mitzvot* is to draw down Divine illumination through the performance of the 248 positive commands, and to dispel the spirit of impurity through the observance of the 365 prohibitions (as explained earlier in Part I, ch. 37, p. 492-3).

Thus, in a situation where positive and negative precepts clash and the question is which one is to be set aside, the positive command supersedes the negative. For it is impossible that doing the prohibited deed will impart a spirit of impurity, inasmuch as its prohibition is being overruled because the Torah so dictates. Conversely, (even) if the Torah were to direct that one should neglect the positive command, the action that would draw down Divine illumination would still be lacking.

For this reason a positive command supersedes a prohibition: the deficiency normally wrought by transgressing a prohibition does not result when the Torah commands that it be set aside, while the dividend gained by fulfilling a positive command — the drawing down of the Divine light — is realized.

However, in light of the above, it would seem that the same reasoning should apply with regard to transgressions: a higher degree of repentance should be necessary for violating a positive command than for transgressing a negative command — yet according to the above quotation from the *Gemara* in *Yoma* the opposite is true.

The explanation is as follows. The advantage of the positive command — the G-dly light that it draws into the soul — cannot be won through repentance in any event; all that repentance can now secure is forgiveness for the transgression. Not so with regard to transgressing a prohibition, where repentance can rectify the misdeed entirely. Furthermore, since the misdeed actively blemished the individual’s soul and the celestial realms as well, mere repentance does not suffice: only Yom Kippur can completely obliterate the blemish that it brought about.

This is what the Alter Rebbe now goes on to say:

היינו משום שעל ידי קיום מצות עשה, ממשיך אור ושפע בעולמות עליונים מהארת אור אין סוף ברוך הוא

this superiority of the positive command that makes it supersede a negative command is so because by performing a positive command one precipitates an illumination and flow into the higher worlds from the reflected [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light

כמו שכתוב בזהר: דרמ"ח פיקודין, אינון רמ"ח אברין דמלכא

(as we find in the *Zohar*:<sup>7</sup> “The 248 positive commandments are the 248 ‘organs of the King’”),

The 248 positive commands are equated with the emotive attributes of *Atzilut* which are collectively termed “the King”. Just as an organ serves as a vessel to the soul-faculty enclined within it, so, too, is each positive command an organ and vessel for a particular effluence of the emotive attributes of *Atzilut* that are drawn down through the performance of that particular commandment. Thus, through performing positive commands one draws down G-dliness into the higher worlds.

וגם על נפשו האלקית

and also through the performance of a positive command one draws G-dliness on to his Divine soul,

כמו שאומרים: אשר קדשנו במצותיו

as we say in the blessings that precede the performance of many *mitzvot*, “...Who has hallowed us with His commandments.”

I.e., fulfilling a positive command has the effect of drawing down Divine light and holiness upon the soul, for which reason it surpasses and supersedes conformity to a negative command.

אבל לענין תשובה

But concerning repentance, which would seek to rectify the transgression of a positive command,

אף שמוחלין לו העונש על שמרד במלכותו יתברך, ולא עשה מאמר המלך

though through repentance the punishment for rebelling against G-d's rule and not fulfilling the King's word is commuted,

מכל מקום האור נעדר וכו'

nonetheless, the illumination which would have been drawn down through the performance of the positive command is lacking — even after repentance, so that the sin remains only partially rectified.

וכמאמר רז"ל על פסוק: מעות לא יוכל לתקן, זה שביטל קריאת שמע של ערבית או וכו'

On the verse,<sup>8</sup> “A crookedness that cannot be corrected,” i.e., even through repentance, our Sages accordingly comment:<sup>9</sup> “This relates to one who neglected the evening [or morning] reading of *Shema*, or [the evening or morning prayer].”

דאף שנוזהר מעתה לקרות קריאת שמע של ערבית ושחרית לעולם

For though he be scrupulous henceforth about reading the morning and evening *Shema* forevermore, thereby demonstrating his regret,

אין תשובתו מועלת לתקן מה שביטל פעם אחת

his repentance is ineffectual in correcting what he once neglected.

For after all is said and done, the world will forever be lacking the unique gift of Divine light that he could have drawn down through reading the *Shema* on that particular occasion. Thus, all that repentance *can* accomplish he is now able to accomplish through repentance alone. No other steps can secure him any further atonement.

So much for him who transgressed a positive precept.

והעובר על מצות לא תעשה, על ידי שנדבק הרע בנפשו, עושה פגם למעלה בשרשה ומקור חוצבה

If one violates a prohibition in thought, speech or action, since thereby evil cleaves to his soul, he [also] impairs its Supernal root and source

בלבושים ד' ספירות דעשיה, כמו שכתוב בתקוני זוהר: לבושין תקינת לון, דמינייהו פרחין נשמתין לבני נשא  
וכו'

(<sup>10</sup>in the garbs of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Asiyah*; as *Tikkunei Zohar* writes,<sup>11</sup> “You have fashioned garbs for [the *Sefirot*], from which fly forth souls for man...”).

We thus see from *Tikkunei Zohar* that it is from the “garments” of the *Sefirot* that souls emanate; when a soul is blemished through sin, these garments are blemished as well.

לכך אין כפרה לנפשו, ולא למעלה, עד יום הכפורים

Therefore there is no atonement for his own soul nor Above until Yom Kippur,

As will be explained a little later, “atonement” means cleansing that which was blemished. This requires not only repentance, but in addition Yom Kippur:

כמו שכתוב: וכפר על הקדש מטומאות בני ישראל ומפשעיהם וכו', לפני ה' תטהרו

concerning which it is written,<sup>12</sup> “He shall atone for the holy place because of the impurities of the Children of Israel and because of their sins...; before *Havayah* shall you be purified.”

“*Before* G-d” is stressed.

I.e., the purification granted by Yom Kippur emanates from a level that *transcends* the Divine Name *Havayah*, and can even atone for a blemish that resulted from transgressing a prohibitive command.

At any rate, we have seen that in certain respects transgressing a positive command has more serious consequences than transgressing a negative command.

ולכן אין ללמוד מכאן שום קולא, חס ושלום, במצוות עשה

Hence, one should not (G-d forbid) infer any leniency in the positive commandments from this *Beraita* which states that one is immediately forgiven after repenting for having transgressed a positive command, while transgressing a negative command requires in addition the atonement of Yom Kippur;

ובפרט בתלמוד תורה

particularly ought one not infer any leniency in Torah study.

ואדרבה אמרו רז"ל: ויתר הקב"ה על עבודה זרה וכו', אף שהן כריתות ומיתות בית דין, ולא ויתר על ביטול תלמוד תורה

On the contrary, our Sages assert,<sup>13</sup> “G-d has in certain instances glossed over [even] idolatry, [incest and murder], though excision and capital punishment are involved, but did not excuse the neglect of Torah study.”<sup>14</sup>

The *Beraita* with which this chapter opened is now resumed:

עבר על כריתות ומיתות בית דין, תשובה ויום הכפורים תולין, ויסורים ממרקין

If one commits a sin [punishable by] excision or execution, repentance and Yom Kippur are tentative, so that the individual is not punished, and sufferings scour

פירוש: גומרין הכפרה, והוא מלשון מריקה ושטיפה, לצחצח הנפש

(<sup>15</sup>i.e., they complete the atonement. [The verb] *memarkin* denotes the final stage, namely, scouring and rinsing, in order to “polish” the soul,

כי כפרה היא לשון קינות, שמקנה לכלוך החטא

for *kaparah* (“atonement”) is the term for the preceding stage of cleaning, removing the uncleanness of the sin),



Sins punishable by excision or execution are not cleaned away through repentance and Yom Kippur alone: the soul must also be scoured and rinsed through suffering, heaven forbid.

שנאמר: ופקדתי בשבט פשעם, ובנגעים עונם

as it is written,<sup>16</sup> “With a rod shall I remember their sin, and with afflictions their iniquity.”

עד כאן לשון הברייתא

Thus far the *Beraita* with which this chapter opened.

והנה מצות התשובה מן התורה היא עזיבת החטא בלבד

Now the *mitzvah* of repentance<sup>17</sup> as required by the Torah is simply the abandonment of sin

כדאיתא בגמרא, פרק ג' דסנהדרין, ובחושן משפט, סוף סימן ל"ד, לענין עדות

(<sup>18</sup>cf. *Sanhedrin*, ch. 3<sup>19</sup>; *Choshen Mishpat*, end of Sec. 34,<sup>20</sup> regarding testimony<sup>21</sup>), where it is stated that if a potential witness simply abandons and does not repeat the transgression that had previously disqualified him, he is once again able to testify.<sup>22</sup>

דהיינו שיגמור בלבו שלם לבל ישוב עוד לכסלה, למרוד במלכותו יתברך

This means that he must resolve in perfect sincerity never again to revert to folly, to rebel against G-d's rule;

ולא יעבור עוד מצות המלך, חס ושלום, הן במצות עשה הן במצות לא תעשה

he will never again violate the King's command, G-d forbid, neither a positive command<sup>23</sup> nor a prohibition.<sup>24</sup>

וזהו עיקר פירוש לשון תשובה: לשוב אל ה' בכל לבו ובכל נפשו, לעבדו ולשמור כל מצותיו

This is the basic meaning of the term *teshuvah* (“repentance”) — to *return* to G-d with all one's heart and soul, to serve Him, and to observe all His commandments.

כמו שכתוב: יעזוב רשע דרכו ואיש און מחשבותיו, וישוב אל ה' וגו'

For so does Scripture state:<sup>25</sup> “Let the wicked abandon his path, and the sinful his thoughts, and return to G-d....”

ובפרשת נצבים כתיב: ושבת עד ה' אלקיך ושמעת בקולו וגו' בכל לבבך וגו'

In the Torah portion of *Nitzavim*<sup>26</sup> it is likewise written:<sup>27</sup> “You shall return unto the Lord your G-d and hearken to His voice...with all your heart....”<sup>28</sup>

שובה ישראל עד ה' אלקיך וגו', השיבנו ה' אליך וגו'

[So, too:]<sup>29</sup> “Return, O Israel, unto the L-rd your G-d...”; [and elsewhere:]<sup>30</sup> “Bring us back, O L-rd, unto You....”

Repentance, then, entails returning to G-d, performing His commandments and refraining from sin.

ולא כדעת ההמון שהתשובה היא התענית

This differs from the popular conception that repentance is synonymous with fasting on account of one's sins.

ואפילו מי שעבר על כריתות ומיתות בית דין, שגמר כפרתו היא על ידי יסורים

Even in the case of sins punishable by excision or execution, where atonement is made complete by suffering, as previously quoted from the *Beraita* in *Yoma*,

היינו שהקב"ה מביא עליו יסורים

this means that it is G-d Who brings suffering upon the sinner, in order to complete his atonement.

וכמו שכתוב: ופקדתי בשבט וגו', ופקדתי דייקא

(<sup>31</sup>as the verse clearly specifies, “With a rod shall I remember [their sin]”).

והיינו: כשתשובתו רצויה לפניו יתברך, בשובו אל ה' בכל לבו ונפשו מאהבה

That is to say: When G-d finds his repentance acceptable, as he returns to Him with all his heart and soul, out of love,

אזי באתערותא דלתתא וכמים הפנים וכו', אתערותא דלעילא, לעורר האהבה וחסד ה' למרק עונו ביסורים  
בעולם הזה

then following the initiative undertaken from below, and<sup>32</sup> “as water reflects the countenance....,” there is an awakening Above, arousing G-d's love and kindness, to scour his sin and entirely cleanse him of it through affliction in This World,

וכמו שכתוב: כי את אשר יאהב ה' יוכיח

in the spirit of the verse,<sup>33</sup> “For he whom the L-rd loves He chastises....”

This is something quite different from any fasts or afflictions that an individual undertakes himself.

ולכן לא הזכירו הרמב"ם והסמ"ג שום תענית כלל במצות התשובה, אף בכריתות ומיתות בית דין

It is for this reason that the *Rambam* and *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol*<sup>34</sup> make no mention whatever of fasting as related to the *mitzvah* of repentance, even in the case of sins punishable by excision or capital sins.

I.e., fasting is not required even with regard to those sins whose atonement is completed through suffering.

רק הוידוי ובקשת מחילה, כמו שכתוב בתורה: והתודו את חטאתם וגו'

They cite only confessing [verbally] and requesting forgiveness; as the Torah prescribes,<sup>35</sup> "They shall confess their sin..."

Why are confession and requesting forgiveness indeed part of repentance?

Every sin consists of a body and a soul. The actual misdeed itself is the "body" of the sin, and the bodily pleasure and ensuing desire with which it was committed are its "soul". Repentance involves eliminating both these elements.

The "soul" of the sin is eradicated by the earnest regret of the individual, who is mortified and pained by his past. Inasmuch as pain is the opposite of pleasure, it negates the pleasure which had earlier aroused his desire to sin, and thereby obliterates the "soul" of the sin.

But the "body" of the sin also needs to be nullified. Simply refraining from further transgression lacks the action that would negate the sinful act itself, its "body". This is accomplished through verbal confession, for<sup>36</sup> "verbalization is also considered to be an action."

At any rate, verbal confession is thus a component of repentance — while fasting is not.

ומה שכתוב ביואל: שובו עדי בכל לבבכם, ובצום ובבכי גו'

As to what we find in the Book of *Yoel*,<sup>37</sup> "Return to Me with all your hearts, and with fasting and weeping...", which would seem to indicate that fasting is in fact part of return and repentance,

היינו לבטל הגזרה שנגזרה, למרק עון הדור על ידי יסורים בארבה

this was to nullify (Note inserted by the Rebbe: '...something which relates to the future, while repentance involves forsaking the past') the heavenly decree that had been issued,

to expunge the sin of the generation through the affliction of locusts; it was not part of the act of repentance.

וזהו הטעם בכל תעניות שמתענין על כל צרה שלא תבא על הצבור

This is the rationale for all fasts undertaken for any trouble threatening the community, their purpose being to avert the impending harsh edict,

וכמו שכתוב במגלת אסתר

as in the Book of *Esther*,[38](#) where we find that the Queen asked that a fast be proclaimed in order to nullify Haman's evil decree.

ומה שכתוב בספרי המוסר, ובראשם ספר הרוקח וספר חסידים, הרבה תעניות וסיגופים לעובר על כריתות ומיתות בית דין

Now the classic *Mussar* works, particularly the *Rokeach* and *Sefer Chassidim*, specify numerous fasts and mortifications[39](#) for sins punishable by excision and execution;

וכן למוציא זרע לבטלה, שחייב מיתה בידי שמים, כמו שכתוב בתורה גבי ער ועונן

likewise numerous fasts are prescribed for the wasteful emission of semen — a sin punishable by death by divine agency, as the Torah recounts of Er and Onan,[40](#)

ודינן כחייבי כריתות לענין זה

and a sin whose retribution is identical in this respect to that of sins punishable by excision, and hence the numerous fasts prescribed.

All this might lead us to assume that the purpose of fasts is suffering — this being the manner through which atonement is brought to completion by those who are guilty of sins punishable by excision. But it has been previously stated that the suffering which completes atonement is specifically that which comes from Above, and not manmade suffering incurred through fasting and the like. The Alter Rebbe answers this seeming contradiction by stating:

היינו: כדי לינצל מעונש יסורים של מעלה, חס ושלום

These above-prescribed fasts and mortifications are intended to avert the punishment of suffering at the hand of heaven, G-d forbid. (Note of the Rebbe: “This too relates to the future, unlike repentance, which relates to the past.”)

This means that if, G-d forbid, the punishment of suffering had been decreed upon an individual, he is able to exempt himself from it through these self-imposed fasts.

וגם כדי לזרז ולמהר גמר כפרת נפשו

Another reason [for these fasts] is to urge on and expedite the conclusion of his soul's atonement.

וגם אולי אינו שב אל ה' בכל לבו ונפשו מאהבה, כי אם מיראה

Also, perhaps he is not returning to G-d with all his heart and soul out of love, but only out of fear.

Such a penitent would not enjoy the Divine reaction that comes “as water reflects the countenance,” and would not be granted the completion of his atonement through suffering. Accordingly, he might undertake these fasts in order to secure this alone. Essentially, however, the suffering that brings about complete atonement (for those guilty of sins punishable by excision and death by Divine agency) is not meant to be self-inflicted, but rather — heaven forbid — imposed from Above.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) Cf. 86a. [2.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [3.](#) *Yevamot* 3b. [4.](#) *Makkot* 23b. [5.](#) *Makkot* 3:15. [6.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [7.](#) *Tikkunei Zohar* 30. [8.](#) *Kohelet* 1:15. [9.](#) Cf. *Berachot* 26a. [10.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [11.](#) Introduction. [12.](#) *Vayikra* 16:16 and 16:30. [13.](#) *Yerushalmi, Chagigah* 1:7. [14.](#) The opening counterpart of this closing parenthesis appeared at the very beginning of the chapter: “(This means....” [15.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [16.](#) *Tehillim* 89:23. [17.](#)

Note of the Rebbe: “The Alter Rebbe speaks of ‘the *mitzvah* of repentance’ (rather than ‘the content of repentance’ or simply ‘repentance,’ and the like, recalling the expression of the *Rambam* in *Hilchot Teshuvah* 2:2). This would seem to indicate his stand on the basic content of repentance — that abandoning sin is a command of the Torah. This is so even according to the *Rambam* and the *Semag*, whose opinions he follows here (see *Sefer HaMitzvot* of the *Tzemach Tzedek*, beginning of *Mitzvat Vidui U‘Teshuvah*) and not only according to the *Ramban* (on *Nitzavim* 30:11, quoted in *Likkutei Torah* on that verse).

”In the preamble to *Hilchot Teshuvah* in *Sefer HaYad* (and it would seem that these introductory headings were written by the *Rambam* himself) we [likewise] read: ‘One positive command: That the sinner return from his sin before G-d and confess.’ Possibly this preamble also serves as the source for the words of the *Tzemach Tzedek*, *loc. cit.* [So too] in *Sefer HaMitzvot* of the *Rambam*: ‘The seventy-third *mitzvah* is that He commanded us to confess [our transgressions] and to articulate them penitently (lit., ‘with *teshuvah*’).“

[18.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [19.](#) 25b. [20.](#) Sub-section 29ff. [21.](#)

Note of the Rebbe: “It will be noted that the Alter Rebbe does not cite Tractate *Kiddushin* (49b) and the section of the *Shulchan Aruch* entitled *Even HaEzer* (38:31) with regard to marriage, even though these two sources respectively precede Tractate *Sanhedrin* and *Choshen Mishpat* (see also *Minchat Chinuch, Mitzvah* 364). [The *Gemara* in *Kiddushin* teaches that even if an utterly wicked individual betrothed a woman on condition that he was a *tzaddik*, the betrothal is valid — *for at that moment he could have repented in his*

heart; the *Shulchan Aruch* in *Even HaEzer* determines that such a betrothal has a degree (albeit uncertain) of legal validity; and the *Minchat Chinuch* in fact cites the above-quoted *Gemara* to demonstrate that the abandonment of sin in itself constitutes *teshuvah*. Why, then, did the Alter Rebbe not draw on these sources?]

“It could be suggested by way of explanation that he prefers to adduce proof from fiscal law, where any particular case is not determined by a majority of instances. This is to say, that it is not only in the majority of instances [but in all instances] that abandonment of sin alone suffices.”

[22.](#) The Rebbe notes that the Alter Rebbe’s point here is that the main element of repentance is not fasting, as he goes on to prove, but the abandonment of sin. However, the text also makes it clear that verbal confession is not essential to repentance (as is demonstrated by the citation from *Choshen Mishpat*, where verbal confession is not mentioned). It is only that when one does confess verbally and ask for forgiveness, these steps are incorporated in his repentance and enhance it — for which reason *Rambam* speaks of them. Fasting, however, is a totally separate thing, as the Alter Rebbe explains at the end of this chapter and the beginning of the next — for which reason (as he goes on to say) “the *Rambam* and the *Semag* make no mention whatever of fasting as related to the *mitzvah* of repentance.” [23.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Though this requires action on his part, nevertheless he so resolves.” [24.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “For by transgressing a negative command rebelliousness is evident — which is not the case when he fails to perform a positive command.” [25.](#) *Yeshayahu* 55:7. [26.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “The Alter Rebbe cites the *parshah* [*Nitzavim*] rather than simply stating that the quoted verse is found ‘in the Torah’ as he does later on, in order to make it clear that he is not referring the reader to *Parshat Va-etchanan* (*Devarim* 4:30), for there the Torah merely relates events, as we see from the beginning of the text, ‘I call as witnesses against you....’ Furthermore, and more importantly (for it could be pointed out that even from a narrative in the Torah we could learn what is considered repentance), there the verse does not specify that it be done ‘with all your heart.’” [27.](#) *Devarim* 30:2. [28.](#) The Rebbe suggests that the reason the Alter Rebbe quotes the Prophets (*Yeshayahu*) before the Torah (*Devarim*) is that the Prophet explicitly states that repentance involves the abandonment of sin. The Rebbe adds: “See *Rambam*, *Hilchot Teshuvah* 2:2.” [29.](#) *Hoshea* 14:2. [30.](#) *Eichah* 5:22. [31.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [32.](#) *Mishlei* 27:19. [33.](#) *Ibid.* 3:12. [34.](#) Positive Command 16. [35.](#) *Devarim* 5:7. [36.](#) *Sanhedrin* 65a. [37.](#) 2:12. [38.](#) 4:16. [39.](#) “Especially problematic here is the mention of mortifications, for in the context of averting a decree the sources speak only of fasts, as in the Books of *Esther* and *Yoel* cited above. An alternative explanation must therefore be found.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [40.](#) *Bereishit* 38:6-7.



## Chapter 2

Repentance, as the Alter Rebbe explained in the opening chapter, is in no way synonymous with fasting for a sin that one has committed; repentance merely entails abandoning the sin for all time. This is so even with regard to transgressions — those punishable by excision or by execution — whose atonement becomes complete through suffering. Even in these instances the suffering is not intended to be self-inflicted through fasting, but is brought on from Above.

אך כל זה לענין כפרה ומחילת העון, שנמחל לו לגמרי מה שעבר על מצות המלך כשעשה תשובה שלמה

However, all this refers to atonement and forgiveness of the sin — [the offender] is pardoned completely for having violated the command of the King once he has repented fully.

