

Lessons in Tanya: Iggeret HaKodesh

Epistle 1

In their Approbation to *Tanya*,¹ the author's sons write that the discourses and open letters together entitled *Iggeret HaKodesh*² ("The Holy Epistle"), as well as the further discourses entitled *Kuntres Acharon* ("Later Pamphlet"), were all "recorded personally by [the Alter Rebbe's] own holy hand in his own saintly expression. These discourses are [collectively] entitled *Iggeret HaKodesh*, being mostly epistles sent by his holy eminence to teach the people of G-d the way by which they should walk and the deed which they should do."

Accordingly, the author's learned sons saw fit to publish them together with the preceding sections of the *Tanya*.

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The first epistle opens with a reference to the chassidic custom (a custom that thrives to this day) of apportioning the tractates of the *Talmud* for study among the members of each congregation or community, so that the entire work is completed in the course of a year. The conclusion of the year's study and the reallocation of tractates are traditionally celebrated on *Yud-Tes Kislev*, the anniversary of the Alter Rebbe's liberation from imprisonment and capital sentence in S. Petersburg in 1798.

The Rebbe has noted on a number of occasions that the collective completion of the *Talmud* by a number of individuals is considered as if each one of the group had completed the entire *Talmud* himself. He explains that this is similar to the law with regard to performing a prohibited labor on *Shabbat*: If doing the labor requires the efforts of two individuals, each of them is considered to have performed the entire labor.³ So, too, since the various individuals partake in the collective study of the *Talmud* for they cannot complete it single-handed in the course of a year, it is considered as if each one of them had studied the entire *Talmud*.

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To return to the central theme of this opening epistle. The Alter Rebbe explains here that the study of the laws set out in the Oral Torah elevates a Jew's soul and assists him in his spiritual service — of meditating upon G-d's greatness, and arousing within himself a love and awe of Him.

On the circumstances of its composition, the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, of blessed memory, has conveyed to us the following:⁴ "During a *Simchat Beit HaShoevah* gathering in the year 5648 (תרמ"ח; 1887), my revered father related that the epistle opening with 'We begin with a benediction' was written by the Alter Rebbe in three stages in three different years.

“The first stage: When the Alter Rebbe decided to make the journey to study at the feet of the Maggid of Mezritch, he presented his disciples with a ‘note of arousal.’ It opened with ‘We begin with a benediction,’ and concluded, ‘And these [faculties] are the arms and the body of the soul.’

“The second stage was when the Alter Rebbe returned from Mezritch, having had revealed to him by the Maggid — at the behest of his mentor, the Baal Shem Tov, and with the blessing of *his* mentor, Achiyah HaShiloni — his spiritual identity, the purpose of his holy soul’s descent into this world, and the great responsibility and danger that his mission entailed. At that time the Alter Rebbe wrote the second part of this epistle, beginning with ‘But what gives the power,’ and concluding, ‘To the extent of pressing out the soul.’

“Speaking to his son, the Mittlerer Rebbe, and to his grandson, the *Tzemach Tzedek*, the Alter Rebbe once described his inner feelings during the first few years after his mentor, the Maggid of Mezritch, had revealed to him the message of the Baal Shem Tov [regarding his soul’s mission].

“These were the Alter Rebbe’s words: ‘The simple faith that we, the disciples of the Maggid, had in him, and our self-sacrificing devotion to him, provided us with the potent strength to obey all his directives with extreme precision, with inner and essential self-sacrifice. In the course of several years, when my young married students settled in various towns and villages, I added three paragraphs to this epistle — from “And now” until “there is no goodness but Torah.” This I did in view of the burden placed upon me by my master, the Maggid, and in order to be able to realize, with G-d’s help, the inner intent of my soul’s descent into this world.’ ”

פותחין בברכה, לברך ולהודות לה' כי טוב

We begin with a benediction, to bless and to give thanks to G-d, for He is good.⁵

שמועה טובה שמעה ותחי נפשי

My soul has heard and been revived by good tidings —

אין טוב אלא תורה

and “good” signifies Torah, as our Sages state in Tractate Avot.⁶

תורת ה' תמימה

More specifically, it signifies⁷ “G-d’s Torah [which] is a perfect whole,” for it is the Torah in this state that the same verse describes as “reviving the soul.”

זו השלמת כל הש"ס כולו ברוב עיירות ומנינים מאנ"ש

[The above remarks] refer to the completion of the whole [8](#) *Talmud*, [9](#) in its entirety, [10](#) in most towns and congregations of *Anash*, the men of our [chassidic] brotherhood.

הודאה על העבר ובקשה על העתיד

[So much for] gratitude in respect of past accomplishments. And [now,] a request for the future:

כה יתן וכה יוסיף ה' לאמץ לבם בגבורים מדי שנה בשנה בגבורה של תורה

May G-d thus continue from year to year to grant added strength to your hearts among the mighty, [11](#) with the might of the Torah,

I.e., may G-d increase that which He has previously granted — His increase being even greater than the original blessing [12](#) — so that the hearts of those who study Torah be strengthened to such a degree that they will be considered mighty even among the mighty, with their strength deriving from the Torah.

ולהודיע לבני אדם גבורתה של תורה שבעל פה וכחה עוז

and make known to mankind the might of the Oral Torah [13](#) and its power which is great.

The might (*Gevurah*) of Torah relates specifically to the Oral Law. For with regard to the *source* of the Torah in the Supernal *Sefirot*, the Written Torah derives from the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah*, which is aligned with the “right side” of the universe — the attribute of *Chesed*, kindness and benevolence; the Oral Torah derives from the *Sefirah* of *Binah*, [14](#) which is aligned with the “left side” of the universe — the attribute of *Gevurah*, stern judgment and severity. [15](#) (This relationship between *Binah* and *Gevurah* is alluded to in the verse, [16](#) “I am *Binah*, *Gevurah* is mine.”)

פירש שלמה המלך, עליו השלום: חגרה בעוז מתניה גוי

On the strength that the Oral Law gives the soul of a Jew, King Solomon (peace be to him) explained: [17](#) “She girds her loins with strength.”