Atonement and forgiveness thus do not require fasting. If the individual repents fully:

ואין מזכירין לו דבר וחצי דבר ביום הדין, לענשו על זה חס ושלום בעולם הבא, ונפטר לגמרי מן הדין בעולם הבא

No charge nor semblance of an accusation is mentioned against him on the day of judgment so that he should be punished for his sin, G-d forbid, in the World to Come; in his trial there he is completely exonerated.

אמנם שיהיה לרצון לפני ה', ומרוצה וחביב לפניו יתברך כקודם החטא, להיות נחת רוח לקונו מעבודתו, היה צריך להביא קרבן עולה

Nonetheless, in order that he should be acceptable before G-d, as beloved of Him as before the sin, so that his Creator might derive delight from his service, — [in past times] he would bring an olah offering,<sup>1</sup> in addition to his repentance,

אפילו על מצות עשה קלה שאין בה כרת ומיתת בית דין

even for [transgressing] an ordinary positive commandment that involves no excision or execution.

כמו שדרשו רז"ל בתורת כהנים על פסוק: ונרצה לו

In this spirit our Sages in *Torat Kohanim* interpret the verse,<sup>2</sup> “It shall be acceptable for him,” — that the *olah* offering causes a person who violated a positive command to become acceptable to G-d.

וכדאיתא בגמרא פרק קמא דזבחים, דעולה מכפרת על מצות עשה, והיא דורון לאחר שעשה תשובה ונמחל לו העונש

Thus too we find in the *Talmud*, in the first chapter of *Zevachim*,<sup>3</sup> that the *olah* offering atones for [the violation of] positive commandments; it is a “gift” [that is offered] after one has repented and been pardoned his punishment.

וכאדם שסרח במלך ופייסו על ידי פרקליטין, ומחל לו

This is like the case of a man who displeased his king, appeased him through intercessors, and was forgiven by him;

אף על פי כן שולח דורון ומנחה לפניו, שיתרצה לו לראות פני המלך

still he will send a gift, so that the king might consent that he appear again before his sovereign.

The *olah* offering was similarly brought as a gift to G-d after the offender had repented and had been granted a pardon, in order that he once again find favor in His eyes, and be beloved by Him as before the sin.

ולשון מכפרת, וכן מה שכתוב בתורה: ונרצה לו לכפר עליו

([4](#)The expression “atones” quoted from the *Talmud*, and in the verse,[5](#) “It shall be acceptable for him, to atone for him,”

אין זו כפרת נפשו

does not refer to the soul’s atonement for the sin, for this is accomplished through repentance,

אלא לכפר לפני ה', להיות נחת רוח לקונו

but rather (so to speak) his restoration before G-d, so that he will bring his Creator gratification; no vestige of the sin will remain, and the former offender will be beloved of G-d as before,

כדאיתא שם בגמרא

as the *Talmud* teaches there — that once the person has been pardoned, then comes the gift of the *olah* offering,

וכמו שכתוב: תמים יהיה לרצון

and as the verse states:[6](#) “It shall be perfect, so that it be acceptable.”)

ועכשיו שאין לנו קרבן להפיק רצון מה', התענית הוא במקום קרבן, כמו שכתוב בגמרא: שיהא מיעוט חלבי ודמי שנתמעט כאלו הקרבתי לפניך כו'

Today, when we have no offerings to call forth G-d’s pleasure, fasting replaces the offering. As the *Talmud* says, that the prayer of one who is fasting is:[7](#) “May my loss of fat and blood brought about through fasting be regarded as though I had offered it to You [as a sacrifice on the altar].”



The purpose of fasting, then, is that one become acceptable to G-d just as before the sin.

ולכן מצינו בכמה תנאים ואמוראים, שעל דבר קל היו מתענים תעניות הרבה מאד

This is why there are many cases of Talmudic Sages, who for some trivial fault undertook a great many fasts.

כמו רבי אלעזר בן עזריה, שהיה מתיר שתהא פרה יוצאה ברצועה שבין קרניה בשבת, וחכמים אוסרים, ופעם אחת יצאה כן פרתו של שכנתו, ולא מיחה בה, והושחרו שיניו מפני הצומות על שלא קיים דברי חביריו,

R. Elazar ben Azariah, for example, contended that a cow may go out wearing its strap between its horns on *Shabbat*, while his colleagues prohibited it. Once a neighbor's cow went out with its strap and R. Elazar did not protest. Because he did not support his colleagues' view, he fasted so long that his teeth were blackened.<sup>8</sup>

וכן רבי יהושע, שאמר: בושני מדבריכם בית שמאי, והושחרו שיניו מפני הצומות

So, too, R. Joshua once remarked:<sup>9</sup> "I am ashamed of your words, Beit Shammai." His teeth, too, turned black through fasting.

ורב הונא, פעם אחת נתהפכה לו רצועה של תפילין, והתענה מ' צומות

Likewise Rav Huna, because his *tefillin* strap once turned over, undertook forty fasts.<sup>10</sup>

וכהנה רבות

Indeed, there are many such instances recorded about our Sages.

These fasts were not undertaken for the sake of repentance, nor as self-inflicted suffering in order to complete a process of atonement; these were not sins of the kind that required this. The sole purpose of these fasts was to restore the bonds of love between the former sinner and his Maker.

ועל יסוד זה

On this basis, that fasting substitutes for an offering, and as such has a place even when an individual does not need to undergo suffering in order to attain complete atonement,

לימד האריז"ל לתלמידיו על פי חכמת האמת מספר הצומות לכמה עונות וחטאים

the *AriZal* taught his disciples, according to the principles of the Kabbalah, the number of fasts to be undertaken for many transgressions,

אף שאין בהן כרת, ולא מיתה בידי שמים

even though they entail neither excision, nor death by divine agency — in which case suffering would be necessary.

כמו על הכעס, קנ"א תעניות וכו'

Examples: for anger — 151 fasts;

ואפילו על איסור דרבנן, כמו סתם יינם, יתענה ע"ג תעניות וכו'

even for transgressing a Rabbinic prohibition, such as drinking the wine of non-Jews — seventy-three fasts;

וכן על ביטול מצות עשה דרבנן, כמו תפלה, יתענה ס"א תעניות וכו'

likewise for neglecting a positive Rabbinic enactment, such as prayer<sup>11</sup> — sixty-one fasts.

ודרך כלל, סוד התענית היא סגולה נפלאה להתגלות רצון העליון ברוך הוא

As a general rule, the mystery of fasting is wondrously effective for the revelation of the Supreme Will,

כמו הקרבן, שנאמר בו: ריח ניחוח לה'

similar to an offering, of which it is said,<sup>12</sup> “An aroma pleasing to G-d.”

וכמו שכתוב בישעיהו: הלזה תקרא צום ויום רצון לה'

Thus in *Isaiah*<sup>13</sup> we find, “Do you call *this* a fast and a day desirable to G-d?!”

מכלל שהצום הנרצה הוא יום רצון

Obviously, an acceptable fast is a “desirable day.”.

FOOTNOTES <sup>1.</sup> *Vayikra* 1:3. <sup>2.</sup> *Loc. cit.*, v. 4. <sup>3.</sup> 7b. <sup>4.</sup> Parentheses appear in the original. <sup>5.</sup> *Loc. cit.*, v. 4. <sup>6.</sup> *Vayikra* 22:21. <sup>7.</sup> Cf. *Berachot* 17a. <sup>8.</sup> *Yerushalmi, Beitzah* 2:8. <sup>9.</sup> *Chagigah* 22b. <sup>10.</sup> *Moed Katan* 25a. <sup>11.</sup> The Rebbe notes that we cannot adduce from here that the Alter Rebbe is of the opinion that the obligation of prayer is of Rabbinic origin. (This would be consonant with the statement in his *Shulchan Aruch, Hilchot Tefillah*, Section 106; it is also implied in the beginning of ch. 38 of *Tanya* [Vol. II in this series, p. 514], and in *Likkutei Torah, Parshat Balak* 70c. However, in the famous letter of the Alter Rebbe that appears in *Beit Rebbe*, Part I, p. 20a, he states outright that prayer is of Torah origin. In *Mishnat Yoel* this whole issue is debated and explained. In any event, no proof can be derived from the above text.) For according to all opinions the specific times for prayer are of Rabbinic origin; when one neglects this aspect of prayer, then the *AriZal* prescribes sixty-one fasts. <sup>12.</sup> *Vayikra* 1:13. <sup>13.</sup> 58:5.

---

## Chapter 3

Though fasting is not at all necessary for attaining atonement, it was explained above that nevertheless it has a salutary effect as a substitute for the *olah* offering. In Temple times this sacrifice was offered (even) for transgressing a positive command, in order to make the former offender once again acceptable and beloved of G-d. Accordingly, the *AriZal* derived from the *Kabbalah* the number of fasts to be undertaken for numerous transgressions, even those that are not subject to the punishment of excision or death by Divine decree.

והנה חכמי המוסר האחרונים נחלקו במי שחטא חטא אחד פעמים רבות

The latter *Mussar* sages — those who lived after the *Ari* — were divided in their opinions about one who repeated a sin many times.

דיש אומרים שצריך להתענות מספר הצומות לאותו חטא פעמים רבות, כפי המספר אשר חטא

Some contend that he must fast the number of fasts appropriate to that sin according to the number of transgressions.

כגון המוציא זרע לבטלה, שמספר הצומות המפורש בתיקוני תשובה מהאריז"ל הן פ"ד תעניות

For example, the number of fasts prescribed in the penances of the *AriZal* for wasteful emission of semen is eighty-four.

ואם חטא בזה עשר או עשרים פעמים, על דרך משל, צריך להתענות עשר או עשרים פעמים פ"ד

If someone commits this sin ten or twenty times, say, he must fast ten or twenty times eighty-four, and so on in all instances.

דומיא דקרבן חטאת, שחייב להביא על כל פעם ופעם

This is comparable to the *chatat* offering (Note of the Rebbe: “i.e., *all* the *chatat* offerings”) required for every instance of violation.

ויש מדמין ענין זה לקרבן עולה, הבאה על מצות עשה

Others compare these fasts to the *olah* offering brought for neglect of a positive command.<sup>[1](#)</sup>

דאפילו עבר על כמה מצוות עשה, מתכפר בעולה אחת, כדאיתא בגמרא, פרק קמא דזבחים

The violation of a number of positive commands is atoned for and the individual finds favor in G-d's eyes by one *olah*, as the *Talmud* explains in Tractate *Zevachim*, ch. 1.<sup>2</sup>

והכרעה המקובלת בזה להתענות ג' פעמים כפי מספר הצומות דחטא זה, דהיינו רנ"ב צומות על הוצאות שכבת זרע לבטלה, וכן בשאר חטאים ועונות

The accepted decision in this dispute is to undertake three times the number of fasts prescribed for that particular sin, i.e., 252 fasts (three times eighty-four) for wasteful emission, and similarly for other sins oft repeated.

והטעם הוא על פי מה שכתוב בזוהר הקדוש, סוף פרשת נח: כיון דחב בר נש קמיה קודשא בריך הוא, זמנא חדא עביד רשימו כו'

This is based on a teaching in the *Zohar*, at the end of *Parshat Noach*:<sup>3</sup> “As soon as mortal man sins once against the Holy One, blessed be He, he makes an impression [Above; should he sin a second time, the impact of his sin is even greater];

זמנא תליתאה, אתפשט ההוא כתמא מסטרא דא לסטרא דא כו'

the third time he commits the sin, the stain penetrates from one side through the other;...”

לכן צריך מספר הצומות גם כן ג' פעמים וכו'

therefore the number of fasts ought also be three.

אבל כל זה באדם חזק ובריא, שאין ריבוי הצומות מזיק לו כלל לבריאות גופו, וכמו בדורות הראשונים

However, all this<sup>4</sup> applies to the strong and robust, whose physical health would not be harmed at all by repeated fasts, as in the generations of yore.

אבל מי שריבוי הצומות מזיק לו, שאפשר שיבוא לידי חולי או מיחוש, חס ושלום, כמו בדורותינו אלה

But whoever would be affected by many fasts, and might thereby suffer illness or pain, G-d forbid, as in contemporary generations,

אסור לו להרבות בתעניות, אפילו על כריתות ומיתות בית דין, ומכל שכן על מצוות עשה ומצוות לא תעשה שאין בהן כרת

is forbidden to undertake numerous fasts, even for sins punishable by excision or execution, and certainly not for [violation of] the positive and prohibitive commands that do not involve excision.

אלא כפי אשר ישער בנפשו שבודאי לא יזיק לו כלל

Instead [the measure of fasting is] the personal estimate of what will not harm him at all.

כי אפילו בדורות הראשונים, בימי תנאים ואמוראים, לא היו מתעניין בכהאי גוונא אלא הבריאים, דמצו לצעורי נפשיהו

For even in those early generations, in the times of the *Tannaim* and *Amoraim*, only the robust who could mortify themselves fasted so frequently.

ודלא מצוי לצעורי נפשיה ומתענה, נקרא חוטא בגמרא, פרק קמא דתענית

But whoever cannot fast yet does so, is called a “sinner” in Tractate *Taanit*, ch. 1.[5](#)

ואפילו מתענה על עבירות שבידו, כדפירש רש”י שם

This applies even to one who fasts for specifically known sins, as *Rashi* explains there,

The very same author of the opinion that he who fasts frequently is considered “holy”, because (as *Rashi* explains) his sins are thereby expunged, goes on to state that he is considered a sinner if he cannot fast yet does so.

וכדאיתא בגמרא, פרק קמא דזבחים, שאין לך אדם מישראל שאינו מחויב עשה וכו’

and it is written in Tractate *Zevachim*, ch. 1,[6](#) that “there is no one of Israel who is not guilty of [transgressing] a positive commandment...,”

Thus, though there are always sins for which one should fast, one should do so only if this will in no way impair his health; otherwise, he is considered a sinner,

ומכל שכן מי שהוא בעל תורה, שחוטא ונענש בכפליים

especially if he is a student of Torah, in which case he is doubly punished,

כי מחמת חלישות התענית, לא יוכל לעסוק בה כראוי

for the weakness resulting from his fast prevents him from studying Torah properly.

אלא מה תקנתיה

What, then, is his remedy?

I.e., what is such a person to do in order to be beloved by his Creator as he was before his sin?

כדכתיב: וחטאך בצדקה פרוק

He should comply with the verse that says,[7](#) “Redeem your sin with charity.”

וכמו שכתבו הפוסקים, ליתן בעד כל יום תענית של תשובה ערך ח”י גדולים פוליש

And, indeed, the codifiers of Torah law specified that one should donate the equivalent of eighteen [large Polish] coins called “*gedolim Polish*” for each day of repentance.

והעשיר יוסיף לפי עשרו וכו'

The wealthy should add to this amount for the redemption of each fast-day according to his means,

כמו שכתב המגן אברהם, הלכות תענית

as stated in *Magen Avraham* in the Laws of Fasts.[8](#)

\* \* \*

ומכל מקום, כל בעל נפש החפץ קרבת ה', לתקן נפשו, להשיבה אל ה' בתשובה מעולה מן המובחר, יחמיר על עצמו

Nevertheless, though it has just been stated that in contemporary generations when excessive fasting causes illness and pain, the fasts of penance should be substituted by charity, every man of spirit who desires to be close to G-d, to amend his *nefesh*[9](#) (his soul), to restore it to G-d with the finest and most preferred repentance, should be stringent with himself.

להשלים על כל פנים פעם אחת כל ימי חייו, מספר הצומות לכל עון ועון מעונות החמורים שחייבין עליהם מיתה על כל פנים, ואפילו בידי שמים בלבד

He should complete, at least once during his lifetime, the number of fasts for every grave sin incurring death at least, if only death by divine agency.

כגון להוצאות זרע לבטלה, פ"ד צומות פעם אחת בימי חייו

For example, for wasteful emission [he should undergo the series of] eight-four fasts once in his life.

ויכול לדחותן לימים הקצרים בחורף, ויתענה כעשר תעניות על דרך משל בחורף אחד או פחות

He may postpone the fasts until the short winter days and fast some ten days or less, for example, in one winter,

ויגמור מספר הפ"ד צומות בט' שנים או יותר, כפי כחו

and complete the series of eighty-four in nine or more years, according to his stamina.

וגם יכול לאכול מעט כג' שעות לפני נץ החמה, ואף על פי כן נחשב לתענית אם התנה כן

([10](#)Besides, he may also eat a little about three hours before sunrise, and this would still be considered a fast, if he so stipulated.)

ולתשלום רנ"ב צומות כנ"ל, יתענה עוד ד' פעמים פ"ד עד אחר הצות היום בלבד

For the completion of the above-mentioned 252 fasts — three times eighty-four, this being the accepted arbitration in the above difference of opinion, so that one undertakes three times the number of fasts prescribed for this specific sin, even if it was committed many times — he may fast another four times eighty-four only until past noon;

דמיחשב גם כן תענית בירושלמי, וב' חצאי יום נחשבים לו ליום אחד לענין זה

this, too, the *Talmud Yerushalmi*[11](#) considers a fast. In this context, moreover, two half-days are reckoned as one full day.

וכן לשאר עונות כיוצא בהן

This approach applies to other, similar sins as well,

Until now the Alter Rebbe addressed himself to those sins which at least incur death by divine agency. The Alter Rebbe now goes on to say that this approach also applies to sins which do not incur such a harsh penalty but are similarly grave — “similar sins” — such as those which are actually comparable to idolatry, murder, and so on, as mentioned in ch. 7 below. Concerning these sins as well, the Alter Rebbe is saying here, one should be stringent and undertake the required number of fasts at least once in his lifetime.

אשר כל לב יודע מרת נפשו וחפץ בהצדקה

for each heart knows its own anguish and desires its vindication.

And this vindication is enhanced by fasting.

\* \* \*

אכן מספר הצומות העודפים על רנ"ב וכהאי גוונא

However, there still remain the fasts in excess of (for example) the 252, i.e., whatever number exceeds three times the prescribed number of fasts for any particular sin,

שהיה צריך להתענות, לחוש לדעת המחמירים להתענות מספר הצומות שעל כל חטא וחטא כפי מספר הפעמים שחטא כנ"ל

that one ought to fast in deference to the more stringent opinion insisting on the appropriate number of fasts for every violation committed, as noted above.

יפדה כולן בצדקה, ערך ח"י גדולים פוליש בעד כל יום

He may redeem them all by charity to the value of eighteen “*gedolim Polish*” for each fast-day.

וכן שאר כל תעניות שצריך להתענות על עבירות שאין בהן מיתה

So, too, [charity may redeem] all other fasts that he should have undergone for sins not entailing death,

ואפילו על ביטול מצות עשה דאורייתא ודרבנן

and even for neglecting a positive command, whether explicit in the Torah or Rabbinically ordained,

ותלמוד תורה כנגד כולם

and for [neglect of the positive command of] [12](#) “Torah study, which is equivalent to them all,”

כפי המספר המפורש בתיקוני התשובה מהאר”י ורובם נזכרים במשנת חסידים במסכת התשובה

according to the number of fasts prescribed by the penances of the *AriZal*. ([13](#)Most of these are noted in *Mishnat Chassidim*, Tractate *Teshuvah*.)

הכל אשר לכל יפדה בצדקה כנ”ל, אי לא מצי לצעורי נפשיה

All of these fasts, then, he may redeem as explained above, if he cannot mortify himself.

ואף שיעלה לסך מסויים, אין לחוש משום: אל יבזבז יותר מחומש

Though this might amount to a very considerable sum, he need not fear violating the injunction that [14](#) “one should not extravagantly distribute more than one fifth [of one’s property to charity],”

דלא מקרי בזבז בכהאי גוונא, מאחר שעושה לפדות נפשו מתעניות וסגופים

for this kind of giving cannot be termed “extravagant distribution,” since he does it to redeem himself from fasting and affliction.

ולא גרעא מרפואת הגוף ושאר צרכיו

This is no less necessary than healing his body or his other needs, in which one does not restrict one’s spending to a fifth of his means.

ולפי שמספר הצומות המוזכרים בתיקוני התשובה הנ”ל רבו במאד מאד



Since the number of fasts enumerated in the above-mentioned penances of the *AriZal* is exceedingly great,

לכן נהגו עכשיו כל החרדים לדבר ה' להרבות מאד מאד בצדקה

all who revere the word of G-d are now accustomed to being unstintingly generous with charity, which is given in place of fasting,

מחמת חלישות הדור, דלא מצי לצעורי נפשם כולי האי

for the prevalent lack of stamina prevents them from mortifying themselves to this extent.

וכמו שכתוב במקום אחר על פסוק: חסדי ה' כי לא תמנו

([15](#)A comment is made elsewhere on this subject on the words, [16](#) “The kindnesses of G-d, for they are not concluded.”)

The last three Hebrew words, here translated “for they are not concluded,” may also be interpreted to mean “for we are not perfect.” Accordingly, in Epistle 10 of *Iggeret HaKodesh*, the Alter Rebbe explains the verse thus: Since “we are not perfect,” burdened as we are by sins that plead for rectification, we are in need of G-d’s infinite kindness and charity. And in order to elicit kindness and pardon of an infinite order, man for his part must exceed the conventional, finite bounds of charity.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “As distinct from other *olah* offerings; see the various types of offerings in Maimonides’ preface to his Commentary on the *Mishnayot* of Tractate *Kodashim*.” [2.](#) 5b, 6a, 7b. [3.](#) 73b. [4.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Concerning all the laws about to be stated, see *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 571 and its commentaries; *Shulchan Aruch Admur HaZaken, Hilchot Nizkei Guf veNefesh*, Sub-section 4.” [5.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “End of p. 11a; see also *Rambam, Hilchot Deot*, beg. of ch. 3, and commentators *ad loc.*” [6.](#) 7a, and see *Rashi* there. [7.](#) *Daniel* 4:24. [8.](#) *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 568:12, and commentaries. [9.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “In this and all similar contexts, the term specifically used is *nefesh* [as distinct from the other four terms for the various levels of the soul] — possibly in view of the statement in the *Zohar* III (24b) and *Sefer HaGilgulim, et al.*, that ‘it is specifically the level of *nefesh* that sins.’” [10.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [11.](#) *Nedarim* 8:1. [12.](#) *Peah* 1:1. [13.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [14.](#) *Ketubbot* 50a. [15.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [16.](#) *Eichah* 3:22.



## Chapter 4

Certain penitential fasts, then, are to be actually undertaken, while others are to be redeemed through charity.

ואולם כל הנ"ל הוא לגמר הכפרה ומירוק הנפש לה' אחר התשובה

However, all we have said refers to the culmination of the atonement — to polishing the soul clean before G-d, so that no vestige of former sin remains, after repentance,

כמו שכתוב לעיל מהגמרא, פרק קמא דזבחים, דעולה דורון היא לאחר שריצה הפרקליט וכו'

as cited above<sup>1</sup> from the *Talmud*, ch. 1 of *Zevachim*, where the *olah* sacrifice brought for transgressing a positive command is described as the gift offered to the offended party after an intercessor's successful plea.

The above-mentioned fasts (or their counterpart in charity) serve a similar function.

אמנם התחלת מצות התשובה ועיקרה

But the beginning of the *mitzvah* of *teshuvah* and its core

לשוב עד ה' באמת ובלב שלם

is a true and wholehearted return to G-d.

As will soon become apparent, this “return (lit.:) *until* G-d” means returning until the point that one has restored completeness to *Havayah*, the Four-Letter Name of G-d, that is to be found within every Jewish soul.

The letters that comprise the Tetragrammaton are (in descending order) *yud* and *hei*, and *vav* and *hei*.

ההכרח לבאר היטב בהרחבת הביאור

This must now be explained thoroughly and comprehensively.

בהקדים מה שכתוב בזהר הקדוש בביאור מלת תשובה על דרך הסוד

Let us begin with the *Zohar's* interpretation<sup>2</sup> of *teshuvah* according to *Sod*, the mystical approach to the Torah:

תשוב ה'

“[*Teshuvah* is] *tashuv hei* (‘the *hei* is to be returned’);

The function of *teshuvah* is to return the letter *hei* of the Divine Name *Havayah* — to reattach it to the level represented by the letter that precedes it, just as it was attached to it before the individual sinned.

ה' תתאה תשובה תתאה

[the reconnection of] the latter *hei* [to the preceding letter *vav*] is *teshuvah tata'ah* ('lower-level *teshuvah*');

ה' עילאה תשובה עילאה

[the reconnection of] the former *hei* [to the preceding letter *yud*] is *teshuvah ila'ah* ('higher-level *teshuvah*').“

וגם מה שכתוב בזהר הקדוש בקצת מקומות שאין תשובה מועלת לפוגם בריתו ומוציא זרע לבטלה

We must also note that the *Zohar* states several times<sup>3</sup> that *teshuvah* is ineffective for violation of the covenant and for the wasteful emission of semen.

והוא דבר תמוה מאד, שאין לך דבר עומד בפני התשובה, ואפילו עבודה זרה וגילוי עריות וכו'

This is most astonishing, for<sup>4</sup> “nothing can stand in the way of *teshuvah*, even idolatry, incest, and so on.”

Jews are commanded to give up their lives rather than transgress these prohibitions, yet repentance atones even for them. How, then, can it be that there are other sins for which repentance is ineffective?

ופירש בראשית חכמה שכוונת הזוהר שאין מועלת תשובה תתאה, כי אם תשובה עילאה וכו'

The *Reishit Chochmah* explains<sup>5</sup> that the intention of the *Zohar* is that though *teshuvah tata'ah* (the conventional level of repentance) is not effective, *teshuvah ila'ah* is.

הנה להבין זאת מעט מזעיר

To grasp even a minute glimmer<sup>6</sup> of this,

צריך להקדים מה שמבואר מהכתוב ומדברי רז"ל, ענין הכרת ומיתה בידי שמים

we must preface what Scripture and our Sages say about [what is entailed by] excision and death by divine agency.

כשעבר עבירה שחייבים עליה כרת, הי' מת ממש קודם חמשים שנה

A violator of a sin punishable by excision would actually<sup>7</sup> die before his fiftieth year.<sup>8</sup>

ובמיתה בידי שמים, מת ממש קודם ששים שנה

In the case of death by divine agency he would actually<sup>9</sup> die before sixty,

כחנניה בן עזור הנביא, בירמיהו

like the prophet Chananiah ben Azur in *Jeremiah*.<sup>10</sup>

As a result of his false prophecy, G-d told him, “I shall banish you from the face of the earth....” This resulted in his actual death.

ולפעמים גם במיתה בידי שמים נפרעין לאלתר, כמו שמצינו בער ואונן

(<sup>11</sup>Indeed, there have been instances in which the punishment of death by divine agency was also meted out instantly, as with Er and Onan.)

This involved a sin incurring death by divine agency.<sup>12</sup>

In any event, both Scripture and the Sages attest that those guilty of sins punishable by excision or death by divine agency would actually die before they reached the age of fifty or sixty. This leads to the following question:

והרי נמצאו בכל דור כמה וכמה חייבי כריתות ומיתות, והאריכו ימיהם ושנותיהם בנעימים

But in every generation there are so many individuals liable to excision and death who nevertheless enjoy extended and pleasant<sup>13</sup> days and years!

אך הענין יובן על פי מה שכתוב: כי חלק ה' עמו וגו'

The key to this will be found in the phrase,<sup>14</sup> “For [G-d’s] people are part of G-d...”;

חלק משם הוי' ברוך הוא

[they are] part of the Four-Letter Name of G-d.

כדכתיב: ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים

Thus, describing G-d’s infusion of a soul into the body of Adam, it is written:<sup>15</sup> “And He blew into his nostrils a soul of life,”

ומאן דנפח מתוכו נפח וכו'

and, as the *Zohar* comments,<sup>16</sup> “He who blows, does so from within him, etc.”<sup>17</sup>

The metaphor of blowing signifies that the soul of a Jew originates in the innermost aspect of G-dliness — in the Tetragrammaton, as shall be soon explained.

ואף שאין לו דמות הגוף וכו' חס ושלום

Now [G-d] has no bodily form, and so on,[18](#) G-d forbid.

How, then, is it possible to say that G-d “blew”, and to speak of a “part” of Himself?

אך דברה תורה כלשון בני אדם

However, the Torah[19](#) “speaks as in the language of men,” i.e., anthropomorphically.

כי כמו שיש הפרש והבדל גדול באדם התחתון, על דרך משל, בין ההבל שיוצא מפיו בדבורו להבל היוצא על ידי נפיחה

By way of analogy: There exists a vast difference in the case of mortal man between the breath issuing from his mouth while speaking and the breath of forceful blowing.

שביוצא בדיבורו מלובש בו כח וחיות מעט מזער

The breath that issues with his speech embodies the soul's power and life-force only minimally,

והוא בבחינת חיצוניות מנפש החיה שבקרבו

and that is only from the superficial aspect of the soul that dwells within him.

אבל ביוצא בכח הנופח דמתוכו נפח

But the breath that issues when he blows forcefully, from deep within himself,

מלובש בו כח וחיות פנימית מבחינת נפש החיה וכו'

embodies the internal power and life-force of the vivifying soul....

Just as there exists a vast difference between man's speaking and forceful blowing:

ככה ממש, על דרך משל, המבדיל הבדלות לאין קץ

Precisely so in the analogy [of Creation], allowing for the infinite differentiations involved [between Creator and created],

יש הפרש עצום מאד למעלה

there exists a prodigious difference Above,

בין כל צבא השמים, ואפילו המלאכים, שנבראו מאין ליש

between all the hosts of heaven, even the spiritual beings like angels, who were created *ex nihilo*, [and the soul of man].

וחיים וקיימים מבחינת היצוניות החיות והשפע שמשפיע אין סוף ברוך הוא להחיות העולמות

They derive their life and existence from the external aspect of the life-force issuing forth from the Infinite One to vitalize creation.

ובחינה זו נקראת בשם רוח פיו, על דרך משל, כמו שכתוב: וברוח פיו כל צבאם

his [external] aspect of the life-giving power is called the “breath of His mouth,” as it were, as the verse states:<sup>20</sup> “By the breath of His mouth all their hosts [were created].”

והיא בחינת חיות המלוכשת באותיות שבעשרה מאמרות

This is the creative power embodied in the letters of the Ten Utterances

שהן בחינת כלים והמשכות וכו', כמו שכתוב בלקוטי אמרים חלק ב' פרק י"א

(<sup>21</sup>these letters being in the nature of vessels, and a drawing down and so forth of the life-force, as explained in Likutei Amarim, Part II, ch. 11).

ובין נשמת האדם שנמשכה תחלה מבחינת פנימיות החיות והשפע שמשפיע אין סוף ברוך הוא

In contrast, the soul of man derives initially from the innermost dimension of the life-force and flow issuing from the Infinite One,

כמו שכתוב: ויפח וגו'

as in the verse quoted above, “And He blew....”

As mentioned earlier, this verb indicates the internal aspect of the Divine flow of life-force, for “he who blows, does so from his innermost being.”

Thus, the soul originated in the internal aspect of the life-force and flow issuing from G-d. It is only afterwards, in order to enable it to be invested within the body, that the soul descended to a more external level, as the Alter Rebbe now goes on to say.

ואחר כך ירדה בסתר המדרגה, גם כן על ידי בחינת האותיות שבמאמר: נעשה אדם וגו'

It then descended through ever more concealing planes, also (like the angels who were created by means of “letters”) by means of the letters that comprise the Divine Utterance,<sup>22</sup> “Let us make man...,”

כדי להתלבש בגוף עולם הזה התחתון

in order that it could eventually be invested in a body in this inferior, [physical] world.

This, then, is the difference between souls and angels: Souls derive from the innermost aspect of G-dliness, the Tetragrammaton, while angels are rooted in the external aspect of G-dliness, the Divine Name *Elokim*, as is now explained.

ולכן נקראו המלאכים בשם אלקים בכתוב

For this reason Scripture calls the angels “*Elokim*”,

וכמו שכתוב: כי ה' אלקיכם הוא אלקי האלקים גו'

as<sup>23</sup> in the phrase,<sup>24</sup> “For the L-rd your G-d, <sup>25</sup>He is the G-d of G-ds (*Elokim*).”, the last word here referring to angels,

הודו לאלקי האלקים גו'

[and likewise],<sup>26</sup> “Praise the G-d of G-ds (*Elokim*).”, once again referring to angels by the name “*Elokim*”,

ויבואו בני האלקים להתייצב גו'

and (in yet another reference to angels),<sup>27</sup> “The sons of G-d (*Elokim*) came to present themselves....”

The Name *Elokim* is applied to angels:

לפי שיניקת חיותם היא מבחינת חיצוניות, שהיא בחינת האותיות לבד

Because they derive their nurture from the external degree [of G-dliness], which is merely the state of “letters”.

ושם אלקים הוא בחינת חיצוניות לגבי שם הויה ברוך הוא

Similarly, the Name *Elokim* is an external state relative to the Tetragrammaton.

אבל נשמת האדם, שהיא מבחינת פנימיות החיות, היא חלק שם הויה ברוך הוא

But the soul of man, deriving from the internal aspect of the G-dly vivifying power, is a part of the Tetragrammaton,

כי שם הויה מורה על פנימיות החיות, שהיא למעלה מעלה מבחינת האותיות

for the Tetragrammaton indicates the innermost dimension of the life-giving power, which far transcends the state of letters.

To explain:

What characteristics of the soul also characterize *Havayah*, the Four-Letter Name of G-d, and thus indicate that the soul is indeed a part of that Name? In answer to this question, the Alter Rebbe now explains that just as the Ten *Sefirot* are included within the Tetragrammaton, so, too, there are ten corresponding faculties that are intrinsic to the soul.

כנודע ממאמר אליהו: אתה הוא דאפיקת עשר תיקונים, וקרינת להון עשר ספירן, לאנהגא בהון עלמין סתימין וכו'

There is a well-known statement of Eliyahu, in the passage entitled *Patach Eliyahu*, in the introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar*: “You are He Who elicited the ten *tikkunim* (lit., ‘garments’) which we call the Ten *Sefirot*, by which to conduct the concealed worlds...[and the revealed worlds...].[28](#)

אתה הוא חכים, ולא בחכמה ידיעא

You are wise, but not with a knowable attribute of wisdom;

אתה הוא מבין, ולא בבינה ידיעא וכו'

You understand, but not with a knowable attribute of understanding; and so on“ — with regard to the remaining *Sefirot*.

וכל הי' ספירות נכללות ונרמזות בשם הויה ברוך הוא

All the Ten *Sefirot* are included and represented in their source, the Tetragrammaton.

The Alter Rebbe now shows how the various *Sefirot* find expression in the four letters that comprise this Divine Name, *Havayah*.

כי היו"ד, שהיא בחינת נקודה לבד, מרמזת לחכמתו ית'

The *yud*, which is a simple point, extending in neither length nor breadth, indicates G-d's Wisdom, the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah*,

שהיא בבחינת העלם והסתר קודם שבאה לבחינת התפשטות וגילוי ההשגה וההבנה

which is the state of concealment and obscurity, before it develops into a state of expansion and revelation in comprehension and understanding.

והקוץ שעל היו"ד רומז לבחינת רצון העליון ברוך הוא, שלמעלה מעלה ממדרגת בחינת חכמה עילאה כנודע



(29The “thorn” above30 the yud indicates the Supreme Will, this being the level of *Keter*, which transcends by far the level of *Chochmah Ila’ah*, Supernal Wisdom, as is known.)

ואחר שבאה לבחינת התפשטות וגילוי ההשגה וההבנה לעלמין סתימין

When [the seminal “point” of Chochmah] is eventually amplified and revealed as something comprehensible to the concealed worlds, i.e., when it descends to the level and *Sefirah of Binah*,

נכללת ונרמזת באות ה', שיש לה בחינת התפשטות לרוחב, המורה ומרמז על הרחבת הביאור וההבנה

it is then contained and represented in the letter *hei* of the Tetragrammaton. This letter extends in breadth, implying a breadth of explanation and understanding, which is the function of *Binah*.

וגם לאורך, המורה על בחינת ההמשכה וההשפעה מלמעלה למטה לעלמין סתימין

[The letter *hei*] also extends in length, to indicate extension and flow downward into the concealed worlds.

The hidden worlds are nourished from the level of *Binah*, so that they may have an understanding of G-dliness.

ואחר כך, כשנמשכת המשכה והשפעה זו יותר למטה לעלמין דאתגליין

In the next stage, when this extension and flow are drawn still lower into the revealed worlds,

וכמו האדם שרוצה לגלות חכמתו לאחרים על ידי דבורו, על דרך משל

which may be compared, by way of analogy, to one who wishes31 to reveal his thoughts to another through his speech,

נכללת ונרמזת המשכה זו באותיות ו"ה

this extension is contained and represented in the [final] letters *vav* and *hei* [of the Tetragrammaton].

כי הוי"ו מורה על ההמשכה מלמעלה למטה

For the letter *vav*, which is shaped like a vertical line, indicates downward extension.

There is another connection between this stage and the letter *vav*:

וגם המשכה זו היא על ידי מדת חסדו וטובו ושאר מדותיו הקדושות, הנכללת בדרך כלל במספר שש שבפסוק:  
לך ה' הגדולה וגו' עד לך ה' הממלכה, ולא עד בכלל

Also, this downward flow into the revealed worlds is effected through the Divine traits of benevolence and goodness and [G-d's] other holy traits, included in general terms in the six attributes, the numerical equivalent of *vav*, in the verse,<sup>32</sup> “Yours, O G-d, is greatness...,” — until “Yours, O G-d, is sovereignty...,” but not including it.

כי מדת מלכותו ית' נקראת בשם דבר ה'

For His attribute of sovereignty is called the “Word of G-d” (and speech is not one of the *middot*, the spiritual emotive attributes),

כמו שכתוב: באשר דבר מלך שלטון

as in the verse,<sup>33</sup> “Wherever the word of the king holds sway.”

Supernal speech, then, is related to *Malchut*, G-d's sovereignty.

ונכללת ונרמזת באות ה' אחרונה של שם ה'

This [attribute of sovereignty] is contained and represented in the final *hei* of the Tetragrammaton, in the following manner:

כי פנימיות ומקור הדבור הוא ההבל העולה מן הלב, ומתחלק לה' מוצאות הפה: אחה"ע מהגרון וכו'

The internal aspect and the source of speech is the breath that rises from the heart, then is particularized into the five oral articulations (five being the numerical equivalent of the letter *hei*). [One of these produces the bracket of letters] *alef*, *chet*, *hei* and *ayin* from the throat, another produces the bracket of letters *beit*, *vav*, *mem* and *pei* from the lips, and so on.

At any rate, the internal aspect of speech is breath.

וגם הברת הה"א היא בחינת הבל לבד

In particular, the enunciation of the letter *hei* is solely unvocalized breath,

כמו שכתוב: אתא קלילא דלית בה מששא

as in the phrase,<sup>34</sup> “A light letter without substance.”

Emanating, as it does, solely from the breath, it alludes to the level of *Malchut* and speech whose internal aspect is “breath”.

ואף שאין לו דמות הגוף חס ושלום

Now “He has no corporeal form,” G-d forbid.

How, then, can one differentiate Above between those letters that possess substance and those that do not?

אך דברה תורה כלשון בני אדם

Nevertheless, “the Torah speaks as in the language of men.”

Since on the mortal plane this differentiation exists, it is also applied to the Divine plane, for spiritually, too, there exists a corresponding difference between the letter *hei* and the other letters.

בשגם

Moreover (i.e., there is yet another reason why this analogy is apt, notwithstanding the fact that G-d has no corporeal form):

שגם דבר ה' כ"ב אותיות המתחלקות לה' חלקי המוצאות, ובהן נברא כל היצור

for G-d's speech as well consists, as it were, of twenty-two letters that separate into the five articulations that produce the Divine speech from which all beings were created.

וכמו שכתוב בליקוטי אמרים חלק ב' פי"א ביאור ענין אותיות אלו

([35](#)For a discussion of these letters and their significance, see *Likutei Amarim*, Part II, ch. 11.)

We thus see that all the Ten *Sefirot* are included and represented within the Tetragrammaton. The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain that likewise within the soul, which is part of the Tetragrammaton, there exist ten corresponding levels or faculties.

וככה ממש, על דרך משל, המבדיל הבדלות לאין קץ, בנשמת האדם

Analogously, exactly the same applies to the soul of man, again keeping in mind the infinite separation between the Creator and the created soul,

שהיא בחינת נפש האלקית דמתוכיה נפה

which is the divine soul which “He blew from within Himself.”

Since the soul derives from the internal aspect of G-dliness, the Tetragrammaton, which comprises the Ten *Sefirot*, the soul likewise comprises the following characteristics:

יש בה בחינת שכל הנעלם, המרומז באות יו"ד

There is [the initial state of *Chochmah*,] the hidden concept alluded to by the letter *yud*,

Just as the letter *yud* lacks length and breadth and is but a simple point, so, too, is *Chochmah* a faculty that lacks intellectual length and breadth, merely —

שבכחו לצאת אל הגילוי, להבין ולהשכיל באמתתו ית' ובגדולתו וכו'

possessing the potential of being revealed, and thereby understanding and conceiving G-d's true existence and greatness,

כל חד וחד לפום שיעורא דיליה, לפי רוחב שכלו ובינתו

in each person according to his measure, according to the breadth of his intellect and understanding.

While the degree of one's comprehension of G-dliness depends on the breadth of one's intellect, a Jew's essential ability to find G-d's true being and greatness securely integrated in his mind, stems from the soul's attribute of *Chochmah*, alluded to in the letter *yud*.

וכפי אשר מעמיק שכלו ומרחיב דעתו ובינתו להתבונן בגדולתו ית'

As a man deepens his intelligence, as he broadens his mind and comprehension, to contemplate G-d's greatness,

אזי מרומזת בינתו באות ה"א, שיש לה רוחב

his now-developed understanding, the faculty of *Binah*, is alluded to by the letter *hei*, that has breadth, indicating the breadth of his understanding.

וגם אורך, המורה על ההמשכה מלמעלה למטה

[The *hei*] also has length, to indicate downward extension,

להוליד מבינתו והתבוננותו בגדולת ה' אהבה ויראה ותולדותיהן

so that from his understanding and contemplation of G-d's greatness, he arouses love and fear and their offspring, i.e., the other emotive attributes, which are termed the offspring or branches of love and fear,

במוחו ותעלומות לבו

in his mind and in the recesses of his heart,

At this early stage in the generation of the spiritual emotions of love and fear and so on, they are not yet manifest.

ואחר כך בבחינת התגלות לבו

until ultimately they find overt expression in his heart.

The downward progression of intellect into the realm of emotions is thus indicated by the vertical length of the letter *hei*.

ומזה נמשכה עבודה האמיתית בעסק התורה והמצות, בקול ודבור או מעשה

These [spiritual emotions] lead to the true service of G-d, in Torah study and *mitzvah* observance, with voice and speech or with deed.

True divine service is that which is motivated by the love and awe of G-d, as explained above in Part I, ch. 4.

הן אותיות וא"ו ה"א וכו'

This is the import of the [final] letters *vav* and *hei* [of the Four-Letter Name, *Havayah*]..., for *vav* alludes to voice and speech, while *hei* alludes to action.

וגם ההתבוננות, להבין ולהשכיל באמתתו וגדולתו ית', נמשכה גם כן מן התורה

Furthermore, contemplation that endeavors to understand and conceive of G-d's true being, also derives from Torah,

I.e., such contemplation must necessarily be preceded by the study of Torah,

דאורייתא מחכמה נפקא, היא בחינת יו"ד של שם הויה וכו'

for<sup>36</sup> “Torah proceeds from *Chochmah*,” which is the *yud* of the Tetragrammaton.