The “woman of valor” lauded by King Solomon at the opening of the relevant chapter is an allegorical allusion to *Knesset Yisrael* — the Congregation of Israel, which comprises all Jewish souls. In the verse quoted, she “girds her loins with strength.” “Strength” refers to the Torah, [18](#) as in the teaching, [19](#) “There is no strength other than the Torah.” Thus, the Torah strengthens the loins of the soul, just as a warrior girds his loins to gather maximal strength. But what is meant by “girding the loins of the soul”?

מתנים הם בחינת דבר המעמיד כל הגוף, עם הראש הנצב ועומד עליהם

The loins are the underframe that supports the whole body, including the head that is positioned over them;

והם המוליכים ומביאים אותו למחוז חפצו

it is they that lead and bring [the body] to its desired destination.

וכמו שהוא בגשמיות הגוף, כך הוא בבחינת רוחניות הנפש האלקית

And just as it is with the corporeality of the body, so it is with the spirituality of the Divine soul.

Just as the loins support the corporeal body and head, so do the soul's loins support and lead the "body" and "head" of the soul to its desired spiritual destination.

האמונה האמיתית בה' אחד, אין סוף ברוך הוא

[The soul's loins are] the true belief in the One G-d, the blessed *Ein Sof*,

דאיהו ממלא כל עלמין וסובב כל עלמין

Who permeates all worlds with a vitality which is indwelling (*pnimi*), a vitality which is contracted and tailored to the capacity of each individual creature, and Who encompasses all worlds with a vitality that is transcendent (*makkif*), and which cannot therefore clothe itself within created beings in an indwelling manner,

ולית אתר פנוי מיניה

there being no place or level of existence void of Him,

למעלה עד אין קץ

above to no end, for there is no end to the degree of His exalted transcendence beyond all worlds,

ולמטה עד אין תכלית

and below to no limit, for there is no limit to His ability to descend to the very lowest levels of creation and clothe Himself within the world even to the point that the world conceals the G-dliness that is within it,

וכן לד' סטרין, בבחינת אין סוף ממש

and likewise in all four directions — east, west, north and south — truly in a state of infinitude.

All the above refers to the dimension of space.

וכן בבחינת שנה ונפש, כנודע

The same applies to the dimensions of “year” and “soul”, as is known.

Creation embraces the three dimensions known as “world”, “year” and “soul”, as is explained in *Sefer Yetzirah*.²⁰ “World” alludes to space, “year” refers to time, and “soul” denotes life. Just as G-d is one and infinite within the realm of *space*, so too is He one and infinite within the realms of *time* and *life*.

הנה אמונה זו נקראת בשם בחינת מתנים, דבר המעמיד ומקיים את הראש

Now this faith, this belief in G-d as outlined above, is referred to as the “loins” which uphold and sustain the “head”,

הוא השכל המתבונן ומעמיק דעת בגדולת אין סוף ברוך הוא, בבחינת עולם שנה נפש

meaning the intellect that contemplates and concentrates on the greatness of the blessed *Ein Sof* in the dimensions of “world”, “year” and “soul”,

Thus, this faith sustains the “head”, for the foundation of one’s comprehension of G-d’s greatness is one’s belief in His unity.

וברוב חסדו ונפלאותיו עמנו

and [that meditates] on the magnitude of His loving-kindness and His wonders with us,

להיות עם קרובו, ולדבקה בו ממש

making of us²¹ “a people near unto Him” who can truly²² “cleave unto Him.”

וכנודע ממאמר: יפה שעה אחת בתשובה ומעשים טובים בעולם הזה מכל חיי עולם הבא

Thus it is known from the teaching,²³ “One hour of repentance and good deeds in this world surpasses all the life of the World to Come.”

שהוא רק זיו והארה מבחינה הנקראת שכינה

For [the World to Come] is a mere gleam and reflection of the level [of Divinity] called *Shechinah*,

השוכן כו'

which is so called because it is the *Shechinah* (שכינה) “Who dwells” (השוכן) within created beings, and so on,

Since the *Shechinah* bears a certain relationship to created beings, it is therefore this level of Divinity that is revealed in *Gan Eden* — the World to Come, which is but a pale reflection of the *Shechinah*.

ונברא ביו"ד אחד משמו יתברך כו'

and [the World to Come] was created by the single letter yud of [G-d's] blessed Name, and so on, as explained by the Sages²⁴ in their exposition of the verse,²⁵ עולמים צור ה' ביה.

אבל תשובה ומעשים טובים מקרבים ישראל לאביהם שבשמים ממש

Repentance and good deeds, however, truly bring Israel near to their Father in Heaven,

למהותו ועצמותו כביכול, בחינת אין סוף ממש

unto (as it were) the very Being and Essence of Him Who is absolute infinitude.

וכמו שכתוב: הודו על ארץ ושמים, וירם קרן לעמו גו'

As it is written,²⁶ “His radiance is upon earth and heaven”: heaven and earth derive their life-force from a mere glimmer or gleam of G-d's Essence; not so the Jewish people, of whom the following verse²⁷ continues: “He raises glory upon His nation.”

The word קרן, here translated “glory”, signifies a thing's essence.²⁸ The verse thus implies that the Jewish people derive their life-force from G-d's infinite Essence.

אשר קדשנו במצותיו וציונו כו'

Similarly, before fulfilling many of the *mitzvot*, we say:²⁹ “Who has sanctified us [unto Himself] through His commandments, and commanded us [to perform the *mitzvah* at hand].”

By granting us the ability to perform His commandments, G-d elevates us to His level — to the encompassing level of holiness that utterly transcends the degree of holiness that permeates the worlds.