FOOTNOTES <sup>1</sup>. Beg. of ch. 2. See also *Likutei Sichot*, Vol. XIX, p. 401, note 12, and the marginal comment on this note. <sup>2</sup>. III, 122a. <sup>3</sup>. *Zohar* I, 60a, 219b; *Zohar* II, 214b. <sup>4</sup>. Note of the Rebbe: “*Rambam*, conclusion of ch. 3 of *Hilchot Teshuvah*, following *Yerushalmi*, *Peah* 1:1; *Zohar Chadash*, conclusion of *Parshat Bereishit*.” <sup>5</sup>. *Shaar HaKedushah*, ch. 17. <sup>6</sup>. Note of the Rebbe: “Perhaps this expression is used (as opposed to, say, *המעט מן מעט*) because the former term (*מעט*) suggests that the extent of understanding is minute, while the latter term (*מזער*) suggests that qualitatively too this understanding is a mere glimmer.” <sup>7</sup>. Note of the Rebbe: “Possibly the Alter Rebbe’s intention here is to negate the opinion of the *Ramban* at the end of *Parshat Acharei*.” The *Ramban* says there that it is sometimes possible that violators liable to excision “are not punished by physical excision; sometimes they may live to a ripe old age.” In specifying here that they would “actually” die, the Alter Rebbe evidently seeks to negate this opinion. <sup>8</sup>. Note of the Rebbe: “As in *Yerushalmi*, *Bikkurim*, beg. of ch. 2, as explained in *Tosafot*, s.v. כרת, *Shabbat* 25a.” <sup>9</sup>. Note of the Rebbe: “As above” — i.e., as in fn. 7. <sup>10</sup>. Ch. 28. <sup>11</sup>. Parentheses are in the original text. <sup>12</sup>. Note of the Rebbe: “See above, end of ch. 1.” <sup>13</sup>. Asked why the Alter Rebbe added the word “pleasant”, the Rebbe replied that this was done “in order to rule out the (labored) interpretation that this punishment was

undergone by virtue of their having suffered poverty or the like, which is also called ‘death’ in Scripture (*Shmot* 4:19) and in Rabbinic terminology (quoted in *Rashi*, *ad loc.*.)” [14.](#) *Devarim* 32:9. [15.](#) *Bereishit* 2:7. [16.](#) See above, Part I, beg. of ch. 2, citing the *Zohar*. [17.](#) The Rebbe suggests that “etc.” alludes to the continuation of this statement above, Part I, beg. of ch. 2: “...from his inwardness and his innermost being.” [18.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “‘Etc.’ signifies ‘nor body’ — from the hymn entitled *Yigdal*. See also beg. of *Likutei Torah leGimmel Parshiyot*.” [19.](#) *Berachot* 31b. [20.](#) *Tehillim* 33:6. [21.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [22.](#) *Bereishit* 1:26. [23.](#) The Rebbe notes that the Alter Rebbe cites three verses to adduce that angels are called *Elokim*, possibly in order to allude to the three general categories of angels — in the Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*. The angels closest to souls (souls having “arisen in the Divine thought”) are those of the World of *Beriah*, the World of Thought. They are alluded to in the first verse, which states that “Your G-d,” i.e., the G-d of souls, is “the G-d of angels.” The second verse, which mentions neither “Your G-d” nor the Tetragrammaton, may be said to refer to the angels in the World of *Yetzirah*. The final verse, which speaks of the angels who give testimony with regard to the worldly affairs of man, may be said to apply to the angels of the nethermost world, the World of *Asiyah*. [24.](#) *Devarim* 10:17. [25.](#) In line with Scripture, the Rebbe restored the word “He” to the paraphrase in the text. [26.](#) *Tehillim* 136:2. [27.](#) *Iyov* 1:6. [28.](#)

The Rebbe asks the following question: The statement that the purpose of the Ten *Sefirot* (which, as he shall soon say, are included within the Tetragrammaton) is “to conduct the concealed *worlds*,” seems to contradict the earlier statement that the Tetragrammaton transcends by far the state of “letters” (from which the various *worlds* and their creatures come into being).

The Alter Rebbe resolves this, explains the Rebbe, by now going on to quote, “You are wise, but not with a knowable attribute of wisdom; You understand, but not with a knowable attribute of understanding...” This cannot possibly refer to the state of “letters”, since their purpose is to make known and to reveal (as oft stated in Part II of *Tanya*). Rather, the above-mentioned conduct of the worlds first relates only to the “concealed worlds,” worlds that are “not known.”

[29.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [30.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “The Alter Rebbe stresses ‘above’, for the ‘thorn’ that projects beneath the *yud* has a different significance.” [31.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “In the analogy the Alter Rebbe speaks of ‘one who *wishes* to reveal his thoughts to another,’ for this mirrors the ‘Divine traits of benevolence and goodness’ that are mentioned below.” [32.](#) *I Divrei HaYamim* 29:11. [33.](#) *Kohelet* 8:4. [34.](#) From the hymn entitled *Akdamut*. [35.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [36.](#) *Zohar* II, 85a, 121a.



## Chapter 5

The previous chapter taught that the Jewish soul is a part of the Tetragrammaton, the internal aspect of G-dliness, from which it derives. In this it differs from other created beings whose source is more external — the Divine Name *Elokim* and Supernal speech.

However, in order that the soul be able to become en clothed in a physical body in this corporeal world, it had to descend through ever more concealing planes by means of the letters that comprise the Divine Utterance, “Let us make man.”

Deriving as it does from the internal aspect of the Divine life-force, the soul itself is thus loftier than the degree of Supernal speech; it merely undergoes a descent through Divine speech. It is for this reason that concerning the infusion of man’s soul into the body the Torah uses the expression “He blew,” indicating that it comes from an internal level, for “he who blows, does so from the innermost aspect of his being.”

Because the soul is part of the Tetragrammaton, it also comprises ten faculties that parallel the Ten *Sefirot* that are found within the Tetragrammaton.

In this chapter the Alter Rebbe goes on to say that even though the soul was invested in the body through the external agency of speech — the Utterance “Let us make man”— nevertheless it derives from the internal aspect of speech, namely, “breath”. In this regard man differs from all other creatures, including angels, which derive their existence from the external aspect of speech. Accordingly, both the internal and external aspects of the soul derive from the internal aspect of G-dliness, the internal aspect of the soul deriving from the internal aspect of G-dliness, namely, the Tetragrammaton, the external aspect of the soul deriving from the internality of the external level of Divine speech.

והנה המשכת וירידת הנפש האלקית לעולם הזה, להתלבש בגוף האדם

Bringing the G-dly soul down into this physical world to invest itself in a human body, this process resulting from Divine speech, viz., the Utterance “Let us make man,”

נמשכה מבחינת פנימיות ומקור הדבור

derives from the internal aspect, the source, of speech.

הוא הבל העליון המרומז באות ה' תתאה כנ"ל

This is the “breath” of the Supreme One that is indicated in the latter *hei* [of *Havayah*, the Four-Letter Name of G-d] discussed above.

וכמו שכתוב: ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים, ויהי האדם לנפש חיה

As Scripture states concerning the vestiture of the soul within the body,<sup>1</sup> “He blew into his nostrils a breath of life, and man became a living creature,”

ומאן דנפח מתוכיה נפח וכו'

and “he who blows, does so from within him, [from his inwardness and innermost being].”

Thus, even the external aspect of the soul that is vested within the body is vested in an inward manner, albeit with the inwardness of speech — the internal aspect of the external level of speech. In this regard it is unlike the internal aspect of the soul which emanates from the most internal aspect of G-dliness.

וזה שנאמר: כי חלק ה' עמו, יעקב חבל נחלתו

This, then, is the meaning of the verse,<sup>2</sup> “For [G-d’s] people is a part of G-d; Jacob is the rope of His inheritance.”

This verse implies that within the soul there are to be found two levels: the internal aspect of the soul is “part of G-d”; the external aspect of the soul is the “rope of His inheritance.”

פירוש: כמו חבל, על דרך משל, שראשו אחד קשור למעלה וקצהו למטה

The analogy is of a rope, whose upper end is bound above and the lower end below; so, too, the “upper end” of the soul is “bound Above” and its “lower end” is enfolded within the body.

כי הנה פשט הכתוב מה שנאמר: ויפח, הוא להורות לנו, כמו שעל דרך משל כשהאדם נופח לאיזה מקום

The simple meaning<sup>3</sup> of the words “He blew” stated in reference to the soul’s vestiture within the body is to instruct us that just as, for example, if one blows in some direction,

אם יש איזה דבר חוצץ ומפסיק בינתיים, אין הבל הנופח עולה ומגיע כלל לאותו מקום

and there is any separation or obstruction there, then the exhaled breath will not reach that place at all,<sup>4</sup>

ככה ממש, אם יש דבר חוצץ ומפסיק בין גוף האדם לבחינת הבל העליון

— precisely this is the case if any obstruction separates man’s body from the “breath” of the Supreme One, concerning which Scripture states, “He blew.”

אך באמת אין שום דבר גשמי ורוחני חוצץ לפניו יתברך

The truth is, though, that nothing material or spiritual is a barrier before Him,

כי הלא את השמים ואת הארץ אני מלא

for, as the verse states,<sup>5</sup> “Do I not fill heaven and earth?”



ומלא כל הארץ כבודו

Furthermore, Scripture states,<sup>6</sup> “All the world is full of His glory.”

ולית אתר פנוי מיניה

Also,<sup>7</sup> “There is no place devoid of Him,”

בשמים ממעל ועל הארץ מתחת, אין עוד

[and]<sup>8</sup> “In the heavens above and on the earth below there is none else,”

ואיהו ממלא כל עלמין וכו'

[and]<sup>9</sup> “He fills all worlds....”

Since G-d is everywhere and within everything, it is thus seemingly impossible for anything to act as a barrier before Him.

אלא כמו שכתוב בישעיהו: כי אם עונותיכם היו מבדילים ביניכם לבין אלקיכם

But as Isaiah declares,<sup>10</sup> “Only your sins separate you from your G-d.”

והטעם, לפי שהם נגד רצון העליון ברוך הוא, המחיה את הכל

The reason is that sins oppose the Will of the Supreme One, Who gives life to all,

כמו שכתוב: כל אשר חפץ ה' עשה בשמים ובארץ

as in the verse,<sup>11</sup> “Whatever G-d wills He has done in heaven and earth.”

וכמו שנאמר לעיל, שהוא מקור השפעת שם הוי', ונרמז בקוצו של יו"ד

(<sup>12</sup>It has been noted above, that [the Supreme Will] is the source of the sustenance issuing from the Tetragrammaton, and is represented in the “thorn” atop the letter *yud*.)

Inasmuch as the Tetragrammaton sustains all of creation, it follows that sins, which act in opposition to it, also oppose and conceal the Divine life-force. Sins are thus capable of preventing the Divine “breath” (concerning which it is written “He blew”) from reaching man.

וזהו ענין הכרת

This, then, is the meaning of excision:

שנכרת ונפסק חבל ההמשכה משם ה' ברוך הוא, שנמשכה מה' תתאה כנ"ל

the “rope” drawn from the final *hei* in the Four-Letter Name of G-d is severed, cut off.

As a result, the soul clothed within the body is unable to receive vitality from its source in that Divine Name. During those times when the Jewish people received their vitality only from the “side” of holiness (as for example during the period of the Temple, as the Alter Rebbe will say in the next chapter), the lack of this life-force led to physical death.

וכמו שכתוב בפרשת אמור: ונכרתה הנפש ההיא מלפני, אני ה'

As the verse says in *Parshat Emor*: [13](#) “That soul shall be cut off from before My face; I am G-d.”

The verse here uses the Tetragrammaton in referring to G-d. Excision thus involves being sundered from the internal aspect of G-dliness. It is this that the Alter Rebbe now goes on to say.

מלפני דייקא

The expression chosen is “from before My face”; i.e., the soul is excised from the innermost aspect of G-dliness, the Tetragrammaton.

ובשאר עבירות שאין בהן כרת

Other sins that do not incur excision

על כל פנים הן פוגמין את הנפש כנודע, ופגם הוא מלשון פגימת הסכין

do cause at least a defect in the soul, in the sense of the defect or nick that invalidates a blade for ritual slaughter.

As with the defective blade, a sin causes something to be lacking in the rope-like flow of life-force from the Tetragrammaton downward to the soul, as is now explained.

והוא על דרך משל מחבל עב, שזור מתרי"ג חבלים דקים

This is analogous to a thick rope woven of 613 thin strands.

ככה חבל ההמשכה הנ"ל כלול מתרי"ג מצות

So, too, the “rope” of the downward flow mentioned above is comprised of the 613 *mitzvot*, [14](#) each *mitzvah* being an individual thin strand.

וכשעובר ח"ו על אחת מהנה, נפסק חבל הדק וכו'

When one violates one of them, G-d forbid, a thin strand consisting of that particular commandment is severed....

Should an individual violate many commandments, G-d forbid, then many strands are severed and the “rope” is grievously weakened. Sins punishable by excision (or death by divine agency) cause the entire “rope” to be severed, heaven forbid.

אך גם בחייב כרת ומיתה, נשאר עדיין בו הרשימו מנפשו האלקית

But even if one has incurred excision or death, there yet remains an impression within him of his Divine soul,

ועל ידי זה יכול לחיות עד נ' או ס' שנה, ולא יותר

and through this he may live until fifty (in the case of excision) or sixty years (in the case of death by divine agency), but no more.

ומה שכתוב בשם האריז"ל, שנכנסה בו בחינת המקיף וכו'

([15](#)As to the statement attributed to the *AriZal*, that the *makkif*, a transcendent level of life-force, enters such an individual, and so on,

Though unable to receive vitality from the internal aspect of G-dliness, he is still able to receive vitality from this transcendent (lit., “encompassing”) level of G-dliness. If this is indeed so, why can he not live longer than fifty or sixty years?

אינו ענין לחיי גשמיות הגוף

this is irrelevant to the life of the physical body,[16](#) which cannot survive once there remains no vestige of the Divine soul,

ומיירי עד נ' שנה

and applies only until fifty years,

I.e., the transcendent level is also found within an individual only so long as he is able to remain alive by virtue of the impression of the Divine soul that is still within his body.

או בזמן הזה, וכדלקמן

or to the contemporary period, as will be noted.)

In this era, when a Jew’s vitality reaches him through becoming clothed in unholy media, it is possible for a person to live even after his soul has been sundered from its source in the Four-Letter Name of G-d. This is why it is now possible for someone liable to excision or death by divine agency to live longer than fifty or sixty years. And during this time, the holy life-force which must be found within a Jew is received from the transcendent level, as the *AriZal* teaches.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Bereishit* 2:7. [2.](#) *Devarim* 32:9. [3.](#)

The Rebbe queries why the Alter Rebbe should have introduced the forthcoming analogy with the seemingly superfluous preamble, “The *simple meaning* of the words ‘He blew’ is *to instruct us....*”

He proposes that the Alter Rebbe added these words in order to resolve a difficulty which would otherwise be inexplicable. For according to the Alter Rebbe’s explanation, the soul is drawn down in a number of successive stages: its initial source is the internal aspect of the life-force, and thereafter the internal aspect (the “breath”) of speech. (Both these concepts are adduced from the words “He blew,” which indicates inwardness, as mentioned above.) The soul later progresses through the letters of speech (for the Utterance “Let us make man” is composed of actual letters of speech, and does not derive from “blowing”, which is an aspect of breath). Only then does it become actually enclothed within the body of man. This ultimate stage, then, the implanting of the soul “into his nostrils,” comes about from speech, not from G-d’s having “blown”.

Now speech is heard even if there is an obstruction between speaker and listener. Accordingly, when describing the soul already situated in the body, how is it appropriate to use the image of exhaled breath, that can be prevented by an obstruction from arriving at its destination?

It is this question that the Alter Rebbe answers by saying that the “simple meaning” of the verse is to “instruct us” that even after the Utterance “Let us make man,” i.e., even when the investiture of the soul in the body takes place by means of speech, it still retains the characteristics of “blowing”.

Just as an obstacle can obstruct the passage of breath, so, too, sins can obstruct the soul’s lifeline to G-dliness. This explains why other creatures which derive their nurture through Divine “speech” are not subject to excision, for the sound of speech can penetrate an obstruction. Souls, however, throughout their sojourn in the body, constantly depend on the nurture which is (so to speak) *blown* into them; they must always have an unobstructed path to their life-source.

[4.](#) The first edition of *Iggeret HaTeshuvah* here cited the instance of a person blowing “into the lungs of an animal.” The Rebbe once explained that this example was chosen because the Alter Rebbe wanted to draw on a source from the Torah, and according to Torah law (*Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh De’ah*, beg. Sec. 39) an animal’s lungs are to be examined by being inflated. [5.](#) *Yirmeyahu* 23:24. [6.](#) *Yeshayahu* 6:3. [7.](#) *Tikkunei Zohar* 51. [8.](#) *Devarim* 4:39. [9.](#) *Zohar* III, 255a. [10.](#) 59:2. [11.](#) *Tehillim* 135:6. [12.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [13.](#) *Vayikra* 22:3. [14.](#)

The Rebbe notes that the Alter Rebbe here offers a remarkably novel thought — that every Jew receives vitality in this world from all 613 *mitzvot*, even though the commandments given to *Kohanim* do not apply to commoners, many commandments cannot be performed simultaneously, and the like.

Possibly, continues the Rebbe, this may be understood in light of the Alter Rebbe's explanation in *Kuntreis Acharon*, in the essay that begins, "To Understand the Details of the Laws..." (p. 159b.) [There the Alter Rebbe writes that even the laws that perhaps never have practical application derive from Supernal Wisdom.]

[15.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [16.](#) At this point the Rebbe refers the reader to *Likutei Torah, Devarim* 62c, where the Alter Rebbe explains that excision applies only to the level of "Yaakov" within the soul, but not to the level of "Yisrael". He also cites *Likutei Torah, Devarim* 83b, where the Alter Rebbe speaks of one who has incurred excision. Though of him it is written, "For my father and mother have forsaken me," yet the continuation of the same verse (*Tehillim* 27:10) also applies to him: "...but G-d has taken me in." The encompassing level of the soul remains intact. Though within his soul the Jew's innate love of G-d is not manifest ("does not shed light"), yet in him too this love is still present, though concealed.



## Chapter 6

The Alter Rebbe opened the fourth chapter by beginning to explain the concept of repentance according to the mystical approach to the Torah. He prefaced his commentary by noting that according to Scripture and our Sages a person who committed a sin punishable by excision would actually die before his fiftieth year, while one who committed a sin punishable by death by Divine agency would actually die before his sixtieth year.

The Alter Rebbe thereupon posed the following question: How is it, he asked, that "in every generation there are so many individuals liable to excision and death [by Divine agency] who nevertheless enjoy extended and pleasant days and years!"

In answer, the Alter Rebbe explained that the soul is part of the Divine Name *Havayah*, the Tetragrammaton. Furthermore, both the internal and external aspects of the soul are "blown" or "breathed" forth, i.e., their source is the innermost reaches of G-dliness. The innermost core of the soul derives from the internal aspect of the Tetragrammaton, the internal level of holiness. And even the external level of the soul, which is drawn down into man's body through the Utterance "Let us make man," derives from the internal aspect of this Utterance. Thus all aspects of the soul, even as enclothed within the body, ultimately derive from an act of "blowing". And it is noted in ch. 5 that unlike speech, which can be heard even when something separates the listener from the speaker, exhaled breath does not reach its destination when there is an intervening obstruction (in this case, the individual's sins).

The Alter Rebbe next uses this image and another to explain the concept of excision. The Jewish people's relationship to G-d is compared in Scripture to a rope, whose upper end is bound above and whose lower end is bound below — “Jacob is the rope of [G-d's] inheritance.” This rope is the lifeline through which G-dliness is drawn down even into the external aspect of the soul that lodges within the body. Sins, especially those incurring excision, sever this lifeline, thus preventing the life-force which is “blown” forth to penetrate to the soul that is invested in the body. In the past, this meant that a person liable to excision would actually die before his fiftieth year, while a person liable to death by Divine agency would actually die before his sixtieth year.

In this, the sixth chapter, the Alter Rebbe goes on to explain that this applied only during the time when the Divine Presence dwelt among Israel, for then each Jew's spiritual sustenance reached him only from the “side” of holiness — from the Four-Letter Name of the Infinite One.

In times of exile, however, when the Divine presence too is (so to speak) in exile, even the life-force of holiness can be drawn down through a garb of *kelipah*. It is therefore then possible that even individuals guilty of sins punishable by excision and death by Divine agency continue to receive their vitality, even though their spiritual lifeline to the Tetragrammaton has been severed. This explains why during the era of exile even those guilty of the above-mentioned sins can live long lives. Parenthetically, this also provides them with the opportunity to repent and rectify their past misdeeds.

אמנם זהו בזמן שהיו ישראל במדרגה עליונה, כשהיתה השכינה שורה בישראל בבית המקדש

However, all this obtained when Israel was on an elevated plane, when the Divine Presence dwelt among Israel<sup>1</sup> in the *Beit HaMikdash*.<sup>2</sup>

ואז לא היו מקבלים חיות לגופם רק על ידי נפש האלקית לבדה, מבחינת פנימיות השפע שמשפיע אין סוף ברוך הוא, על ידי שם הוי' ברוך הוא, כנ"ל

Then the body<sup>3</sup> received its vitality only through the divine soul, from the innermost source of the life-giving power issuing from the Infinite One, through the Tetragrammaton, as discussed above.

Thus, if the spiritual lifeline emanating from the Tetragrammaton was severed, it was impossible for them to continue living. However, as the Alter Rebbe now goes on to say, once they had fallen from that spiritual height, and thereby diverted the flow of the Divine life-force from its accustomed course, even deliberate transgressors can now receive their vitality as freely as do mere creatures.

אך לאחר שירדו ממדרגתם, וגרמו במעשיהם סוד גלות השכינה

But they then fell from their estate, and through their actions brought about the mystic exile of the Divine Presence,

That the Divine Presence should be in a state of exile among the forces of unholiness is indeed an inconceivable mystery.<sup>4</sup>

כמו שכתוב: ובפשעכם שולחה אמכם

as the verse<sup>5</sup> states,<sup>6</sup> “Through your sins was your mother banished.”

“Your mother” refers to the Divine Presence, the “mother of the children” (as explained in Part I, ch. 52), also known as *Knesset Yisrael*, the source of Jewish souls — the level of *Malchut* of *Atzilut*. In the context of the letters that constitute the Tetragrammaton, this corresponds to the final *hei*, from which proceeds the “rope” or “lifeline” to the soul.

דהיינו, שירדה השפעת בחינת ה"א תתאה הנ"ל, ונשתלשלה ממדרגה למדרגה למטה מטה

This means that the benevolence flowing forth from the above-mentioned<sup>7</sup> latter *hei* of the Tetragrammaton was lowered far down, from plane to plane,

עד שנתלבשה השפעתה ב' ספירות דנוגה

until it became en clothed in the Ten *Sefirot* of *nogah*,

Inasmuch as the *kelipah* called *nogah* includes an admixture of goodness, it is composed of Ten *Sefirot*, corresponding to the Ten *Sefirot* of holiness.<sup>8</sup>

המשפיעות שפע וחיות על ידי המזלות וכל צבא השמים והשרים שעליהם

which transmit<sup>9</sup> the benevolence and vitality through the hosts of heaven and those charged over them,

לכל החי הגשמי שבעולם הזה, וגם לכל הצומח

to every living physical being in this world, even to vegetation,

כמאמר רז"ל: אין לך כל עשב מלמטה שאין לו מזל וכו'

as our Sages state:<sup>10</sup> “There is no blade of grass below that has no spirit [Above that smites it and commands it: Grow!]”

Thus, the life-force of all living beings — even of vegetation, which expresses its vitality through growth — derives from the *kelipah* of *nogah*.

ואזי יכול גם החוטא ופושעי ישראל לקבל חיות לגופם ונפשם הבהמיות

Hence, even the sinful and deliberate transgressors<sup>11</sup> of Israel may receive vitality [from it] for their bodies and animal souls,

כמו שאר בעלי חיים ממש

exactly as other living creatures do,

כמו שנאמר: נמשל כבהמות נדמו

as Scripture states,<sup>12</sup> that there exists a state wherein human beings are “likened and similar to beasts.”

ואדרבה

In fact, not only is it possible for the sinner to receive his nurture from *kelipah* as do animals and other living beings, but indeed,

ביתר שאת וביתר עז

with even greater emphasis and force.

על פי המבואר מזהר הקדוש פרשת פקודי, שכל שפע וחיות הנשפעות לאדם התחתון

For, as explained in the holy *Zohar, Parshat Pekudei*, all the benevolence and vitality granted mortal man

בשעה ורגע שעושה הרע בעיני ה', במעשה או בדיבור או בהרהורי עבירה וכו'

while he commits evil in the eyes of G-d, in deed or speech, or by musing on sin, and so on,<sup>13</sup> i.e., through any of the three soul-garments of thought, speech and action, —

הכל נשפע לו מהיכלות הסטרא אחרא המבוארים שם בזהר הקדוש

all [this life-force] issues to him from the [various] chambers of the *sitra achra* described there in the holy *Zohar*.

והאדם הוא בעל בחירה, אם לקבל השפעתו מהיכלות הסטרא אחרא, או מהיכלות הקדושה שמהם נשפעות כל מחשבות טובות וקדושות וכו'

The choice is man's — whether to derive his nurture from the chambers of the *sitra achra*, or from the chambers of holiness<sup>14</sup> from which flow all good and holy thoughts, and so on.

When one's thoughts, words and deeds are wholesome and holy, he receives his nurture from holiness; when his thoughts, words and deeds are evil, he derives his nurture from the chambers of the *sitra achra*.

כי זה לעומת זה עשה האלקים וכו'



For [15](#) “one opposite the other did G-d make....”

Every manifestation of holiness has a counterpart in the *kelipah* and *sitra achra*.

והיכלות הסטרא אחרא מקבלים ויונקים חיותם מהתלבשות והשתלשלות השפע די' ספירות דנוגה

The chambers of the *sitra achra* derive their vitality from the issue of the Ten *Sefirot* of *nogah* that is embodied within them and that descends into them by stages,

הכלולה מבחינת טוב ורע, היא בחינת עץ הדעת וכו', כנודע ליודעי ח"ן

and [this *kelipah* of *nogah*] is comprised of good and evil, as in “the Tree of Knowledge [of good and evil],” as is known to those who are knowledgeable in the *Kabbalah*.

Since the *kelipah* of *nogah* is composed of both good and evil it serves as a source, after a multitude of descents, for the evil of the chambers of the *sitra achra* — the reservoir from which a man is refuelled when he sins in thought, speech or action.

The Alter Rebbe now resumes his explanation of why a sinful person not only receives his vitality from the “other side” like other living creatures, but in fact does so to an even greater degree. Since through his freely-chosen thoughts, words and deeds it was the sinner himself who replenished the reservoirs of the *kelipot* with life-force of Divine origin, it is he who will now have to swallow the lion’s share of those reservoirs.

והנה: יעקב חבל נחלתו כתיב

Scripture states: [16](#) “Jacob is the rope of [G-d’s] heritage.” [17](#)

על דרך משל: כמו החבל שראשו אחד למעלה וראשו השני למטה

The analogy [compares the soul of a Jew] to a rope, with one end above and the other end below.

אם ימשוך אדם בראשו השני, ינענע וימשך אחריו גם ראשו הראשון, כמה שאפשר לו להמשך

When one pulls the lower end he will move and pull after it the higher end as well, as far as it can be pulled.

וככה ממש בשרש נשמת האדם ומקורה מבחינת ה"א תתאה הנ"ל

It is exactly so with regard to the root of the soul of man and its source in the latter *hei*.

הוא ממשך ומוריד השפעתה על ידי מעשיו הרעים ומחשבותיו

Through one’s evil deeds and thoughts one draws down the life-force [issuing from the latter *hei*]

עד תוך היכלות הסטרא אחרא, כביכול, שמשם מקבל מחשבותיו ומעשיו

into the chambers of the *sitra achra*, as it were, from which he receives his thoughts and deeds.

Although a person punishable by excision has severed his ropes, so to speak, he is still able to draw down the life-force issuing from the latter *hei* into the chambers of the *sitra achra*. The reason, as is explained elsewhere in the literature of *Chassidut*, is that even after the rope is severed, some external vestige of it survives. And it is through this remnant that the life-force of holiness is drawn down into the chambers of the *kelipot*.

ומפני שהוא הוא הממשיך להם ההשפעה, לכן הוא נוטל חלק בראש, וד"ל

Because it is he, the sinful individual, who draws the flow of vitality into [the chambers of the *sitra achra*], it is he who receives the greatest portion from them.

I.e., in even greater measure than do other living creatures. Nevertheless, it is explained in the literature of *Chassidut* [18](#) that ultimately the sinner will cease to draw vitality from this flow, for the *sitra achra* can serve a Jew as a source only temporarily.

This will suffice for the understanding.

וזהו שאמרו רז"ל: אין בידינו לא משלות הרשעים וכו'

Hence the statement of our Sages, [19](#) of blessed memory: "It is not within our hands (i.e., it is not given us) to understand the reason for either the tranquillity of the wicked [or the suffering of the righteous]."

בידינו דוקא, כלומר: בזמן הגלות אחר החורבן

The quotation specifies "in *our* hands," i.e., in this time of exile after the Destruction, when the wicked receive added vitality through the *kelipot* and *sitra achra*.

וזהו בחינת גלות השכינה, כביכול

This is an expression of the "Exile of the Divine Presence," as it were, during which time the life-force emanating from the latter *hei* flows into the *kelipot*,

להשפיע להיכלות הסטרא אחרא אשר שנאה נפשו ית'

viz., [G-d's] granting [supplementary measures of] life-force to the chambers of the *sitra achra* that He despises.

וכשהאדם עושה תשובה נכונה, אזי מסלק מהם ההשפעה שהמשיך במעשיו ומחשבותיו

But when the sinner repents appropriately, he then removes from them the life-force that he had drawn into them through his deeds and thoughts,

כי בתשובתו, מחזיר השפעת השכינה למקומה

for by his repentance he returns the flow issuing from the *Shechinah* to its proper place.

וזהו תשוב ה"א תתאה מבחינת גלות

This, then, is the meaning of [the teaching of the *Zohar*, quoted in ch. 4, that “*teshuvah* is] *tashuv hei*, the return of the lower *hei* from exile” — that the lower level of repentance consists of returning the *Shechinah*, which is represented by the latter *hei* of the Tetragrammaton, from its state of exile.

וכמו שכתוב: ושב ה' אלקיך את שבותך

As the verse states,<sup>20</sup> “The L-rd, your G-d (the source of *your* soul), will return (i.e., bring back) those of you who return”;

כלומר: עם שבותך

regarding the verb as being intransitive, this means [that G-d Himself will return] *with* your return.

וכמאמר רז"ל: והשיב לא נאמר וכו'

As our Sages have commented<sup>21</sup> on this verse, “Scripture does not say, ‘He shall bring back,’ [but that He Himself will return].”

The verse is thus telling every Jew: When through repentance you extricate yourself from your own spiritual exile, you will thereby liberate “your G-d” — the *Shechinah*, the source of your soul — from His exile too.

FOOTNOTES <sup>1.</sup> Note of the Rebbe: “This indicates the level of the Jewish people at that time.” <sup>2.</sup> Note of the Rebbe: “This applies to the world as a whole and to the Divine Presence. Specifically, with regard to man, there is yet another aspect.” <sup>3.</sup> Note of the Rebbe: “I.e., also with regard to each and every individual.” <sup>4.</sup> Note of the Rebbe: “See below, p. 140b.” [I.e., *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle 25, para. beg. *VeHinei Zeh Leumat Zeh*....] <sup>5.</sup> Note of the Rebbe: “At first glance it is incomprehensible that man’s actions should cause the exile of the Divine Presence. The Alter Rebbe therefore provides proof and also an explanation: (a) proof — that it is indeed so; (b) an explanation — for the Divine Presence is ‘your mother.’” <sup>6.</sup> *Yeshayahu* 50:1. <sup>7.</sup> Note of the Rebbe: “In ch. 4 — on a cosmic scale; in ch. 5 — in each individual soul.” <sup>8.</sup> Note of the Rebbe: “Cf. Part I, ch. 6.” <sup>9.</sup> Note of the Rebbe: “They do so in any case (and not necessarily because of the state of exile discussed here; rather, as a result of the sin of the Tree of Knowledge; see below, beg. of p. 140a).” <sup>10.</sup> *Bereishit Rabbah* 10:6. <sup>11.</sup> Note of the Rebbe: “It would

seem that the text should read ‘transgressor’, in the singular.” [12. Tehillim 49:13.](#) [13.](#) The Rebbe notes that the Alter Rebbe may have added the words “and so on” for the following reason. In Part I, ch. 11, the Alter Rebbe differentiates between two situations: (a) contemplating the commission of a sin, (b) “and even where one does not actually contemplate committing a sin, but indulges in contemplation on the carnal union of male and female in general.” The term “and even” seems to imply that the latter form of contemplation is not an entirely distinct form of sin (for which reason no distinct mention of it is made in *Iggeret HaTeshuvah*). Nevertheless some reference to it must be made here, and this the Alter Rebbe does by adding the words “and so on.” [14.](#)

The Rebbe comments that it seems to be entirely superfluous for the Alter Rebbe to state that “the choice is man’s.” He goes on to provide two possible explanations.

(a) Paradoxically, this statement is indeed novel: The Alter Rebbe desires to emphasize that even in times of exile, when “through your sins was your mother banished,” and the benevolence flowing forth from the latter *hei* is enfolded in the *kelipah* of *nogah*, man can still choose to receive his vitality from the chambers of holiness.

This is possible because the garment of *nogah* becomes nullified to its wearer — to holiness, and is thereby itself transformed to goodness and absorbed within holiness. This recalls the statement in Part I, early in ch. 40, that in the case of the holy letters of Torah and prayer, the *kelipah* of *nogah* is converted to good and is absorbed into holiness.

(This explanation, that the Alter Rebbe wished to tell us that even in times of exile man can choose to derive his nurture from the chambers of holiness, does not accord with the explanation given in *Likutei Biurim BeSefer HaTanya*, by Rabbi Yehoshua Korf.)

(b) Another possible explanation (which would also go a long way in explaining why it is specifically here that the Alter Rebbe states that “the choice is man’s”): The Alter Rebbe means to tell us that it is specifically during the times of exile, when they “fell from their estate,” that Jews can choose to receive their vitality from the chambers of *sitra achra*. This, however, could not be done during the time of the *Beit HaMikdash*, as explained at the end of ch. 5 above. [For at that time, if the “rope” connecting a person to his spiritual source was severed — if, for example, he committed a sin punishable by excision — he could not live at all; during that period Jews truly could not receive their vitality from the *kelipah* of *nogah*.]

[15. Kohelet 7:14.](#) [16. Devarim 32:9.](#) [17.](#)

The Rebbe observes that the analogy of the rope is introduced here in terms that suggest that it is a novel thought, when in fact it occupied the whole of the previous chapter. By way of explanation, the Rebbe writes that the Alter Rebbe is indeed introducing a thought that is not only novel but even contrary to what was written in the previous chapter; moreover, this approach will explain much of the variance between the two chapters.

In brief: The Alter Rebbe explained in ch. 4 how a soul is part of the Tetragrammaton. He went on to explain in ch. 5 how this soul-level descends into the body by way of “Jacob, ...the rope of His inheritance, ...whose upper end is bound above and the lower end below.” In ch.6, however, the Alter Rebbe emphasizes that the movements of the lower end of the rope also affect the upper end. Furthermore, as the Alter Rebbe goes on to say here, this rope not only descends as far as “Jacob” but even provides additional life-force to the chambers of unholiness; i.e., the effect of the rope is able to descend even lower than the level of “Jacob” which it itself embodies.

This is the anomaly that the Alter Rebbe resolves, when he repeats that a person’s sins make him descend so sharply that he reaches the lowly level of the very *kelipot* and *sitra achra* “from which he receives his thoughts and deeds.” Since the sinful individual sinks to such a low level that in this respect he is a recipient from the *kelipot*, his “rope” descends there as well, and the *kelipot* and *sitra achra* are able to receive their life-force from its lower extremity.

[18.](#) *Kuntres Uma‘ayon* [English translation by Rabbi Zalman I. Posner; Kehot, N.Y., 1969], Discourse 8. [19.](#) *Avot* 4:15. [20.](#) *Devarim* 30:3. [21.](#) *Megillah* 29a.



## Chapter 7

In the language of the *Zohar*, the lower level of repentance entails returning the latter *hei* of the Four-Letter Name of G-d to its rightful place — returning the *Shechinah*, which is the source of Jewish souls, from the exile to which it was banished by transgression. For when a man sins, the Divine vitality that flows forth from the *Shechinah* descends into the chambers of *kelipah* and *sitra achra*, and from there that individual in turn derives nurture at the time of his sins. Repentance redeems the *Shechinah* from its exile and returns the flow to its proper place.

This was the theme of the previous chapter.

ואולם דרך האמת והישר לבחינת תשובה תתאה ה"א תתאה הנ"ל, הם ב' דברים דרך כלל

However, the true and direct path to the lower level of *teshuvah*, returning the latter *hei* as noted above, involves two general elements.

These two elements are: (a) awakening G-d’s supreme compassion for his soul, and (b) the subjugation and nullification of evil. Both are necessary in order to ensure that the lower level of repentance will be *true* and *direct*.

The Rebbe notes that although we have previously learned (ch. 1) that the kernel of repentance is a firm and wholehearted resolution not to commit a particular sin again, nevertheless without the two basic elements about to be discussed such repentance will be neither true nor direct.

Truth implies permanence,<sup>1</sup> as in the verse,<sup>2</sup> “The lip of truth shall be established forever.” Should one fail to take the preparatory steps about to be mentioned here, it is entirely possible that his forsaking sin — described above as repentance — will not be everlasting, hence not truthful.

Furthermore, these steps also make one’s repentance “direct”. For a state of repentance can also be arrived at very indirectly, as in the case of R. Elazar ben Durdaya, who was led to repentance by circumstances which were in themselves evil.<sup>3</sup> The direct path to repentance, by contrast, is found by means of the steps that the Alter Rebbe now describes.

האחד הוא לעורר רחמים העליונים, ממקור הרחמים, על נשמתו ונפשו האלקית

The first is to awaken supreme compassion from the Source of mercy for one’s Divine spirit and soul,

There are two distinct states of Divine compassion, indicated by the terms “Merciful Father” and “Father of Mercy”.<sup>4</sup> The former term (הרחמן אב) merely signifies that G-d possesses the attribute, or *middah*, of mercy — and since *middah* means not only “attribute” but also “measure”, it refers to a finite quality of mercy. The latter term (אב הרחמים) stresses the fact that G-d is the father, or fountainhead, of all mercy. Arousing His essential quality of mercy “from the Source of mercy” thus means arousing His infinite measure of compassion — supreme compassion.

שנפלה מאיגרא רמה, חיי החיים ברוך הוא

that has fallen from a lofty height (lit., “rooftop”), the Infinite Source of Life,

לבירא עמיקתא

into a deep pit,<sup>5</sup>

Not merely from a rooftop but from a “lofty rooftop”; not merely into a pit, but into a “deep pit.”

הן היכלות הטומאה והסטרא אחרא

namely, the chambers of defilement and *sitra achra*.

As explained in the previous chapter, a person's sins degrade his soul to the chambers of the *kelipot* and *sitra achra*. Finding itself in such a sorry state, such a soul is indeed in need of Divine compassion.

ועל מקורה במקור החיים, הוא שם הוי' ברוך הוא

[One should arouse Divine compassion] as well for the source [of the soul] in the Source of Life, the Four-Letter Name of G-d.

Since the soul is rooted in the Tetragrammaton, its degradation — brought about by sin — correspondingly causes the flow of holiness that emanates from the Tetragrammaton to descend into the chambers of the *kelipot* and *sitra achra*. Hence not only the soul, but its Source too, is to be pitied.

וכמו שכתוב: וישוב אל הוי' וירחמהו

As the verse states:<sup>6</sup> “He shall return to G-d and He will have compassion for him”; i.e., the sinner shall return to G-d and have compassion for *Him*.

But how are we to understand the concept of arousing mercy for the Tetragrammaton?

פירוש: לעורר רחמים על השפעת שם הוי' ברוך הוא, שנשתלשלה וירדה תוך היכלות הסטרא אחרא הטמאים להחיותם

This means, arousing compassion for the life-giving power issuing from the Four-Letter Name, that has descended by stages into the chambers of the impure *sitra achra*, to give them vitality.

על ידי מעשה אנוש ותחבולותיו ומחשבותיו הרעים

[This descent was brought about] by the deeds of man, and his evil schemes and thoughts.

Evil thoughts alone suffice to make the vitality descend into the chambers of the *kelipot* and *sitra achra*.

וכמו שכתוב: מלך אסור ברהטים, ברהיטי מוחא וכו'

As the verse says,<sup>7</sup> “The king is bound with gutters,” [which is interpreted to mean that “the King is bound] with the gutters of the mind....”<sup>8</sup>

As explained by the Rebbe, the image is of the various channels and gutters of the mind through which thoughts, like gushing currents, rush fleetingly. Thus, even transient evil thoughts that one harbors ephemerally can bind and shackle the King; they can exile the flow of vitality emanating from the Four-Letter Name of G-d.

היא בחינת גלות השכינה כנ"ל

And this state, as noted above,<sup>9</sup> is the exile of the *Shechinah* — the Divine Presence, the level of *Malchut* (“Kingship”) of the World of *Atzilut*.

וזמן המסוגל לזה הוא בתיקון חצות

The auspicious time for this [arousal of compassion] is *Tikkun Chatzot*, the midnight lament for the exile of the Divine Presence,

כמו שכתוב בסדור בהערה, עיין שם באריכות

as pointed out in the note to *Tikkun Chatzot* in the *Siddur*; see there at length.

וזה שכתוב שם: נפלה עטרת ראשינו, אוי נא לנו כי חטאנו

We thus find [in that prayer], “The crown of our head is fallen; woe to us, for we have sinned”; i.e., sin causes the soul’s Source (“the crown of our head”) to topple into the depths of the *kelipot* and *sitra achra*.

ולכן נקרא הקב"ה מלך עלוב בפרקי היכלות, כמו שכתב הרמ"ק ז"ל

Therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, is called the “humiliated King” in *Pirkei Heichalot*,<sup>10</sup> as R. Moshe Cordovero wrote,

כי אין לך עלבון גדול מזה

for there is no humiliation deeper than this, than the ignominy of exile within the realm of the *kelipot*.

ובפרט כאשר יתבונן המשכיל בגדולת אין סוף ברוך הוא, ממלא כל עלמין וסובב כל עלמין

Especially when a thoughtful person meditates on the greatness of the Infinite One, Who permeates all worlds and encompasses all worlds, for G-d provides vitality to created beings both in a manner which “permeates” each recipient according to its individual capacity, as well as in a manner that transcends and “encompasses” them,

כל אחד ואחד לפי שיעור שכלו והבנתו

each person [meditating upon G-d’s greatness] according to the range of his intellect and understanding,

יתמרמר על זה מאד מאד

he will be extremely grieved over this.

The richer one’s perception of G-d’s majesty, the more intense will be his feeling of compassion for his own soul and for its Source, the bound and humiliated King.



והב': לבטש ולהכניע הקליפה והסטרא אחרא

The second element [in one's preparation for a true and direct path to repentance] is to crush and subdue the *kelipah* and *sitra achra*,

אשר כל חיותה היא רק בחינת גסות והגבהה

whose entire being is simply grossness and arrogance;

כמו שכתוב: אם תגביה כנשר וגו'

as the verse states,<sup>11</sup> “If you exalt yourself like the eagle....”

והביטוש וההכנעה עד עפר ממש, זוהי מיתתה וביטולה

This crushing and subjugation, absolutely to dust, is its death and nullification.

היינו: על ידי לב נשבר ונדכה, ולהיות נבזה בעיניו נמאס וכו'

[Evil is crushed] through a broken and contrite heart, a sense of personal unworthiness, repugnance, and so forth.

As explained in Part I, ch. 29, the animal soul — even of a *Beinoni*, how much more so of a sinner — is the very person himself. When his heart is humbled, his animal soul which derives from *kelipah* is, of course, humbled as well. Thus, crushing and subduing one's arrogance crushes the *kelipot* and *sitra achra*.

וכמו שכתוב בזהר הקדוש, על פסוק: זבחי אלקים רוח נשברה, לב נשבר ונדכה וגו'

This is described in the *Zohar*<sup>12</sup> on the verse,<sup>13</sup> “Offerings to G-d (*Elokim*) are a broken spirit; (i.e., the offering consists of breaking the spirit of the *kelipot* and *sitra achra*, and this is achieved through) a heart broken and contrite....”

כי כל קרבן מן הבהמה הוא לשם הוי', היא מדת הרחמים

For all animal offerings are dedicated to G-d (the Tetragrammaton), the attribute of mercy.

This is why all verses which speak of offerings to G-d, refer to Him with the Tetragrammaton.