וכמים הפנים גו'

And reflecting upon G-d's infinite kindness to us, in that He chose us to be “His nation, the people close to Him,” will result in a reaction of “waters reflecting the face.”³⁰

להוליד מתבונה זו דחילו ורחימו שכליים או טבעיים

From this contemplation are born the intellectually-generated or the natural awe and love — the awe and love of G-d that are naturally found within the heart of all Jews and need but be revealed through contemplation.³¹

להיות בחינת צעק לבם אל ה'

giving rise [either] to (a) a mode of love in which³² “their heart cried out unto G-d” in its yearning to cleave to Him,

או בחינת רשפי אש ושלֵהבת עזה

or to (b) a mode of love characterized by³³ “flashes of fire, a mighty flame.”

בבחינת רצוא

The latter mode of love is the first stage of a dual dynamic³⁴ — *ratzo* (“advance”), loving G-d so fiercely and rapturously that the soul almost flees the body;

ואחר כך בבחינת שוב

this longing to expire, to lose one’s independent identity in G-d’s all-encompassing unity, [must be] followed by the second stage — *shov* (“retreat”), a sober and self-effacing return to the Divinely-ordained reality of living as a soul en clothed in a body,

להיות פחד ה' בלבו

so that there be the fear of G-d in one’s heart,

וליבוש מגדולתו כו'

specifically, the superior order of fear whereby [the individual] is abashed by His greatness.

This abashedness restrains him from doing anything that G-d finds displeasing.

והוא בחינת שמאל דוחה

This level of awe, fear and shame [results from]³⁵ “the left hand that parries,”

The Divine “left hand” represents *Gevurah*, the Supernal attribute of severity. It holds the worshiper at arm’s length, so to speak, curbing the intense love that would result from his sensation of G-d’s nearness as represented in the phrase,³⁶ *viyemino techabkeini* — “His right hand embraces me.”

כמו שכתוב במתן תורה: וירא העם וינעו, ויעמדו מרחוק

as it is written concerning the Giving of the Torah:³⁷ “The people saw and they trembled, and they stood from afar.”

The Divine revelation at the Giving of the Torah produced a feeling of awe and self-nullification which found expression in the Jews’ “standing from afar,” fearing as they did to draw close to G-d.

והן בחינת הזרועות והגוף שבנפש

And these [faculties] — love and fear — are the arms and the body of the soul; love and kindness are the “right arm,” fear and severity are the “left arm.”[38](#)

* * *

אך מי הוא הנותן כח ועוז לבחינת מתנים להעמיד ולקיים הראש והזרועות

But what gives the power and strength to the “loins” (i.e., faith) to support and sustain the “head” (i.e., the intellect that contemplates G-d’s greatness) and the “arms” (i.e., the love and fear of G-d)?

הוא עסק ולימוד הלכות בתורה שבעל פה

It is one’s involvement in — and study of — the laws of the Oral Torah, for the Torah is the food[39](#) that nourishes the soul’s faith,

שהיא בחינת גילוי רצון העליון

and [the Oral Torah] is the manifestation of the Supreme Will.

Only the Oral Torah manifestly reveals the Supreme Will in all its ramifications; the Written Torah does not elaborate on the detailed laws concerning the performance of the commandments. On the *mitzvah* of *tefillin*, for example, the Written Torah merely states that[40](#) “You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall serve as a reminder between your eyes.” It is not at all clear exactly what shall be bound, how it shall serve as a sign, and precisely where it shall be placed “between your eyes.” All these particulars are elaborated upon in the Oral Torah; it is there that G-d’s specific intentions regarding *tefillin* are revealed.

So too with the other commandments: the Oral Torah reveals the Supreme Will, as will be explained in more detail below, in Epistle 29.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to say that Torah may indeed be said to be the revelation of G-d’s Will, a level that transcends His wisdom, notwithstanding the fact that[41](#) “Torah proceeds from *Chochmah*,” i.e., from Divine wisdom. This is so because:

דאורייתא מחכמה היא דנפקת

Torah [merely] proceeds i.e., unfolds from *Chochmah*: it is merely revealed through Divine wisdom;

אבל מקורה ושרשה הוא למעלה מעלה מבחינת חכמה

its source and root, however, surpass by far the rank of *Chochmah*,

והוא הנקרא בשם רצון העליון, ברוך הוא

being that which is referred to as the Blessed One's Supreme Will, which encompasses and sustains *Chochmah*.

וכמו שכתוב: כצנה רצון תעטרנו

Thus it is written, — and the following proof text is cited here to illustrate the effect of Torah upon the soul,⁴² “As with a shield You crown⁴³ [the righteous man] with favor.” (The word here translated “favor” is *ratzon*, the same word that has been rendered as “Will”.)

So, too, the study of Torah encompasses and protects the soul of the Torah student,

כעטרה שהיא על המוחין שבראש

like a crown which is placed above the brains which are within the head.

Since the study of the Oral Torah reveals G-d's Will (i.e., the “crown” that transcends the level of wisdom), it is therefore able to strengthen the “loins” (i.e., faith), whose purpose it is to support the “head” (i.e., intellect) and the “arms” (i.e., the love and fear of G-d — the spiritual emotions that are the fruits of intellect).

וכנודע ממה שכתוב על פסוק: אשת חיל עטרת בעלה

[This teaching] parallels the familiar exposition of the verse,⁴⁴ “A woman of valor is the crown of her husband.”

The Alter Rebbe explains below, in Epistle 29, that “a woman of valor” alludes to the Oral Torah. Its numerous laws serve as a “crown” for her “husband” — the intellectual faculty of *Chochmah*.

וכל השונה הלכות בכל יום כו'

[This teaching] likewise [recalls the Rabbinic teaching, that]⁴⁵ “whoever studies Torah laws every day [is assured of life in the World to Come],” for it is the study of the Oral Torah that enables one to be receptive to Divine revelation in the World to Come, as is explained at greater length in Epistle 29.

וזהו: חגרה בעוז מתניה

This, then, is the meaning of the verse, “She girds her loins with strength”:

אין עוז אלא תורה

“There⁴⁶ is no strength but Torah,”

שהיא נותנת כח ועוז לבחינת מתנים החגורים ומלובשים בה

for it gives power and strength to the “loins”, i.e., the faith of the soul, which are girded and embodied in it,

לחזק ולאמץ זרועותיה, הן דחילו ורחימו שכליים או טבעיים

to strengthen and fortify its “arms”, namely the intellectually-generated or innate awe and love

כל חד לפום שיעורא דיליה

in each man according to his measure.