אבל לשם אלקים, היא מדת הדין, אין מקריבין קרבן בהמה

To *Elokim*, however, the Name indicating the attribute of justice, no animal offering is brought.

Instead,

I.e., what is considered an offering to *Elokim*, for the verse does, after all, state “*the offerings to Elokim*”?

לשבר ולהעביר רוח הטומאה והסטרא אחרא, וזהו רוח נשברה

[the offering is] the shattering and removing of the spirit of defilement and *sitra achra*. This is the meaning of a “broken spirit.”

והאיך נשברה רוח הסטרא אחרא, כשהלב נשבר ונדכה וכו'

How is the spirit of the *sitra achra* broken? When the heart is broken and contrite....[14](#)

והאיך נשבר הלב ונדכה

And how is the heart to be broken and humbled?

הנה מעט מזעיר הוא על ידי סיגופים ותעניות

Only a very minor part of this can be accomplished through mortification and fasts

בדורותינו אלה, שאין לנו כח להתענות הרבה כדוד המלך

in these generations of ours, when we have not the strength to fast as much as did King David;

כמאמר רז"ל על פסוק: ולבי חלל בקרבי, שהרגו בתענית

as our Sages comment [15](#) on the verse uttered by him, [16](#) “And my heart is slain within me” — “for he had destroyed [his Evil Inclination] by fasting.”

אך עיקר הכנעת הלב, להיות נשבר ונדכה

But the true humbling of the heart, so that it be broken and crushed,

והעברת רוח הטומאה והסטרא אחרא

and so that the spirit of impurity and *sitra achra* will be removed,

הוא להיות ממארי דחושבנא בעומק הדעת

is achieved through being a “master of accounting” with all the profundity of one’s mind.

One's personal stocktaking should be as scrupulous as the accounting made by the master or owner of a business, to whom every detail is critical.

להעמיק דעתו ובינתו שעה אחת בכל יום או לילה לפני תיקון חצות

One should concentrate his intellect and understanding deeply for a period<sup>17</sup> every day, or at night before *Tikkun Chatzot*,

להתבונן במה שפעל ועשה בחטאיו, בחינת גלות השכינה כנ"ל

to contemplate how through his sins he has brought about the exile of the Divine Presence, as noted above,

וגרם לעקור נשמתו ונפשו האלקית מחיי החיים ברוך הוא

and caused his spirit and Divine soul to be uprooted from the Divine Source of all Life,

והורידה למקום הטומאה והמות, הן היכלות הסטרא אחרא

and demeaned it to a place of defilement and death, namely, the chambers of the *sitra achra*,

ונעשית בבחינת מרכבה אליהם

[his soul] becoming a vehicle for them,

Just as a vehicle has no will of its own and is completely subservient to the desires of its driver, so, too, is his soul subservient to the impure chambers of the *sitra achra* from whence it derives nurture.

לקבל מהם שפע וחיות להשפיע לגופו, כנ"ל

receiving from them vitality to endow his body, as noted above — that the nurture and life-force of the sinner emanate from the *kelipot* and *sitra achra*.

Meditation along these lines will bring a man to a state of contrition — itself a fit offering to the Divine Name *Elokim*.

וזהו שאמרו רז"ל: רשעים בחייהם קרויים מתים

Thus our Sages declared<sup>18</sup> that “the wicked while alive (lit., “in their *life*”) are called ‘dead’.”

כלומר, שחייהם נמשכים ממקום המות והטומאה

This means to say, that their *life* is derived from the site of death and impurity — from the chambers of the *kelipot* and *sitra achra*, as opposed to holiness, which is true life.

וכן מה שכתוב: לא המתים יהללו וגו', אינו כלועג לרש, חס ושלום

([19](#)Accordingly, the verse[20](#) that says that “the dead will not praise...” is no “mockery of the impoverished,” G-d forbid,[21](#) for it does not refer to those who are physically dead.

אלא הכוונה על הרשעים, שבחייהם קרויים מתים

Rather, the reference is to the wicked who, while alive, are called dead, and being spiritually dead are unable to praise G-d,

שמבלבלים אותם במחשבות זרות בעודם ברשעם, ואינם חפצים בתשובה, כנודע

for they are confused with alien thoughts while yet in their wickedness, and do not desire repentance, as is known.)

While in such a state, the evil person will find it well nigh impossible to praise G-d fittingly, because of the confusing alien thoughts which are thrust upon him.

Thus, an individual will become contrite of heart when he contemplates how his soul has been uprooted from its Source because of a sin incurring excision or death by divine agency.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to say that even sins which do not carry so harsh a penalty may still have the same effect.

ואף מי שלא עבר על עון כרת וגם לא על עון מיתה בדי שמים

Even one who has never violated a sin punishable by excision or a sin incurring death by divine agency,

שהוא הוצאת זרע לבטלה וכהאי גוונא

such as vain emission and the like,

אלא שאר עבירות קלות

but other less severe sins,

אף על פי כן, מאחר שהן פוגמים בנשמה ונפש האלקית

nonetheless, since they cause a defect in the spirit and Divine soul,

וכמשל פגימת ופסיקת חבלים דקים כנ"ל

as in the analogy of the fine strands of rope that are defective or severed, as noted above — in ch. 5, which describes the 613 strands that together comprise the lifeline of the soul, and when one transgresses one of the 613 commandments, one of these strands is severed,

הרי בריבוי החטאים יכול להיות פגם כמו בלאו אחד שיש בו כרת ומיתה

therefore, through an accumulation of sins there can eventually be a defect as grave as from one prohibition involving excision or death.

ואפילו בכפילת חטא אחד פעמים רבות

This would be true even when a single sin is repeated numerous times.<sup>22</sup>

Far from merely damaging the selfsame strand repeatedly, the repetition of even the same sin weakens and jeopardizes the rope as a whole.

כמו שהמשיל הנביא החטאים לענן המאפיל אור השמש

In this manner the prophet compares sins to a cloud that dims the light of the sun.

כמו שנאמר: מחיתי כעב פשעיך

As the verse states,<sup>23</sup> “I have erased your transgressions like a thick cloud” (that can dissipate).

הם עבירות חמורות, המבדילות בין פנימית השפעת שם הוי' ברוך הוא לנפש האלקית

This refers to the grave sins (<sup>24</sup>that are barriers) between the internal aspect of the power flowing forth from the Tetragrammaton, and the Divine soul.

כהבדלת ענן עב וחשוך המבדיל בין השמים לארץ ולדרים עליה, על דרך משל

This is like the separation of a thick, dark cloud that stands between the sun and the earth with its inhabitants.<sup>25</sup>

וכענן חטאתיך, הן עבירות קלות שאדם דש בעקביו

[The above verse continues:] “...and your sins like a cloud.” These are the lesser sins that man tramples under his heel,

המבדילות כהבדלת ענן קל וקלוש, על דרך משל

[sins] that obscure as does a thin and wispy cloud.

והנה, כמו שבמשל הזה, אם משים אדם נגד אור השמש בחלון מחיצות קלות וקלושות לרוב מאד, הן מאפילות כמו מחיצה אחת עבה, ויותר

In the illustration, if one obscures the sunlight streaming through a window with many fine and flimsy curtains, they will darken as much as one thick curtain will, and even more.

וככה ממש הוא בנמשל

This is exactly so in the analogue,

בכל עונות שאדם דש בעקביו

with all those cloud-like sins upon which man tramples indifferently, because they seem to be of little import: they obscure the Divine light by their multitudinous repetition as do many fine curtains, “darkening as much as one thick curtain will, and even more”;

ומכל שכן המפורסמות מדברי רז"ל, שהן ממש כעבודה זרה וגילוי עריות ושפיכות דמים

and certainly with those sins that our Sages often warned against, that are actually like idolatry, immorality and bloodshed.

כמו העלמת עין מן הצדקה

For example:[26](#) ignoring the needy,

כמו שכתוב: השמר לך פן יהיה דבר עם לבבך בליעל וגו'

concerning which Scripture writes,[27](#) “Beware lest there be in your heart something unworthy....”

ובליעל היא עבודת אלילים וכו'

*Beliyaal* (here translated “unworthy”) is used in reference to idolatry[28](#)..., from which we learn that ignoring the needy is likened to idolatry.

והמספר בגנות חבירו, היא לשון הרע, השקולה כעבודה זרה וגילוי עריות ושפיכות דמים

Or talebearing, the evil tongue, that is equated to idolatry, immorality, and bloodshed.[29](#)

וכל הכועס כאילו עובד עבודה זרה

Likewise, the vile-tempered is like the idolatrous,[30](#)

וכן מי שיש בו גסות הרוח

and so is the arrogant.[31](#)

וכהנה רבות בגמרא

There are many such cases described in the *Talmud* — of sins whose punishment is not as severe as that of idolatry and the like, but which nonetheless effect a similar spiritual blemish,

ותלמוד תורה כנגד כולן

and [the sin of neglecting] the study of the Torah equals them all.

כמאמר רז"ל: ויתר הקב"ה על עבודה זרה וכו'

As our Sages assert,<sup>32</sup> “G-d has overlooked idolatry, [immorality and bloodshed, but has not overlooked the sin of neglecting Torah study].”

Thus, sins such as ignoring the needy, talebearing, and so on, though not carrying the punishment of excision or death by the hand of heaven, nonetheless sever the soul from its Divine source.

ולכן סידרו בקריאת שמע שעל המטה, לקבל עליו ד' מיתות בית דין וכו'

For this reason it was ordained that in the course of *Keriat Shema* at the bedside<sup>33</sup> one should accept the four executions of the court, and so on.

This acceptance is recited even by those who have never committed capital sins, because many other sins blemish the soul to the same degree as do those which are punishable by any of the four executions administered by the court.

מלבד שעל פי הסוד כל הפוגם באות יו"ד של שם הוי' כאילו נתחייב סקילה

Besides, according to *Sod*, the mystical dimension of the Torah, causing a defect in the *yud* of the Tetragrammaton is like incurring lapidation;

והפוגם באות ה"א כאילו נתחייב שריפה

causing a defect in the *hei* is like incurring burning;

ובאות וי"ו כאילו נתחייב הרג

[causing a defect] in the *vav* is like incurring the sword;

ובאות ה"א אחרונה כאילו נתחייב חנק

and [causing a defect in] the latter *hei* is like incurring strangulation.

והמבטל קריאת שמע פוגם באות יו"ד, ותפילין באות ה"א

Neglecting the *Shema* impairs the *yud*, and *tefillin* the *hei*,

*tzitzit* the *vav*, and prayer the latter *hei*, and so on.

We thus see that according to the *Kabbalah* the soul can be blemished through other sins just as by a capital sin. Undertaking the “four executions” clears the soul of these blemishes.

ומזה יוכל המשכיל ללמוד לשאר עונות וחטאים

From this a thinking man can infer for other sins and transgressions (The Rebbe adds: “...which one of the letters of the Tetragrammaton they are related to, and thus, to which manner of execution”),

וביטול תורה כנגד כולן

and for [the sin of] neglecting the study of the Torah, which is equivalent to them all.

All the above lends the thinking person a contrite heart, as he grows aware of the blemish caused even by his supposedly lesser sins.

This contrition is the second preparatory step along the “true and direct” path to the lower level of repentance. For contrition crushes the *kelipot* and *sitra achra* and enables a man to repent truthfully, earnestly regretting his past misdeeds and firmly resolving to better his future ways.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “As in Part I, end of ch. 13.” [2.](#) *Mishlei* 12:19. [3.](#) *Avodah Zarah* 17a. [4.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “*Likkutei Torah*, Nasso 23a, and references there.” [5.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “An expression of the *Talmud* in *Chagigah* 5b. The word ‘roof’ is omitted in the text of *Rashi* in the *Talmud*, but is to be found in the text of *Rashi* in *Ein Yaakov*.” [6.](#) *Yeshayahu* 55:7. [7.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “*Shir HaShirim* 7:6; see *Tzemach Tzedek*, *ad loc*. This requires further clarification.” [8.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Addenda to *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun Vav*.” [9.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Concerning all the above see [*Tanya*,] Part I, ch. 45, and the notes referring to it by the *Tzemach Tzedek* on *Eichah*, p. 22 (in *Or HaTorah on Nach*, Vol. II, p. 1053), concerning the variations, etc.” [10.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Ch. 18.” [11.](#) *Yirmeyahu* 49:16; *Ovadia* 1:4. [12.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “*Vayikra* 5a.” [13.](#) *Tehillim* 51:19. [14.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “This, too, is implied in the *Zohar*.” [15.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Conclusion of *Yerushalmi*, *Berachot*; quoted as well in [*Tanya*,] Part I, ch. 1.” [16.](#) *Tehillim* 109:22. [17.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “At a pinch this phrase could be said to mean an actual hour, like the preparatory period before prayer.” [18.](#) *Berachot* 18b. [19.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [20.](#) *Tehillim* 115:17. [21.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “For this is so utterly forbidden that our Sages have said, ‘One should not go...’ (*Berachot* 18a).” [22.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “The proof of the *Ran* is well known (and it appears as an actual point of law in the *Shulchan Aruch* of the Alter Rebbe, *Orach Chayim* 328:16) — that the repeated transgression of a prohibition of the Torah involving a quantity that is less than the minimal punishable amount, is more serious than



transgressing a prohibition that incurs death by lapidation! (Incidentally, this serves to prove (cf. below) that a multitude of seemingly lesser sins can ‘darken as much..., and even more.’)” [23](#). *Yeshayahu* 44:22. [24](#). Parentheses are in the original text. [25](#). Note of the Rebbe: “This phrase would appear to be superfluous. Possibly it relates to two details in the analogue: the lower *hei* (*Malchut*, earth); the divine soul (‘with its inhabitants’).” [26](#). Note of the Rebbe: “*Ketubbot* 68a.” [27](#). *Devarim* 15:9. [28](#). Note of the Rebbe: “Until here, as in the *Gemara*, *loc. cit.*, and *Sanhedrin* 111b.” [29](#). Note of the Rebbe: “*Arachin* 15b.” [30](#). *Zohar* II, 182b; *Rambam*, *Hilchot De‘ot* 2:3. [31](#). Cf. *Sotah* 4b. [32](#). Introduction to *Eichah Rabbah*, beg. of Sec. 2; *Yerushalmi*, *Chagigah* 1:7. [33](#). Note of the Rebbe: “Even though it is not the function of *Iggeret HaTeshuvah* to explain the prayers, this comment is relevant here because one of the themes of the bedside *Keriat Shema* is stocktaking and *teshuvah*. (See also Part I, end of ch. 7.)”



## Chapter 8

Two basic elements, as the Alter Rebbe made clear in the previous chapter, enable the lower level of repentance to be true and direct: (a) considering how one's soul and its Source, the *Shechinah*, are to be pitied, and arousing Supreme compassion upon them; (b) making a thoughtful, soulful and accurate accounting of the extent to which one's own sins have brought about the “exile of the *Shechinah*.” This will make one's heart humble and contrite, which in turn will crush the spirit of the *kelipot* and *sitra achra*.

והנה אחרי העמקת הדעת בכל הנ"ל

After deeply considering all this,

יוכל לבקש באמת מעומקא דלבא כרוב רחמיך מזה פשעי וכו'

one can truly plead, from his inmost heart,<sup>[1](#)</sup> “In accordance with Your abounding compassion, erase my transgressions....”

This verse is recited during *Tikkun Chatzot* as well as during the bedside reading of *Keriat Shema* - propitious times for spiritual stocktaking, which will enable him to recite it wholeheartedly.

כי אזי תקבע בלבו באמת גודל הרחמנות על בחי' אלקות שבנפשו ושלמעלה כנ"ל

For by then his heart will be thoroughly impressed with the pathetic state of the spark of Divinity within his soul, and [in his soul's Source] Above, as noted earlier.

ובזה יעורר רחמים העליונים מי"ג מדה"ר הנמשכות מרצון העליון ברוך הוא

He will thereby arouse Supreme mercy, from the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy which derive from the Supreme Will,

הנרמז בקוצו של יו"ד

alluded to by the “thorn” atop the yud,

שלמעלה מעלה מבחינת ההשפעה הנשפעת מאותיות שם הוי'

which by far transcends the flow issuing from the letters of the Tetragrammaton.

Sins cause a blemish in the individual letters of the Tetragrammaton, as explained above. This causes the flow emanating from there, and from which a Jew derives his life-force, to descend into the *kelipot* and *sitra achra* and provide them with additional nurture.

When one arouses the Supreme mercies of the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, which emanate from the level of the Supreme Will that transcends the letters of the Tetragrammaton, he is then able to rectify the letters and redirect their flow into his soul.

ולכן הי"ג מדות הרחמים מנקים כל הפגמים

Therefore, on account of their lofty origin, these Thirteen Attributes of Mercy correct all defects,

וכמו שכתוב נושא עון ופשע ונקה

as it is written,<sup>2</sup> “He bears sin and transgression..., and cleanses.”

With this awakening of mercies following the contrition,

ושוב אין יניקה להחיצונים והסטרא אחרא מהשפעת ה"א תתאה כנ"ל

there is no further nurture for the evil (lit., “extraneous”) forces and for the *sitra achra* from the life-force emanating from the lower *hei*, as noted.

(ובזה תשוב ה"א תתאה למקומה להתייחד ביה"ו וד"ל)

(<sup>3</sup>The latter *hei* thereupon returns to its proper place, reunited with [the preceding three letters of the Tetragrammaton,] *yud-hei-vav*. This will suffice for the understanding.)

This, then, is the meaning of the statement quoted in chapter 4, that the lower level of *teshuvah* consists of the “return of the lower *hei*.”

וכן ממש למטה בנפש האלקית שבאדם

Just as there is a restoration of the *hei* Above, exactly so below in the Divine soul within man,

שוב אין עונותיכם מבדילים

no more do<sup>4</sup> “your sins separate [you from G-d].”

וכמו שכתוב ונקה מנקה הוא לשבים

Thus it is written, naming one of the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy,<sup>5</sup> “He cleanses,” on which our Sages comment,<sup>6</sup> “He cleanses those who return to Him in penitence,”

לרחוץ ולנקות נפשם מלבושים הצואים הם החיצונים

to lave and cleanse their souls of the soiled garments, which are the evil (lit., “extraneous”) forces, i.e., the *kelipot* and *sitra achra*,

כמו שכתוב בגמרא מלפפתו וכו'

that the Talmud describes <sup>7</sup> as [a garment born of a man's sin that] “envelops him....”

ומאחר שרוח עברה ותטהרם

After the<sup>8</sup> “wind [of forgiveness] passes over [the souls of sinners] and purifies them,”

אזי תוכל נפשם לשוב עד הוי' ברוך הוא ממש

then their souls are enabled to return literally unto G-d Himself,

ולעלות מעלה מעלה למקורה ולדבקה בו יתברך ביחוד נפלא

to ascend the greatest heights, to their very Source, and cleave to Him with a remarkable unity,

כמו שהיתה מיוחדת בו יתברך בתכלית היחוד בטרם שנפחה ברוח פיו ית'

in ultimate union with Him, just as before the soul was blown forth by the breath of His mouth

לירד למטה ולהתלבש בגוף האדם

to descend and be incorporated within the body of man.

(וכמו על דרך משל באדם הנופח ברוח פיו בטרם שיוצא הרוח מפיו הוא מיוחד בנפשו)

([9](#)To illustrate this unity: Before one exhales, the breath is one with the person, inseparably.)

Likewise, just as the soul was utterly united with G-d before it was “blown” or “breathed” into the body, so too, does it now unite with Him after repentance.

וזו היא תשובה שלימה

This is perfect return - *Teshuvah*.

והנהגה בחינת יחוד זה ותשובה זו היא בחינת תשובה עילאה, שלאחר תשובה תתאה

This state of unity and this return are called *teshuvah ila'ah*, the higher level of repentance, that follows *teshuvah tata'ah*, the lower level of repentance.

וכמו שכתוב בזוהר הקדוש ברעיא מהימנא פרשת נשא דתשובה עילאה היא דיתעסק באורייתא בדחילו ורחימו דקודשא בריך הוא וכו'

The *Zohar*, in *Ra'aya Mehemna (Parshat Nasso)*,[10](#) explains that *Teshuvah ila'ah* means engaging in the study of the Torah, in awe and love of the Holy One, Blessed be He....

The *Zohar* goes on to say that doing so makes one worthy of the revelation of the letter vav of the Tetragrammaton,

דאיהו בן י"ה בינה וכו'

for this [letter vav] is the child of *yud-hei*, or *Binah*....

*Binah* is the level of *Teshuvah ila'ah*, the return of the higher letter *hei* of the Tetragrammaton. The word itself is a composite of the words “*ben yud-hei*.” This alludes to the spiritual emotions of love and fear (represented by the letter vav) that are born of the intellectual levels of the Tetragrammaton, the *yud* of *Chochmah* and the *hei* of *Binah*.

(ומעלת בעלי תשובה על צדיקים גמורים בזה היא

([11](#)Herein lies the superiority of penitents over the perfectly saintly.

Seemingly, the study of Torah permeated with love and fear of G-d, is not the unique prerogative of penitence; the perfectly saintly do this as well. Wherein lies the superiority of *baalei teshuvah*?

כמו שכתוב בזוהר הקדוש פרשת חיי שרה: דאינון משכי עלייהו ברעותא דלבא יתיר ובחילא סגי, לאתקרבא למלכא וכו')

As the *Zohar* states in *Parshat Chayei Sarah*[12](#) “They draw upon themselves with a more intense longing of the heart, and with great forcefulness, to approach the King....”)

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) Tehillim 51:3. [2.](#) Bamidbar 14:18. [3.](#) Parenthesis are in the original text. [4.](#) Cf. Yeshayahu 59:2. [5.](#) Bamidbar 14:18. [6.](#) Yoma 86a. [7.](#) Sotah 3b. [8.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Iyov 37:21. The meaning of the verse is that the wind clears the heavens of clouds. So too in analogue, the breath of repentance spirits away the dense cloud of sin.” [9.](#) Parenthesis are in the original text. [10.](#) *Zohar* III, 123a. [11.](#) Parenthesis are in the original text. [12.](#) *Zohar* I, 129b.



## Chapter 9

The Alter Rebbe explained at the conclusion of the previous chapter that through *teshuvah ila'ah*, the higher level of repentance, the soul is totally cleansed and purified. It then ascends and cleaves to G-d with the same degree of unity that it enjoyed before it descended into the body. Furthermore, the Alter Rebbe quoted the *Zohar* to the effect that *teshuvah ila'ah* involves studying Torah with awe and love of G-d.