One individual generates a love or awe of G-d through his own intellectual endeavor, through study and meditation; another merely draws on his inborn reservoir of love and awe; in all cases, however, these spiritual emotions are strengthened by the study of Torah laws.

In the spirit of the above we can understand the metaphor of the verse, “She girds her loins with strength”: Just as a warrior gathers strength by girding his loins, so does the soul become more powerful by being enveloped with the encompassing radiance of the Divine light, which is drawn down upon it from the Supreme Will that is revealed in the laws of the Torah.

(ועל העמדת וקיום בחינת הראש שבנפש, הוא השכל המתבונן בו, אמר: טעמה כי טוב סחרה גוי, ומבואר במקום אחר)

([47](#)As regards supporting and sustaining the “head” of the soul, i.e., the intellect that contemplates, [Solomon] said:[48](#) “She perceives that her trade is good,” [a metaphor which is] explained elsewhere.)

What mainly concerns the Alter Rebbe here is “girding one’s loins” in order to arouse a love and fear of G-d; as he will soon explain, the ideal time for this is during prayer. He therefore only briefly notes in passing that the intellect is also strengthened through the study of Torah laws.

אך עת וזמן החיזוק ואימוץ הזרועות והראש היא שעת תפלת השחר

However, the occasion and time for the strengthening and fortification of the “arms” (i.e., the spiritual emotions) and the “head” (i.e., the intellect) is the time of morning prayer,

שהיא שעת רחמים ועת רצון העליון למעלה

for Above, that is a time of compassion, a time at which the Supreme Will is revealed.[49](#)

Since the Supreme Will strengthens the “arms” and “head”, it follows that the time of prayer — an hour of favor when the Supreme Will is manifest — is an especially propitious time to strengthen both one’s intellectual grasp of G-dliness and one’s spiritual emotions. Prayer is thus the ideal opportunity to meditate upon the greatness of G-d and to create within oneself a feeling of awe and love of Him.

ולזאת אותה אבקש ממבקשי ה'

Therefore, says the Alter Rebbe, this is what I would ask of those who seek to draw close to G-d:

יבינו וישכילו יחדיו, ולהיות לזכרון בין עיניהם, כל מה שכתבתי אליהם אשתקד בכלל

Let them both understand and contemplate, and have as a [constant] reminder between their eyes,[50](#) all that I wrote them last year[51](#) in general,

ובפרט מענין כוונת התפלה מעומקא דלבא

and especially with respect to devout concentration during prayer from the depths of their heart.

יום יום ידרשון ה' בכל לבם ובכל נפשם

Day after day let them seek G-d and desire to cleave to Him with all their heart and with all their soul;[52](#)

ונפשם תשתפך כמים נוכח פני ה'

let them pour out their soul like water[53](#) in the presence of G-d.

וכמאמר רז"ל בספרי: עד מיצוי הנפש כו'

In this spirit our Sages, of blessed memory, taught in Sifrei, commenting upon the verse, “and with all your soul”[54](#) — that [prayer should be intense] “to the extent of pressing out the soul”; i.e., until the soul bursts forth and expresses itself in an outpouring of love for G-d.

The wine that is forced out through the cracks of an absolutely full barrel is no more than a trickle. Yet what forces it through is the very fullness of the entire quantity of wine within. So, too, “pressing out the soul” refers to a state in which the entire essence of the soul is bursting forth with its love for G-d, yet only a trickle of this love is visible externally.

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ועתה הפעם הנני יוסיף שנית ידי בתוספת ביאור ובקשה כפולה, שטוחה ופרושה לפני כל אנשי שלומים
הקרובים והרחוקים, לקיים עליהם

And now once more I put forth my hand a second time with an additional explanation and a twofold request, extended and proposed to all men of the chassidic brotherhood, those who are near and those who are far, to undertake the following:

שכל ימי החול לא ירדו לפני התיבה הבעלי עסקים, שאין להם פנאי כל כך

On all weekdays, businessmen — who do not have so much time — should not step down before the Ark [to lead the congregation in prayer].

רק אותם שיש להם פנאי, או המלמדים או הסמוכים על שולחן אביהם

Only those who have the time [should lead the prayers], such as teachers or those who are supported by their parents,

שיכולים להאריך בתפלת השחר ערך שעה ומחצה לפחות, כל ימות החול

who at the morning service are able to pray at length for at least about an hour and a half [55](#) on all weekdays. [56](#)

מהם יהיה היורד לפני התיבה, על פי הגורל או על פי ריצוי הרוב

One of them should step down before the Ark, chosen by lot or by consent of the majority [of the congregants].

והוא יאסוף אליו בסביב לו כל הסמוכים על שולחן אביהם או המלמדים, שיוכלו להאריך כמוהו

He should gather around him all those who are supported by their parents, or teachers, who are able to pray at length like himself, and will thus not be distracted by the haste of others.

בבל ישונה, נא ונא

[This arrangement is] not to be changed, I beg and beseech you!

* * *

אך בשבתות וימים טובים, שגם כל בעלי עסקים יש להם פנאי ושעת הכושר להאריך בתפלתם בכוונת לבם
ונפשם לה'

On the Sabbaths and festivals, however, when all the businessmen, too, have the time and opportunity to pray at length, devoutly concentrating their heart and soul to G-d, —

ואדרבה, עליהם מוטל ביתר שאת ויתר עז, כמו שכתוב בשולחן ערוך, אורח חיים

moreover, their duty to do so is much greater, as is stated in *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim*,[57](#)

וכמו שכתוב בתורת משה: ששת ימים תעבוד גו', ויום השביעי שבת לה' אלקיך

and as is written in the Torah of Moses:[58](#) “Six days shall you work and the seventh day is a Sabbath *unto the L-rd your G-d*,”

דייקא: כולו לה'

stating clearly that the Sabbath is to be devoted wholly unto G-d, —

Unlike the festivals which are “partially unto G-d and partially unto you,” the Sabbath ought to be wholly dedicated to spiritual matters. Since the reason for this is that it was preceded by six mundane days of labor, it follows that those who were engaged in this labor during the weekdays — businessmen and the like — should surely utilize the Sabbath “wholly unto G-d.”

ולזאת גם הם ירדו לפני התיבה בשבת ויום טוב

on Sabbaths and festivals, therefore, they too can step down before the Ark,

על פי הגורל או בריצוי הרוב, כמו שכתבתי אשתקד

according to lot or by assent of the majority, as I wrote last year.

* * *

וכגון דא צריך לאודועי שבדעתי, אם ירצה השם, לשלוח לכל המנינים מרגלים בסתר

Moreover, it should be made known that, G-d willing, it is my intention to send spies secretly to all congregations,[59](#)

לידע ולהודיע כל מי שאפשר לו וכל מי שיש לו פנאי להאריך ולעיין בתפלה, ומתעצל

to find out and to notify about anyone who has the ability and the time to worship at length and to meditate while at prayer, but is slothful.

יהיה נידון בריחוק מקום, להיות נדחה בשתי ידים בבואו לפה לשמוע דברי אלקים חיים

He shall be punished by estrangement, being distanced by both hands when he comes here to hear chassidic teachings.[60](#)

ומכלל לאו אתה שומע הן

And from the negative you may infer the positive⁶¹ — that those who are more generous in the time they devote to their prayers will be assured of a warm welcome.

ולשומעים יונעם, ותבא עליהם ברכת טוב

Pleasant be the lot of those who hearken; may the blessing of goodness light upon them,

ואין טוב אלא תורה וכו'

— and⁶² “there is no ‘good’ but Torah.”

FOOTNOTES ^{1.} See Vol. I of the present series, p. 10. ^{2.} The Rebbe remarks that one would have expected this anthology to be entitled *Igrot Kodesh* (“Holy Epistles”), in the plural. The Rebbe goes on to suggest that a possible (and not entirely satisfactory) explanation might be an intended parallel to the preceding component of *Tanya*, which is entitled *Iggeret HaTeshuvah* (“Epistle on Repentance”), in the singular. ^{3.} *Shabbat* 93a; see *Likkutei Sichot*, Vol. XVIII, p. 267. ^{4.} In a talk on 2 Nissan 5708, recorded in *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5708, p. 170. ^{5.} “The occasion was the receipt of good news, which is a reason for expressing gratitude (*Rashi* on *Bereishit* 24:52, based on *Bereishit Rabbah* 58:6).” (— Note of the Rebbe.) ^{6.} 6:3. ^{7.} *Tehillim* 19:8. ^{8.} “This indicates that the tractates apportioned should include those that [consist only of *Mishnah* and] are lacking *Gemara*.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) ^{9.} “The intent [of the seemingly superfluous word כולו, here translated ‘in its entirety’] is to negate the possibility of covering the *Talmud* nearly enough to have it considered completely covered, in the spirit of the principle of כולו רובו (cf. *Taz* and *Acharonim*, *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim* 582:7). I.e., the apportioning of the *Shas* is to include those tractates in the Orders of *Zeraim* and *Taharot* (as mentioned above [that consist only of *Mishnah* and are lacking *Gemara*]), as well as [the tractates] *Tamid* and *Middot* (which do no more than describe [the *Beit HaMikdash* and related subjects]; cf. the Commentary [of the *Rambam*] on the *Mishnah*, cited in *Tosafot Yom Tov*, *ad loc.*).” (— Note of the Rebbe.) ^{10.} “It is then ‘whole’ in this [literal] sense as well.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) ^{11.} “Perhaps this phrase is intended to point out that this *public* study intensifies the learning of each individual participant, insofar as he is part of a multitude, and intensifies its effect upon him, by fortifying his heart.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) ^{12.} *Bereishit Rabbah* 61:4. ^{13.}

“This being the subject at hand — the [study of the] *Talmud*.” (— Note of the Rebbe.)

^{14.} “In accordance with the conclusion of Epistle 29 of *Iggeret HaKodesh*.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) ^{15.} “The following interpretation appears to be preferable: The Written Torah and the Oral Torah correspond respectively to the Six *Middot* and to the attribute of *Malchut*. The former *Sefirot* are predominantly *Chassadim*; the latter *Sefirah* is dominated by *Gevurot*.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) ^{16.} *Mishlei* 3:2. ^{17.} *Ibid.* 31:17. ^{18.} “See *Torah Or* (and *Or HaTorah*) at the conclusion of *Parshat Yitro*.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) ^{19.} *Sifri*, *Haazinu* 32:2 *et al.* ^{20.} 3:3 *et al.* ^{21.} *Tehillim* 148:14. ^{22.} *Devarim* 11:22. ^{23.} *Avot* 4:17. ^{24.} *Menachot* 29b. ^{25.} *Yeshayahu* 26:4. ^{26.} *Tehillim* 148:13. ^{27.} *Ibid.*, v. 14. ^{28.} “As in the [Talmudic] phrase *keren vachomesh*.” [Here *keren* signifies the