In the fourth chapter, however, he explained that *teshuvah ila'ah* involves reinstating the higher letter *hei* of the Tetragrammaton. What possible connection does this have with studying Torah out of love and fear of G-d, when these two spiritual emotions are related to the letter *vav*?

In order to resolve this seeming anomaly, the Alter Rebbe will now explain that the love and fear discussed in the present chapter are generated intellectually: they result from meditation upon G-d's greatness, and are thus the offspring of *Binah*. It is specifically this kind of love and fear that unites the *hei* and the *vav* — the intellect with the resulting emotions.

וביאור הענין, כמו שכתוב בזוהר הקדוש ותיקונים בכמה מקומות

The explanation of this subject — which levels of love and fear are related to the upper *hei* — is as discussed frequently in the *Zohar* and *Tikunnim*

דבינה אידי תשובה עילאה

that *Binah* is the higher level of *teshuvah*,<sup>[1](#)</sup>

והאם רובצת על האפרוחים

“the mother crouching over the chicks....”

I.e., *Binah* is the mother of her offspring — the love and fear of G-d.

דהיינו שעל ידי שמתבונן בגדולת ה' בהעמקת הדעת

One ought to meditate profoundly and with concentration on the greatness of G-d

ומוליד מרוח בינתו דחילו ורחימו שכליים

and through his comprehension arouse a sense of intellectual awe and love

ובטוב טעם ודעת

on rational grounds.

כענין שנאמר: לאהבה את ה' אלקיך משום כי הוא חייך וגו'

This love is that of the verse,<sup>2</sup> “To love the L-rd your G-d.... *because* He is your life....”  
— a love based on a reason.

ולא די לו באהבה טבעית המסותרת לבד וכו'

He will not be content with the endowed, latent love alone....

This is concealed in the heart of every Jew and needs but to be revealed; such a worshipper, though, creates instead a love of G-d through his own intellectual endeavor.

וכן ביראה ופחד

So too with fear and terror of G-d

או בושה וכו' כנודע

or shame.... as is known.

This is a deeper form of awe in which one feels abashed in G-d's presence, hence fearing to rebel against Him by sinning.

When one's spiritual emotions of love and fear are born in the mind, then]:

אזי נקראת האם רובצת על האפרוחי' וכו'

this is termed “the mother crouching over the chicks....” Binah has given birth and hovers over her offspring — the love and fear of G-d.

והנה עיקר האהבה היא אתדבקות רוחא ברוחא

*Ahavah*, the love of G-d, is primarily the cleaving of spirit to Spirit,<sup>3</sup>

כמו שכתוב: ישקני מנשיקות פיהו וגו' כנודע

as the verse expresses it,<sup>4</sup> “He kisses me with the kisses of his mouth....”

A physical kiss unites the inner breath or spirit of two individuals. Similarly, the internal aspects of the soul and G-dliness are united through the “breath” or speech of Torah, through good deeds, and more specifically through the concentrated study of Torah, as explained in Part I, Chapter 45.

ועל זה נאמר: ובכל נפשך

With regard to this [cleaving of spirit to Spirit] the verse says<sup>5</sup> [that “you shall love the L-rd your G-d....] with all your soul,”

שהם הם כל חלקי הנפש, שכל ומדות ולבושיהם מחשבה דיבור ומעשה, לדבקה כולן בו יתברך

which means that the love is to be so intense that all aspects of the soul — intellect and emotions, and their garbs of thought, speech and deed — are to cleave to G-d.

דהיינו: המדות במדותיו יתברך מה הוא רחום וכו'

This means that man's emotive faculties are to be bound up with His<sup>6</sup> — “As He is merciful [so should you be merciful]...”

Thus when a person acts kindly out of the attribute of compassion, for example, this emotive faculty of his is bound up with G-d's.

והשכל בשכלו וחכמתו יתברך

So, too, man's intellect adheres to G-d's intellect and wisdom;

הוא עיון התורה דאורייתא מחכמה נפקא

this refers to the concentrated study of Torah, for<sup>7</sup> “the Torah issues from Wisdom.”

וכן המחשבה במחשבתו יתברך

So, too, is man's thought [to be united] with G-d's,

והדיבור בדבר ה' זו הלכה

and his speech [is to be unified with]<sup>8</sup> “the word of G-d, which is the *Halachah*,”

וכמו שכתוב: ואשים דברי בפיו

as in the passages which speak of the Torah:<sup>9</sup> “I have placed My word in your mouth,”

ודברי אשר שמתי בפִּיךָ

and [10](#) “My words that I have placed in your mouth.”

והמעשה הוא מעשה הצדקה

Man's deeds [shall likewise be united with His deeds] through works of charity,

להחיות רוח שפלים

to revive the spirit of the crestfallen,

Acting thus unites man with His Maker, for He too provides life and “revives the spirit” of created beings”,

כמו שכתוב: כי ששת ימים עשה ה' וגו' כנודע במקום אחר

as the verse states [11](#) “For six days G-d wrought....,” as is explained elsewhere.

The expression used concerning G-d's activity during the Six Days of Creation — a verb expressing action and doing — indicates that the Divine powers had to descend even to the nethermost level of mere action, in order to create and vitalize the inconsequential beings of creation.

וזו היא אתדבקות דרוחא ברוחא, בתכלית הדביקות ויחוד, כשהיא מחמת אהבה וכו'

This is the cleaving of spirit to Spirit — the ultimate attachment and union that result from love....

Ultimate union with G-d through Torah study is attained only when it is the result of love. Thus, while it is true that when one studies Torah simply out of one's acceptance of the Yoke of Heaven he also achieves a measure of the cleaving of spirit of Spirit, this cannot compare to the degree of attachment that is attained when the same study is motivated by a love of G-d. Hence, since *teshuvah ila'ah* is a manifestation of the soul's ultimate attachment with G-d, it follows that “*Teshuva ila'ah* means engaging in the study of Torah in awe and love of the Holy One, blessed be He,” as the *Zohar* teaches.

ולפי שפגם הברית בהוצאת זרע לבטלה

Since the violation of the covenant through wasteful emission,

ואין צריך לומר בעריות, או שאר איסורי ביאה דאורייתא או דרבנן

to say nothing of incestuous relations, or other unions prohibited by the Torah or the Sages



(כי חמורים דברי סופרים וכו')

([12](#) for [13](#) “the words i.e. the prohibitions of the Sages are more grave [than even the words i.e., the prohibitions of the Torah]”),

פוגם במוח

causes a blemish in the mind,

לכן תיקונו הוא, דיתעסק באורייתא דמחכמה נפקא

therefore his rectification is secured by engaging in the study of the Torah, which derives from Wisdom.

This explains why it was stated in Chapter 4 that only *teshuvah ila'ah* — “engaging in the study of the Torah in awe and love of the Holy One, blessed be He” — is effective in remedying this sin."

וזהו שכתוב בתנא דבי אליהו: אדם עבר עבירה ונתחייב מיתה למקום, מה יעשה ויחיה

We therefore find in *Tana devei Eliyahu*: [14](#) "A man commits a sin and is liable to death before Al-mighty (for the above-mentioned sin carries with it the punishment of death by Divine agency); what shall he do and live?

אם היה רגיל לקרות דף אחד יקרא ב' דפים, לשנות פרק אחד ישנה ב' פרקים וכו'

If he was accustomed to studying one page [of Written Law], let him study two; if he was accustomed to studying one chapter [of the Oral Law], let his study two chapters...."

Why is sin punishable by death by Divine agency, such as the sin of wasteful emission, rectifiable by an increase in Torah study?

והיינו: כמשל חבל הנפסק וחוזר וקושרו

This resembles a rope that is severed and then reknotted:

שבמקום הקשר הוא כפול ומכופל

the site of the knot is twofold and fourfold thicker than the rest of the rope.

וככה הוא בחבל נחלתו וכו'

So it is with the “rope of [G-d's] heritage,” with the soul's bond with its Source.

If this relationship was severed by sin, then repentance must reknott the cord doubly and fourfold. And this is accomplished through the study of the Torah.

וזהו שאמר הכתוב: בחסד ואמת יכופר עון וגו'

Thus Scripture states,<sup>15</sup> “Through kindness and truth is sin forgiven .....,”

ואין אמת אלא תורה

and<sup>16</sup> “there is no truth but Torah....”

Thus it is through the study of Torah that sin is forgiven.

ועון בית עלי בזבח ומנחה הוא דאינו מתכפר, אבל מתכפר בתורה וגמילות חסדים

Similarly, on the statement in Scripture<sup>17</sup> that “the sin of the house of Eli will not be atoned by sacrifices and offerings,” the *Gemara* comments: “By sacrifices and offerings will the sin of the House of Eli not be atoned, but it will be atoned through the study of Torah and through good deeds,”

כדאיתא בסוף פרק קמא דראש השנה

as explained at the end of the first chapter<sup>18</sup> of *Rosh HaShanah*.

FOOTNOTES <sup>1.</sup> *Devarim* 22:6. <sup>2.</sup> *Ibid.* 30:20. <sup>3.</sup> Note of the Rebbe: “There are many differences between the way in which the ‘cleaving of spirit to Spirit’ is explained here, and earlier on in chapter 49 [of Part I].” <sup>4.</sup> *Shir HaShirim* 1:2. <sup>5.</sup> *Devarim* 6:5. <sup>6.</sup> *Yerushalmi, Peah* 1:1, *et al.* <sup>7.</sup> *Zohar* I, 85a. <sup>8.</sup> *Shabbat* 138b. <sup>9.</sup> *Yeshayahu* 51:16. <sup>10.</sup> *Ibid.* 59:12. <sup>11.</sup> *Shmot* 20:11. <sup>12.</sup> Parentheses are in the original text. <sup>13.</sup> Cf. *Sanhedrin* 88b. <sup>14.</sup> Cf. *Vayikra Rabbah*, beginning. of chapter 25. <sup>15.</sup> *Mishlei* 16:6. <sup>16.</sup> Cf. *Berachot* 5b. <sup>17.</sup> *I Shmuel* 3:4. <sup>18.</sup> In his glosses on *Tanya*, the Rebbe notes that the Alter Rebbe’s reference to “the end of the first chapter” is somewhat problematic, for this statement appears four pages before the end of that chapter, on page 18a.



## Chapter 10

The theme of the previous chapter was *teshuvah ila'ah* and how it finds expression in the “cleaving of spirit to Spirit” — through Torah study, *tzedakah* and acts of lovingkindness.

והנה תשובה עילאה זו, דאתדבקוּתא דרוחא ברוחא על ידי תורה וגמילות חסדים

This higher level of *teshuvah*, the cleaving of spirit to Spirit through the study of Torah and the performance of acts of kindness,

היא בבחינת המשכה מלמעלה למטה

is a matter of eliciting from Above.

Neither Torah study nor acts of lovingkindness elevate a person solely as a result of his own initiative and Divine service. Rather, he is aided from Above to reach an infinitely higher level than he would have attained alone.

להיות דבר ה' ממש בפיו

So that the word of G-d shall actually be in one's mouth,

this too is a Divine gift.

וכמו שכתוב: ואשים דברי בפיו

As Scripture states,<sup>[1](#)</sup> “I have placed My words in your mouth.”

Torah study thus accomplishes much more than what man could attain on its own.

Similarly,<sup>[2](#)</sup>

וימינו תחבקני, בגמילות חסדים

“His right hand embraces me,” through man's acts of kindness,

דחסד דרועא ימינא וכו'

for<sup>[3](#)</sup> “kindness is the [Supernal] right arm....”

With every act of lovingkindness one draws down Divine benevolence: one is embraced by a far loftier level of holiness than he could possibly aspire to by dint of his own spiritual service.

אבל אדם התחתון צריך לילך ממדרגה למדרגה ממטה למעלה

But mortal man must ascend from stage to stage

היא בחינת תשובה עילאה ואתדבקות רוחא ברוחא בכוונת הלב בתפלה

towards this higher level of *teshuvah* and this “cleaving of spirit to Spirit” through the heart's devoted worship,

ובפרט בקריאת שמע וברכותיה

particularly during *Shema* and its blessings,

כדי לומר ואהבת וגו' בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך וגו' באמת לאמיתו

so that he might in perfect truth say during the recitation of the *Shema*,<sup>4</sup> “You shall love [the L-rd your G-d] with all your heart and with all your soul.....”

וכן: והיו הדברים האלה וגו' ודברת במ וגו'

Likewise:<sup>5</sup> “These words [which I command you today] shall be [upon your heart]..... And you shall speak of them.....”

All the above verses speak of the study of Torah.<sup>6</sup>

להיות דבר ה' בפיו באמת

The word of G-d must truly be in his mouth, [which is the case when one's mouth serves as a vessel for G-d's word]<sup>7</sup>

ואין אמת וכו'

and “there is no truth [but Torah].”<sup>8</sup>

וכן לקיים כל המצות

He must also perform all the *mitzvot*,

כמו שכתוב: אשר קדשנו במצותיו

as it is written,<sup>9</sup> “He has sanctified us with His commandments.”

כמו הרי את מקודשת לי

This [sanctification] has the same sense as in the phrase,<sup>10</sup> “You are sanctified unto me” — i.e., separate from all others and wholly sanctified unto G-d through the performance of His commandments.

היא בחינת קדש העליון

This is the level of *Kodesh HaElyon* (“Supernal Holiness”), which one draws upon himself through the performance of the *mitzvot*.

לשון פרישות והבדלה

“Kodesh” translated “holiness” connotes something apart, or transcendent,

שאינו יכול להתלבש תוך עלמין

that cannot be contained within the created worlds, permeating each of them with Divine life-force commensurate with its particular capacity,

משום דכולא קמיה כלא חשיב

since [11](#) “everything is considered as naught before Him.”

Relative to this transcendent level, the differing levels of spirituality of the various created beings are of no consequence.

אלא בבחינת סובב כל עלמין

Rather, this is a level [of holiness] that transcends [lit., “encompasses”] all worlds, and hence affects them all equally from afar, so to speak;

הוא רצון העליון ברוך הוא וכו'

this is [the level of] the Supreme Will, and so on, which is drawn down into this world through the performance of *mitzvot*,

כמו שכתוב: בלקוטי אמרים פרק מ"ו

as discussed in the first part of Tanya, *Likutei Amarim*, chapter 46.

וגם אחר התפלה אומרים: אליך ה' נפשי אשא

After prayer as well, we say, [12](#) “To You, O G-d, I lift my soul,” referring to the initiative of the worshiper below in raising his soul upward to its Source,

דהיינו לאתדבקא רוחא ברוחא כל היום וכו'

so that through the performance of *mitzvot* spirit will cleave to Spirit throughout the day.....

וכל זה: על ידי ההתבוננות בגדולת אין סוף ברוך הוא

All this is brought about through meditation on the grandeur of the Infinite One,

בהעמקת הדעת בשתים לפנייה ובפסוקי דזמרה, כנודע

concentrating the mind deeply during the two blessings preceding *Shema* and during the preparatory hymns of praise known as *pesukei dezimrah*, as is known.

Meditating in this fashion gives birth to a love for G-d, which is translated into the study of the Torah and the performance of *mitzvot*. This form of Divine service is *teshuvah*

*ila'ah* that takes the direction called *milmata lemala*; it works its way upward from the initiative taken by the enterprising worshiper who elevates himself by his own bootstraps.

ומאחר שהתפלה היא בחינת תשובה עילאה

Since prayer is an expression of *teshuvah ila'ah*, the higher level of return,

צריך להקדים לפניה בחינת תשובה תתאה

it must be preceded by *teshuvah tata'ah*, the lower level of return that is reached by the contriteness of a penitent heart.

וזה שאמרו רז"ל במשנה: אין עומדין להתפלל אלא מתוך כובד ראש

This is what the Sages intended in the *Mishnah*:<sup>13</sup> “One should embark on worship only in an earnest frame of mind.”

ופירש רש"י: הכנעה

*Rashi* explains this to mean “humility”.

והיא בחינת תשובה תתאה

This is the state of *teshuvah tata'ah*,

לעורר רחמים כנ"ל

in which one arouses Divine compassion for oneself, as noted above, in chapters 7 and 8.

וכדיליף התם בגמרא מקרא דכתיב

This the *Talmud*<sup>14</sup> infers from a phrase which states <sup>15</sup> with regard to Chanah,

והיא מרת נפש

“She was bitter of spirit, [and she prayed to G-d].”

אכן בברייתא שם: תנו רבנן, אין עומדין להתפלל אלא מתוך שמחה

At the same time we must note the *Beraita* there:<sup>16</sup> “Our Sages taught, ‘One should embark on worship only with joy.’”

Thus, while the individual is to begin his preparations for prayer by achieving a state of bitterness of spirit, he is expected to begin his actual prayers in a state of joy.

ועכשיו בדור יתום הזה, שאין הכל יכולין להפוך לבם כרגע מן הקצה

In our bereaved generation, however, when not all are capable of turning their hearts instantly from one extreme [to the other], from humility to joy,

אזי עצה היעוצה: להקדים בחינת תשובה תתאה בתיקון חצות כנ"ל

it is advised that *teshuvah tata'ah* be practiced earlier, at *Tikkun Chatzot*; This is an especially appropriate time for the spiritual stocktaking that leads to the humility of a “broken and contrite heart,” as noted above.<sup>[17](#)</sup>

ומי שאי אפשר לו בכל לילה, על כל פנים לא יפחות מפעם אחת בשבוע, לפני יום השבת

Whoever cannot do this nightly<sup>[18](#)</sup> should maintain an absolute minimum of once every week, before the *Shabbat*.

כנודע ליודעים, שהשבת היא בחינת תשובה עילאה

It is familiar to the initiates in the mysteries of the Torah that *Shabbat* is of the order of *teshuvah ila'ah*;

ושב"ת אותיות תש"ב אנוש

indeed, the very letters of the word *Shabbat* spell *tashev* [“You return”,<sup>[19](#)</sup> as in the phrase,<sup>[20](#)</sup> “You cause man to return.”

כי בשבת היא עליות העולמות למקורם כו'

For on *Shabbat* all the worlds ascend to their Source ...., and this, too, is the time of the ascent of the soul to its Source — which constitutes the act of *teshuvah*.

ובפרט תפלות השבת, וד"ל

The prayers of *Shabbat* in particular — even more than the weekday prayers — [are an act of *teshuvah ila'ah*]. This will suffice for the perceptive.

(ובזה יובן מה שכתוב: שובה אלי כי גאלתיך)

<sup>[21](#)</sup>(We can now understand the phrase,<sup>[22](#)</sup> “Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.”

פירוש: כי מאחר שמחיתי כעב פשעיך, היא העברת הסטרא אחרא

For since [as in the preceding phrase] “I have erased your sins like a thick cloud,” removing the *sitra achra*,

וגאלתיך מן החיצונים בהתעוררות רחמים עליונים, באתערותא דלתתא בתשובה תתאה כנ"ל

and “I have redeemed you” from the evil lit., “extraneous” forces through the arousal of Supreme compassion following the initiative taken by man below in his *teshuvah tata'ah*, as explained above,

אזי שובה אלי בתשובה עילאה)

therefore, “Return to Me” — with *teshuvah ila'ah*.)

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Yeshayahu* 51:16. [2.](#) *Shir HaShirim* 2:6. [3.](#) Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar*. [4.](#) *Devarim* 6:5. [5.](#) *Ibid.* 6:6-7. [6.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “For Scripture speaks [here] of the study of the Torah' (*Berachot* 13b). See [*Tanya*,] Part I, end of chapter 49.” [7.](#) *Tanna devei Eliyahu Zuta*, ch. 21. [8.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “See [*Tanya*,] conclusion of ch. 37.” [9.](#) From the blessing recited before the performance of certain *mitzvot*. [10.](#) *Kiddushin* 5b; from the betrothal ceremony. [11.](#) *Zohar* I, 11b. [12.](#) *Tehillim* 25:1. [13.](#) *Berachot* 30b. [14.](#) *Ibid.* [15.](#) *I Samuel* 1:10. [16.](#) *Berachot* 31a. [17.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “See above, chapter 7.” [18.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “As explained in chapter 11 of *Kuntres HaTefillah*, this applies only to great *tzaddikim*..... For most people, however, it need not be nightly....” [19.](#) Conclusion of *Torat Natan*. [20.](#) *Tehillim* 90:3. [21.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [22.](#) *Yeshayahu* 44:22.



## Chapter 11

The Alter Rebbe stated in the previous chapter that since prayer is an expression of *teshuvah ila'ah*, the higher level of return, it must be preceded by the humility and contrition of *teshuvah tata'ah*, the lower level of return. This is attained by spiritual stocktaking and by arousing Divine compassion upon one's soul, in keeping with the Mishnaic dictum that “one should embark on worship only in an earnest frame of mind,” which is explained by *Rashi* to mean “humility”.

At the same time, the Alter Rebbe continued, we are also taught that “one should embark on worship only with joy.” Since nowadays most people are incapable of instantly turning their hearts from one extreme to the other, the Alter Rebbe advised that the time for the humbled heart of *teshuvah tata'ah* be advanced to the *Tikkun Chatzot* of the preceding midnight, so that when the time for prayer arrives the worshiper will be in a state of joy.

In the present chapter the Alter Rebbe goes on to say that difficulties notwithstanding, it is possible for the heart to simultaneously harbor two opposite emotions — the anguished soul of *teshuvah tata'ah* and the joy that immediately precedes and accompanies prayer.

ואמנם להיות בלבו ההכנעה, היא בחינת תשובה תתאה הנ"ל וגם השמחה בה' שתיהן ביחד



This subject, simultaneously harboring contrite humility in the heart — the state of *teshuvah tata'ah*, as explained — and the above — mentioned [contrary emotion of] joy in G-d, that is also necessary for the service of prayer,

כבר מילתא אמורה בלקוטי אמרים, סוף פרק ל"ד

has already been discussed in *Likutei Amarim*, at the end of chapter 34.

The Alter Rebbe explained there that these two emotions are not mutually exclusive, since one's contriteness is occasioned by his body and animal soul, while his joy stems from his Divine soul and the G-dly spark that it houses. Having two distinct causes, the two emotions can lodge together.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to quote the *Zohar* to this effect:

כמו שכתוב בזוהר הקדוש: חדוה תקיעא בלבאי מסטרא דא וכו'

This is as stated in the *Zohar*:<sup>1</sup> “Weeping is lodged in one side of my heart [and joy is lodged in the other side of my heart].”