principal, the capital value of an object, as opposed to an added payment; cf. *Kerisos* 26b.] (— Note of the Rebbe.) [29.](#) Cf. *Siddur*, p. 6. [30.](#) “As explained above, in Part I, ch. 49.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) Cf. *Mishlei* 27:19. [31.](#) “As explained above, in Part I, ch. 44.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [32.](#) Cf. *Eichah* 2:18. [33.](#) Cf. *Shir HaShirim* 8:6. [34.](#) Cf. *Yechezkel* 1:14. [35.](#) Cf. *Sotah* 47a. [36.](#) *Shir HaShirim* 8:3. [37.](#) *Shmot* 20:15. [38.](#) *Tikkunei Zohar*, Introduction II. [39.](#) Cf. *Mishlei* 9:5. [40.](#) *Devarim* 6:8. [41.](#) *Zohar* II, 121a *et passim*. [42.](#) *Tehillim* 5:13. [43.](#) The Rebbe notes: “Though *tzinah* generally denotes a shield that protects the *body* from three sides, our verse concludes with the verb ‘crowned’ (rather than ‘surrounded’; see commentary of *Rashi* here), signifying that this shield also serves as a ‘crown’.” [44.](#) *Mishlei* 12:4. [45.](#) Conclusion of *Niddah* and *loc. cit.* [46.](#) *Sifri* on *Parshat Haazinu*, and elsewhere. [47.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [48.](#) *Mishlei* 31:18. [49.](#) *Zohar* I, 247b; III, 204a. [50.](#) Cf. *Shmot* 15:9. [51.](#) In the epistle beginning “You shall reprove” that appears at the conclusion of *Kuntres Acharon*. [52.](#) Cf. *Devarim* 4:29. [53.](#) Cf. *I Shmuel* 1:15. [54.](#) *Devarim* 6:5. [55.](#) “Cf. *Zohar* I, 62b and its commentaries; the letter published in the anthology entitled *Me’ah She’arim* 2b, and the sources indicated in the footnote there. See also *op. cit.*, 9b.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [56.](#) “The statement (*Berachot* 32b) that even the early chassidim [of Talmudic times] would devote one hour to the prayer itself, refers to the *Amidah* [alone].” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [57.](#) Gloss to 290:2; see also *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, *Orach Chayim* 290:5. Note of the Rebbe: “See also the *maamar* entitled *Mi Yitencha*, in *Torah Or.*” [58.](#) *Shmot* 20:9. [59.](#) In the original, *minyanim*; a *minyan* is a group of at least ten men constituting a congregation, and, by extension, signifies a place of communal prayer. [60.](#) Lit., “the words of the living G-d.” [61.](#) A Talmudic term; cf. *Nedarim* 11a. [62.](#) *Avot* 6:3.

Epistle 2

Upon his Arrival from Petersburg

The Alter Rebbe sent this pastoral letter to all his followers, upon his release from the imprisonment brought about by calumnies instigated by the opponents of Chassidism.[1](#) This slander resulted from his selfless and tireless efforts to strengthen the chassidic movement and disseminate its teachings. His subsequent release (also) served as a nod of approval from the government for their continued dissemination.

The Rebbeim, the successive leaders of the *ChaBaD* chassidic school of thought, have taught that the Alter Rebbe’s arrest resulted from an indictment voiced in the Heavenly Court — against his doctrine of clothing the teachings of Chassidism in intellectual terms.[2](#) (In fact the very word *ChaBaD*, naming the movement he founded and the teachings he first articulated, is an acronym for *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat* — “wisdom”, “understanding”, and “knowledge”, respectively.) The same voice, moreover, disapproved of the fact that the Alter Rebbe beamed these teachings at the Jewish masses.

The Alter Rebbe wrote this epistle in order that it be clearly understood that his release from physical incarceration resulted directly from his being cleared of all spiritual charges. Indeed, a clear signal and an extra measure of strength was thereby given from Above that the teachings of Chassidism be promulgated according to the Alter Rebbe's approach of making them intelligible and accessible to all.

With the Alter Rebbe's release there thus began a second era in the dissemination of Chassidism. This is alluded to by this letter, which is numbered *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle 2. It will be noted that the number 2 is mentioned only *after* the heading, "Upon his Arrival from Petersburg." Now Epistle 27 also has a prefatory heading that explains why it was written. There, however, the number of the epistle appears first, and only then is it followed by the introductory heading. Here the order is inverted, because the second period (or, in chassidic terminology, [3](#) "the second degree of greatness"), which is alluded to by the number 2, began with the Alter Rebbe's arrival from Petersburg.

קטנתי מכל החסדים ומכל האמת

"[I4](#) have become small from all the favors and from all [the truth]."

These words were uttered by Jacob as an introduction to his plea to G-d that He save him from Esau. Although G-d had previously [5](#) assured him that He would accompany and protect him wherever he went, Jacob nonetheless feared that all the kindnesses that G-d had already shown him had made him "small", i.e., had reduced his merits. He thus feared that he was possibly in a state in which he would have to ask G-d anew, [6](#) "Save me."

פירוש:

This means —

Rashi comments [7](#) that "I have become small" is a result of "all the favors and all the truth"; i.e., "My merits have diminished because of the favors and truth You have done with me." *Ramban* argues that this comment is inconsistent with the "language of the verse," which states that "*I* have become small," not that the speaker's *merits* have become small; there is a diminution in quality rather than in quantity. [8](#)

Ramban therefore understands [9](#) "I have become small" to mean: "I am unworthy of receiving all your kindness and truth." Thus, according to *Ramban*, "I have become small" is not a *result* of G-d's "kindness and truth," but rather an expression of the speaker's being *unworthy* of receiving G-d's "kindness and truth."

The Alter Rebbe, however, is going to explain this verse according to the commentary of *Rashi*: "*from* all the kindness" simply means that it was the kindness that made Jacob feel "small". At the same time, though, the Alter Rebbe will understand "I have become small" as referring to the speaker himself: it is he himself who has become diminished as a result of G-d's many kindnesses and His truth. (Thus, not only have the particular

person's merits become lessened, which results in his diminishment,¹⁰ but he himself is directly affected as a result of the “kindness and truth.”)

Although it is the person himself (and not the tally of his merits) that has become diminished, nonetheless this diminution is a result of the “kindness and truth.” This, then, is what the Alter Rebbe intends by saying “This means” —

שבכל חסד וחסד שהקדוש ברוך הוא עושה לאדם, צריך להיות שפל רוח במאד

that with every single favor that G-d bestows upon a man, he ought to become very humble.

כי חסד דרועא ימינא

For [the Supernal *Sefirah* of]¹¹ “*Chesed* is the right arm,”

וימינו תחבקני

and, as Scripture states,¹² “His right arm embraces me,”

שהיא בחינת קרבת אלקים ממש, ביתר שאת מלפנים

which refers to the state of G-d actually bringing him close [to Himself], far more intensely than before.

Every Divine act of *Chesed* brings a man closer to G-d.

וכל הקרוב אל ה' ביתר שאת, והגבה למעלה מעלה

And whoever is [brought] exceedingly close to G-d, being raised aloft to great heights, ¹³

צריך להיות יותר שפל רוח, למטה מטה

ought to be ever more humble, to the lowliest plane,

כמו שכתוב: מרחוק ה' נראה לי

as it is written,¹⁴ “From afar has G-d appeared to me.”

When G-d appears to an individual through a particular manifestation of kindness, this should make him perceive himself as being — in relation to G-d — “afar”, i.e., humbly distant from Him. Alternatively, the verse may be implying that perceiving oneself as being “afar” is the very means by which to attain a state in which “G-d has appeared to me.”

וכנודע, דכולא קמיה דווקא כלא חשיב

And, as is known, “All that are before *Him* are esteemed as nothing.”

A being of even the highest conceivable spiritual level is of absolutely no account — indeed, it is nullified out of existence — when in G-d’s presence, when it is “before Him,” for nothing exists before G-d other than Himself.

ואם כן, כל שהוא קמיה יותר, הוא יותר כלא ואין ואפס

Hence, whoever is more “before Him” — whoever is closer to G-d — is that much more like nothing, naught, and non-existent.

וזו היא בחינת ימין שבקדושה, וחסד לאברהם

This [self-effacing response to Divine favors] is the level of the “right side” of holiness, and of “*Chesed* unto Abraham” — the Divine lovingkindness that is bestowed upon Abraham, as in the verse, [15](#) “You grant truth to Jacob, loving-kindness unto Abraham,”

שאמר: ואנכי עפר ואפר

who said, [16](#) “And I am dust and ashes.”

The kindness that G-d showed Abraham motivated him to attain the ultimate degree of humility that this statement expresses. Just as in the heavenly realms “the right arm of Divine *Chesed*” causes recipients of the *Chesed* to lose their independent identity in the identity of the Bestower of lovingkindness, so too does it affect mortals upon whom it is bestowed, making them likewise humble and self-effacing.

וזו היא גם כן מדתו של יעקב

This [humility born of kindness] is also the characteristic trait of Jacob,

ובזאת התנצל על יראתו מפני עשו, ולא די לו בהבטחתו: והנה אנכי עמך גו'

and therewith he justified himself for his fear of Esau, and did not regard the [Divine] promise given to him as being sufficient: [17](#) “And behold I am with you [and I shall protect you wherever you go].”

מפני היות קטן יעקב במאד מאד בעיניו, מחמת ריבוי החסדים

[This was so,] because Jacob regarded himself as utterly insignificant on account of the multitude of [G-d’s] favors,

כי במקלי גו'

[as he said,] [18](#) “for [only] with my staff [did I cross the Jordan, and now I have [enough property for] two camps],”

ואינו ראוי וכדאי כלל להנצל כו'

and he considered himself as being utterly unfit and unworthy to be saved, and so on.

וכמאמר רז"ל: שמא יגרום החטא

As our Sages, of blessed memory, expressed it,¹⁹ “[Jacob was apprehensive] lest sin would cause [him not to be saved],”

שנדמה בעיניו שחטא

for it appeared to him that he had sinned.

“I have become small” thus means that the multitude of kindnesses bestowed upon Jacob caused him to feel so small and insignificant that he feared that he had sinned, and hence needed once again to beseech G-d that He save him from his brother Esau. And, indeed, every Jew would do well to follow in the footsteps of his father Jacob, becoming ever more humble with every successive act of kindness that G-d shows him.

The Rebbe once explained why at the outset of this epistle the Alter Rebbe uses an expression in which the word *Chesed* is repeated: וחסד חסד בכל. (This is translated above, “with every single favor [that G-d bestows upon man].”) In general, there are two modes of Divine kindness: (a) that which descends to man within the ordered framework of created worlds and becomes manifest in a natural manner; and (b) that which transcends the conventions of the created universe and whose manifestation is supernatural.

This is why the Alter Rebbe there goes on to say that (a) “*Chesed* is the right arm,” as well as (b) “His right arm embraces me.” The former phrase alludes to the *Chesed* of the Supernal *Sefirot*, a finite mode of Divine kindness that is analogous to the finite degree of life-force that is clothed in the human arm; the latter phrase alludes to the infinite mode of Divine kindness that is analogous to the infinite degree of life-force that transcends the limitation of being clothed in a particular organ, and is thus said to be “encompassing” (*makkif*) or “embracing”.

מה שאין כן בזה לעומת זה, הוא ישמעאל, חסד דקליפה

It is different, though, with the [unholy] counterpart [to the attribute of kindness that belongs to the holy “side” of the universe]; i.e., [it is different] with Ishmael, [who personifies] the attribute of *Chesed* that belongs to the *kelipah*.

The counterpart to Abraham, who personifies the attribute of “*Chesed* (kindness) that belongs to holiness,” is Ishmael, who personifies “kindness that belongs to unholiness”; the opposite of Isaac, who represents the attribute of “*Gevurah* (severity) that belongs to holiness,” is Esau, who represents the attribute of “*Gevurah* that belongs to unholiness.”

כל שהחסד גדול, הוא הולך וגדל בגובה וגסות הרוח ורוחב לבו

The more kindness [shown to Ishmael and to his ilk], the more he grows in pride, arrogance and self-satisfaction.

A Jew must thus be on guard against the “*Chesed of kelipah*,” and ensure that G-d’s acts of kindness will lead him to cultivate the traits of Abraham and Jacob, the “*Chesed of holiness*,” so that his response will be humility rather than pride.

* * *

ולזאת באתי מן המודיעים מודעה רבה לכללות אנ"ש

Accordingly, I am now making a weighty announcement to all the men of our [chassidic] fraternity,

על ריבוי החסדים אשר הגדיל ה' לעשות עמנו

regarding the multitude of favors,[20](#) “the great things that G-d has done with us.”