This statement was made by R. Elazar ben R. Shimon. Hearing from his father Kabbalistic insights into the Destruction of the Holy Temple, he was at one and the same time heartbroken from his renewed recognition of the enormity of the Destruction — and joyful to be inducted into the mysteries of the Torah. We thus see from the *Zohar* that two opposite emotions can coexist when they result from two different causes.

ובצירוף עוד האמונה והבטחון, להיות נכון לבו בטוח בה' כי חפץ חסד הוא

Joined to this is faith and confidence, the heart being firm and certain in G-d — that<sup>2</sup> “He delights in kindness,”

וחנון ורחום ורב לסלוח, תיכף ומיד שמבקש מחילה וסליחה מאתו יתברך

and is<sup>3</sup> “gracious and merciful” and abundantly forgiving the instant one entreates Him for forgiveness and atonement.

(כרוב רחמין מזה פשעי

(<sup>4</sup>As it is written,<sup>5</sup> “In accordance with Your abounding compassion, erase my transgressions”;

כבסני, טהרני

or:<sup>6</sup> “Cleanse me, purify me”;

וכל עוונותי מזה וכו')

or: [7](#) “Erase all my sins.....”)

בלי שום ספק וספק ספיקא בעולם

[The worshiper offers supplications such as the above] without the faintest vestige of doubt.

וכמו שאנו מברכין בכל תפלת שמונה עשרה: תיכף שמבקשים סלח לנו כו', ברוך אתה ה' חנון המרבה לסלוח

For this reason, in every *Shemoneh Esreh*, the moment we plead, “Pardon us .....,” [we conclude,] “Blessed are You, O G-d, gracious One Who pardons abundantly.”

והרי ספק ברכות להקל, משום חשש ברכה לבטלה

Now we are forbidden to recite a blessing of doubtful obligation, for fear that it be pronounced in vain. [8](#)

Thus, were there even the slightest doubt as to whether G-d forgives the sinner, we would never have been commanded to recite the above blessing.

אלא אין כאן שום ספק כלל

But there is no doubt here whatsoever,

מאחר שבקשנו: סלח לנו, מחל לנו

for we have asked, “Pardon us, forgive us.”

ואילו לא היינו חוזרים וחוטאים, היינו נגאלין מיד

Furthermore, were we not to repeat our transgressions we would be immediately redeemed,

כמו שאנו מברכין: ברוך אתה ה' גואל ישראל

in accordance with the blessing we recite immediately afterwards, “Blessed are You, O G-d, Who redeems Israel.”

As the order of the blessings indicates, forgiveness leads to redemption — if not for our relapses.

והרי אפילו במדת בשר ודם כן, שצריך האדם למחול תיכף ומיד שמבקשים ממנו מחילה

Even by human standards [this certainty of pardon is legitimate, for] one must forgive as soon as he is asked for pardon.

ולא יהא אכזרי מלמחול

He must not cruelly withhold his forgiveness

ואפילו בקוטע יד חבירו

even if one were to cut off his hand,

כדאיתא בגמרא, בסוף פרק ח' דבבא קמא

as we find in the *Gemara*, at the end of chapter 8 of *Bava Kama*.[9](#)

ואם ביקש ממנו ג פעמים ולא מחל לו, שוב אינו צריך לבקש ממנו

So, too, if one has asked his fellow for forgiveness three times and has been rebuffed, he need not apologize further.

והגבעונים, שביקש דוד המלך עליו השלום מהם מחילה בעד שאול, שהמית את הגבעונים, ולא רצו למחול

When King David asked the Gibeonites[10](#) to forgive King Saul who had killed their people and they refused to do so,

גזר דוד עליהם שלא יבאו בקהל ה', שהם רחמנים וכו'

David decreed that they should not enter the congregation of G-d, i.e., they would never be allowed to convert and thereby join the Jewish people, who are merciful .....,

כדאיתא בפרק ח' דיבמות

as we have learned in *Yevamot*, end of chapter 8. [11](#)

ובמדת הקב"ה על אחת כמה וכמה לאין קץ

As a Divine trait, how much more certain is it — nay, infinitely more certain — [that forgiveness is swift].

Now if mere mortals are also expected to forgive instantly, what kind of praise is it that we offer the Infinite One in *Shemoneh Esreh* (the *Amidah*) by ascribing a like attribute to Him? This is the question that the Alter Rebbe now anticipates:

ומה שמשבחים ומברכים את ה': חנון המרבה לסלוח, המרבה דייקא

As to the fact that we praise and bless G-d as being “the gracious One Who abounds in forgiveness,” — the verb chosen is *marbeh* “abounds”, implying a quality unique to G-d.

וכמו שכתוב בעזרא: ורב לסלוח

In *Ezra* [12](#) [too] we find that G-d “pardons abundantly.”

היינו

This means:

שבמדת בשר ודם, אם יחטא איש לאיש וביקש ממנו מחילה ומחל לו

In the mortal world, if one person harms another and asks his pardon which is granted,

ואחר כך חזר לסורו

and then repeats the misdeed,

קשה מאד שימחול לו שנית

it becomes more difficult to grant pardon again,

ומכל שכן בשלישית ורביעית

and certainly a third and fourth time.

אבל במדת הקב"ה אין הפרש בין פעם אחת לאלף פעמים

By the standard of G-d, however, there is no difference between once and a thousand times.

כי המחילה היא ממדת הרחמים

For pardon is a manifestation of the attribute of mercy,

ומדותיו הקדושות אינן בבחינת גבול ותכלית, אלא בבחינת אין סוף

and Divine attributes are not bounded and finite; they are infinite,

כמו שכתוב: כי לא כלו רחמיו

as in the verse, [13](#) “For His mercies have not ended.”

ולגבי בחינת אין סוף, אין הפרש כלל בין מספר קטן לגדול

Relative to infinity there is no difference whatsoever between a small number and a large one.

דכולא קמיה כלא ממש חשיב, ומשוה קטן וגדול וכו'

For [14](#) “before Him all are considered as naught,” and [15](#) “He makes equal the small and the great.....”

ולכן: מעביר אשמותינו בכל שנה ושנה

Therefore [16](#) “He removes our sins every year.”

וכל החטאים שמתוודים בעל חטא מדי שנה, אף שחזר ועבר עליהם

As to all the sins for which we confess in the *Al Chet* annually, though repeatedly violated,

חוזר ומתודה עליהם ביום הכפורים בשנה הבאה, וכן לעולם

we again confess for them on Yom Kippur in the coming year, and so on always.

ובכל שנה ושנה לא דוקא, אלא כמו כן בכל יום ויום, ג' פעמים מברכים ברוך אתה ה' חנון המרבה לסלוח

“Every year” does not necessarily imply a yearly pardon; rather, three times every day we likewise say, “Blessed are You, O G-d, Who is gracious and abounds in forgiveness.”

וכמאמר רז"ל: תפלה, כנגד תמידין תקנוה

As our Sages teach, [17](#) the prayers were instituted in place of the daily sacrificial offerings.

ותמיד של שחר היה מכפר על עבירות הלילה, ותמיד של בין הערביים על של יום

The daily morning sacrifice would atone for the sins of the previous night, and the daily evening sacrifice atoned for the sins of the past day,

וכן מדי יום ביום לעולם

and so on, day by day, constantly.

Just as in former times atonement was secured by the regular altar offerings, so too nowadays, our prayers and repentance bring about forgiveness.

What, however, is the difference between the forgiveness granted on Yom Kippur and that granted daily?

אלא שיום הכפורים מכפר על עבירות חמורות, והתמיד שהוא קרבן עולה מכפר על מצוות עשה בלבד

[“Every year” means only that] Yom Kippur atones for the grave sins, while the regular offering of the *olah* sacrifice atoned only for the violation of positive commands.

וכן התפלה בזמן הזה, עם התשובה כנ"ל

In our time, worship with repentance substitutes for offerings, atoning only for violations of positive commands, as noted above.

ואין זה אחטא ואשוב

However, this thrice-daily recitation of G-d's assurance of forgiveness is not [the attitude of one who says,] “I will sin and [later] repent,” concerning whom our Sages say,<sup>18</sup> “He is not granted an opportunity to repent.”

כי היינו דוקא שבשעת החטא היה יכול לכבוש יצרו, אלא שסומך בלבו על התשובה

For that is relevant only if while committing the sin he could have overcome his evil impulse, but depended in his heart on repenting [later].

ולכן, הואיל והתשובה גורמת לו לחטוא, אין מספיקין וכו'

Since it was [the opportunity for] repentance that caused him to sin, “He is not granted an opportunity [to repent].”

ואף גם זאת אין מספיקין דייקא

And even then, he is not granted an opportunity.

אבל אם דחק ונתחזק ונתגבר על יצרו ועשה תשובה

But if he pressed forcefully and overpowered his evil impulse and did repent,

מקבלין תשובתו

then his repentance is accepted.

This all applies to a situation where a person indeed says, “I shall sin and [later] repent.”

אבל אנו, שמבקשים בכל יום: סלח לנו

But we, who plead daily, “Forgive us,”

אנו מקדימין לבקש: והחזירנו בתשובה שלימה לפניך

preface that prayer by saying, “Bring us back with a perfect repentance before you,”

דהיינו: שלא נשוב עוד לכסלה

so that we revert no more to folly, and sin no more.

וכן ביום הכפורים מבקשים: יהי רצון מלפניך שלא אחטא עוד

On Yom Kippur too we ask, “May it be Your will that I sin no more.”

Hence, since one does not rely on one's ability to repent later:

מספיקין ומספיקין

Opportunity is abundantly granted for repentance.

כמאמר רז"ל: הבא לטהר מסייעין אותו

As our Sages teach: [19](#) “Whoever comes to purify himself [of his sin] is given assistance.”

הבא דייקא, מיד שבא

The expression “whoever comes” [indicates that he is granted assistance] as soon as he comes,

ואי לזאת, גם הסליחה והמחילה היא מיד

and the pardon and forgiveness are thus also granted forthwith.

ומה שכתוב: וחטאתי נגדי תמיד

As to the verse that says, [20](#) “My sin is always before me,”

אין המכוון להיות תמיד עצב נבזה, חס ושלום

this does not imply that one ought to be constantly melancholy and humiliated, G-d forbid,

דהא כתיב בתריה: תשמיעני ששון ושמחה וגו'

for later verses declare, [21](#) “Let me hear gladness and joy....,”

ורוח נדיבה תסמכני וגו'

and [22](#) “uphold me with a spirit of magnanimity....”;

ומשום שצריך להיות כל ימיו בתשובה עילאה, שהיא בשמחה רבה כנ"ל

moreover, [23](#) “Throughout one's days one should experience *teshuvah* [*ila'ah*],” [a manner of repentance] that is marked by great joy, as noted above.

How, then, are we to understand that “my sin is always before me”?

אלא נגדי דייקא

Rather, [the term used for “before me” is] specifically negdi, which implies being opposite, but at a certain distance,

כמו: ואתה תתיצב מנגד, מנגד סביב לאהל מועד יחנו

as in the verse that says, [24](#) “You shall stand at a distance (mineged)”; or: [25](#) “at a distance (mineged) around the Tent of Assembly shall they camp.”

ופירש רש"י מרחוק

*Rashi* defines the above term lit., “opposite” as “at a distance.”

Thus, one should always retain an awareness of his having sinned — but “at a distance,” i.e., at the back of his mind.

והמכוון רק לבלתי רום לבבו

Hence, the intention [of our verse] is merely that one's heart should not grow haughty,

ולהיות שפל רוח בפני כל האדם

and that he be humble of spirit before all men,

כשהיה לזכרון בין עיניו שחטא נגד ה'

because there will be a remembrance between his eyes that he has sinned before G-d.

Memories of past sin are thus not intended to engender despondency, G-d forbid.

ואדרבה, לענין השמחה, יועיל זכרון החטא ביתר שאת

In fact, as far as joy is concerned, the remembrance of one's past sins will be especially effective

בכדי לקבל בשמחה כל המאורעות המתרגשות ובאות

in encouraging happiness in the face of whatever misfortunes threaten to overtake him,

בין מן השמים בין על ידי הבריות

whether from heaven or through the agency of man,

בדיבור או במעשה

whether in speech or in deed.



Any such physical or verbal offense will be accepted with equanimity when one recalls that he has sinned in the past, and that his present afflictions in fact assist in his atonement.

(וזו עצה טובה להנצל מכעס וכל מיני קפידא וכו')

([26](#)This [humility on account of one's imperfect record] is good counsel that enables a man to be immune to becoming angry or taking offense in any way.....)

וכמאמר רז"ל: הנעלבים ואינן עולבין

As our Sages declare,[27](#) “Those who are humiliated yet do not humiliate in turn,

שומעים חרפתם ואין משיבים

who hear their insult and do not retort,

עושים מאהבה ושמחים ביסורים וכו'

who perform out of love and are happy in affliction, [concerning them does Scripture say,[28](#) ‘Those who love Him [shall be] like the sun rising in all its might’].”

Three distinct categories are mentioned here, in ascending order: “Those who are humiliated yet do not humiliate in turn” do respond to the insults of others, but do not retaliate in kind. Those of the second category “hear their insult and do not retort” at all. Those of the third category actually “are happy in affliction” — because they remember their past sins, and are glad to accept their present suffering as a means of penance.

וכל המעביר על מדותיו מעבירים לו על כל פשעיו

Moreover,[29](#) “whoever passes over his feelings, all his sins are passed over.”

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) III, 75a. [2.](#) *Micah* 7:18. [3.](#) *Tehillim* 145:8. [4.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [5.](#) *Tehillim* 51:3 [6.](#) Cf. *loc. cit.*, v. 4. [7.](#) *Loc. cit.*, v. 11. [8.](#) *Berachot* 33a. [9.](#) 92a. [10.](#) II Shmuel 21. [11.](#) 78b ff. [12.](#) The reference is not to the term but to the concept; see explanation of the Rebbe in the Yiddish original of the present work (*Shiurim BeSefer HaTanya*), p. 1212 ff. [13.](#) *Eichah* 3:22. [14.](#) Cf. *Zohar* I, 11b; cf. *Daniel* 4:32. [15.](#) *Vechol Maaminim*, in liturgy of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. [16.](#) *Machzor* of Yom Kippur. [17.](#) *Berachot* 26a. [18.](#) *Yoma* 85b. [19.](#) *Shabbat* 104a; *Yoma* 38b. [20.](#) *Tehillim* 51:5. [21.](#) *Loc. cit.*, v. 10. [22.](#) *Loc. cit.*, v. 14. [23.](#) Cf. *Shabbat* 153a. [24.](#) II Shmuel 18:13. [25.](#) *Bamidbar* 2:2. [26.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [27.](#) *Shabbat* 88b; *Gittin* 36b. [28.](#) *Shoftim* 5:31. [29.](#) *Rosh HaShanah* 17a.

# Chapter 12

The Alter Rebbe explained in the previous chapter that although a penitent should always remember his past sins, his recollection should not lead to a state of ongoing depression or shame; such an attitude would cripple the cardinal principle of serving G-d with joy. Rather, he should recall his past misdeeds “from afar” — only insofar as they will teach him to be humble before all men.

Moreover, these memories will actually enhance the joy of his Divine service, for they will cause him to accept with happy equanimity all manner of pain and suffering, be it verbal or physical, whether visited upon him from Above or through mortal agents.

In this, the concluding chapter of *Iggeret HaTeshuvah*, the Alter Rebbe explains why these afflictions cause the penitent joy.

וטעם השמחה ביסורי הגוף

The reason for joy<sup>1</sup> in the suffering of the body

לפי שהיא טובה גדולה ועצומה לנפש החוטאת

is that it is a great and potent<sup>2</sup> favor for the sinning soul,

למרקה בעולם הזה

to cleanse it in This World,<sup>3</sup>

ולהצילה מהמירוק בגיהנם

and to spare it from being scoured in *Gehinnom*.<sup>4</sup>

(בפרט בדורותינו אלה

(<sup>5</sup>This is particularly true in these generations of ours,

שאין ביכולת להתענות כפי מספר כל הצומות שבתיקוני תשובה מהאריז"ל

when one cannot undertake all the fasts prescribed in the penances of the *AriZal*, as mentioned earlier on in chapter 3,

הצריכות למירוק הנפש, להצילה ממירוק בגיהנם)

fasts imperative for the cleansing of the soul, to rescue it from the cleansing of *Gehinnom*.)

וכמו שכתוב הרמב"ן ז"ל בהקדמה לפירוש לאיוב, שאפילו יסורים של איוב ע' שנה, אין להן ערך כלל ליסורי הנפש שעה אחת בגיהנם

As Nachmanides writes, in the Introduction to his Commentary on Job, that even the sufferings of Job for seventy years bear absolutely no comparison to the suffering of a soul for even one hour in *Gehinnom*,

כי אש אחד מששים וכו'

for <sup>6</sup> “[physical] fire is but one sixtieth [of the fire of *Gehinnom*].”

אלא לפי שעולם הזה חסד יבנה

It is only that this <sup>7</sup> “world is built by kindness,”

וביסורין קלין בעולם הזה, ניצול מדינים קשים של עולם הבא

for which reason through mild suffering in This World one is saved from severe judgments in the Coming World.

כמשל הילוך והעתקת הצל בארץ טפח

This is analogous to the movement of a shadow on earth of a handsbreadth,

לפי הילוך גלגל השמש ברקיע אלפים מילין וכו'

which equals the sun's movement in the heaven of thousands of miles...

I.e., the sun's movement of thousands of miles causes a corresponding movement of but a few inches of shadow].

ויתר על כן לאין קץ הוא בנמשל

Infinitely more so is this true in the parallel,

בבחינת השתלשלות העולמות מרום המעלות עד עולם הזה הגשמי

in the descent of the worlds from level to level, from the most exalted heights until this physical world.

The analogy may be understood as follows. Any event that transpires in this world results from a parallel but far more ethereal event that “previously” took place in the spiritually

exalted worlds. Thus, the effect of an event in this physical world is much greater in those lofty worlds.

וכנודע ממה שכתוב בזהר הקדוש, מענין עליות עולמות העליונים

We see this in the teachings of the *Zohar* on the elevation of the higher worlds

באתערותא דלתתא, בהקרבת עוף אחד בן יונה או תור על גבי המזבח, או קומץ מנחה

as a result of the spiritual arousal initiated by man below through his offering of one fowl, a dove or pigeon, or a handful of meal, on the altar.

The *Zohar* teaches that offering but one such representative creature from the animal world or but one such representative item from the vegetative world, elevates all the spiritual realms.

וכן הוא בכל המצות מעשיות, כנודע מהאריז"ל

Such are the effects of all the commandments requiring practical performance, as is known from the *AriZal*.

*Mitzvot* performed in this world with physical objects, such as tzitzit made of wool or the passages of the *tefillin* written on parchment, set up far-reaching reverberations in the exalted spiritual worlds.

וזה שאמרו רז"ל על פסוק: והתקדשתם והייתם קדושים

This too is our Sages' comment<sup>8</sup> on the verse,<sup>9</sup> “Sanctify yourselves and you shall be holy” —

אדם מקדש עצמו מעט מלמטה, מקדשין אותו הרבה מלמעלה וכו'

“Man sanctifies himself [only] a little i.e.,” comments the Rebbe, ‘in quantity’ below i.e.,“ comments the Rebbe, ‘in quality’, and he becomes sanctified in great measure from Above...”

(וכמו שכתוב לעיל בענין אשר קדשנו במצותיו וכו' בחינת סובב כל עלמין וכו')

(<sup>10</sup>It was thus noted above<sup>11</sup> in reference to the phrase, “Who sanctified us with His commandments...,” [that Israel's sanctification through *mitzvot* is bound up with the Infinite life- force that] encompasses and transcends all worlds...)

Thus, the physical performance of a Divine commandment in this world, draws down upon the individual holiness not only from the most lofty spiritual worlds, but also from the degree of G-dliness that transcends worlds.

וככה ממש הוא בענין שכר ועונש

Precisely so is it in reference to reward and punishment.

The reward for the performance of a *mitzvah* infinitely surpasses the physical deed itself; the punishment as well, suffered by an individual in this world for his sins, substitutes for a far greater measure of punishment that the person would have undergone had it been meted out in the Coming World.

כמאמר רז"ל: שכר מצוה מצוה וכו'

As our Sages say,<sup>12</sup> “The reward of a *mitzvah* is the *mitzvah*...”;

[I.e., the reward is the spiritual illumination that is drawn down through the fulfillment of the *mitzvah* itself],

וכמו שכתוב במקום אחר

as discussed elsewhere.

Since it has just been explained that the performance of a *mitzvah* draws down as a reward Divine illumination that utterly transcends all worlds, it follows that the reward for the *mitzvah* in the loftier spiritual worlds is infinitely higher than the physical action performed here below.

ודעת לנבון נקל

This knowledge is elementary to the discerning,

ומשכיל על דבר ימצא טוב

and those with intelligence in this matter will discover good.

FOOTNOTES <sup>1.</sup> Note of the Rebbe: “The focus of this entire explanation is that the difference [between physical and spiritual suffering] and the benefit [of physical suffering] are twofold, quantitative and qualitative. Afflictions of the body, as opposed to afflictions of the soul; physical fire is only one-sixtieth of the fire of *Gehinnom*; a shadow's movement of a handsbreadth on earth is equivalent to thousands of miles.” <sup>2.</sup> Note of the Rebbe: “The two terms [‘great’ and ‘potent’] quite possibly allude to [the] extent and quality [of the favor].” <sup>3.</sup> Note of the Rebbe: “Thus enabling the soul to leave this world in the same [pure] state as when it entered it.” <sup>4.</sup> Note of the Rebbe: “This seems to imply yet another matter.” <sup>5.</sup> Parentheses are in the original text. <sup>6.</sup> *Berachot* 57b. <sup>7.</sup> *Tehillim* 89:3. <sup>8.</sup> *Yoma* 39a. <sup>9.</sup> *Vayikra* 20:7. <sup>10.</sup> Parentheses are in the original text. <sup>11.</sup> Part I, chapter 46; chapter 10, above. <sup>12.</sup> *Avot* 4:2.