The attribute of *Chesed* (kindness) is also known by the name *Gedulah* (greatness), as in the verse[21](#) which enumerates the Divine attributes, and which begins, והגבורה הגדולה ה' לך, Indeed, the term *Gedulah* connotes an even greater manifestation of Divine kindness than does *Chesed*. The Alter Rebbe therefore adds the phrase regarding “the *great* things that G-d has done for us,” thereby indicating the extraordinary kindness G-d had shown chassidim by releasing him.

לאחוז במדותיו של יעקב

[As a result of all these favors:] Hold on to the attributes of Jacob,

שאר עמו ושארית ישראל

[for Jews are known as][22](#) “the remnant of His people” and[23](#) “the remainder of Israel”; a Jew possesses within himself the attributes described here as “remnants” and “remainder”,

שמשים עצמו כשיריים ומותרות ממש, שאין בו שום צורך

regarding himself truly as mere remnants,[24](#) as something truly superfluous and dispensable.

לבלתי רום לבבם מאחיהם כו'

Let [the men of our fraternity] not become haughty in relation to their brethren, i.e., their opponents, who caused the arrest of the Alter Rebbe.

ולא להרחיב עליהם פה, או לשרוק עליהם, חס ושלום

Let them not jeer nor whistle derisively at them, heaven forbend.

הס מלהזכיר, באזהרה נוראה

A strict warning: Hold your peace! Mention nothing!

רק להשפיל רוחם ולבם, במדת אמת ליעקב, מפני כל אדם

Rather, [the men of our chassidic fraternity] are to subdue their spirit and heart before every man according to the attribute of “truth unto Jacob,”²⁵

בנמיכת רוח, ומענה רך משיב חימה, ורוח נכאה כו'

with humility, with²⁶ “a soft answer [that] turns away anger,” and with a restrained spirit.

וכולי האי ואולי יתן ה' בלב אחיהם, כמים הפנים וגו'

And through all that,²⁷ perhaps G-d will put [a conciliatory and loving response] into the heart of their brethren, [for]²⁸ “as waters [reflect] one’s face, [so too does the heart of one man reflect the heart of another].”

FOOTNOTES ¹. See *The Arrest and Liberation of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi* by Rabbi Avraham Chanoch Glitzenstein, translated by Rabbi Jacob Immanuel Schochet (Kehot, N.Y., 1964). To this day, the Alter Rebbe’s release in 1798 is celebrated annually on 19-20 Kislev. ². See *Likkutei Sichot*, Vol. I, p. 74. ³. See *Or HaTorah*, p. 367ff. ⁴. *Bereishit* 32:11. ⁵. *Ibid.* 28:15. ⁶. *Ibid.* 28:15. ⁷. “Based on *Shabbat* 32a.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) ⁸. “See *Chiddushei Aggadot*, *loc. cit.*” (— Note of the Rebbe.) ⁹. “Thus too in *Bereishit Rabbah* on this verse.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) ¹⁰. “Cf. *Chiddushei Aggadot*, *loc. cit.*” (— Note of the Rebbe.) ¹¹. *Tikkunei Zohar*, Introduction II, s.v. *Patach Eliyahu*. ¹². *Shir HaShirim* 2:6. ¹³. Cf. *Yeshayahu* 7:11. The letters of the unusual Heb. verb והגבה are vocalized as follows: *Shva*, *patach*, *shva*, *tzeirei*, and *patach* for the final *mapik hei*. ¹⁴. *Yirmeyahu* 31:2. ¹⁵. *Michah* 7:20; Abraham personifies the attribute of *Chesed*. ¹⁶. *Bereishit* 18:27. ¹⁷. *Ibid.* 28:15. ¹⁸. *Ibid.* 32:11. ¹⁹. *Berachot* 4a. ²⁰. *Tehillim* 126:3. ²¹. *I Divrei HaYamim* 29:11. ²². *Yeshayahu* 11:11. ²³. *Yirmeyahu* 6:9; 31:6. ²⁴. *Rosh HaShanah* 17a-b. ²⁵. For the comment of the Rebbe Maharash on this stipulation of the Alter Rebbe, see *HaYom Yom*, p. 77. ²⁶. Cf. *Mishlei* 15:1. ²⁷. This final sentence was added by the Alter Rebbe at a later date; see *HaYom Yom*, *loc. cit.* ²⁸. *Mishlei* 27:19.

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Epistle 3

וילבש צדקה כשריון, וכובע ישועה בראשו

“And¹ He garbed himself with *tzedakah*² as with a coat of mail, and a helmet of salvation upon his head.”

This verse in fact speaks of G-d’s promised actions in defense of His people. Nevertheless, the deeds of Jews that mirror G-d’s deeds serve as a vessel which can receive (or as a means which can bring about) G-d’s reciprocal action.³ Hence when Jews act in a righteous and charitable manner, in the spirit of the term *tzedakah*, such conduct attracts and calls forth Divine activity on their behalf. In particular, a Jew’s Divine service that resembles G-d’s own acts of *tzedakah* contains within it a protective “coat of mail” for his body and a “helmet of salvation” for his head.

ודרשו רז"ל: מה שריון זה, כל קליפה וקליפה מצטרפת לשריון גדול, אף צדקה, כל פרוטה ופרוטה מצטרפת לחשבון גדול

[On this verse] our Sages, of blessed memory, commented:⁴ “Just as with chain mail all the individual scales add up to form a large coat of mail, so it is with charity: all the individual coins [given to charity] add up to a great amount.”

The Alter Rebbe now anticipates a question: What is gained by this analogy? Surely it is just as obvious that “all the individual coins [given to charity] add up to a great amount” as it is that “all the individual scales add up to form a large coat of mail.”

פירוש: שהשריון עשוי קשקשים על נקבים, והם מגינים שלא יכנס חץ בנקבים, וככה הוא מעשה הצדקה

This means — and this is the additional point being made here — that just as the mail is made of scales covering gaps, and these shield one against any arrow entering through the gaps, so it is with the act of charity.

I.e., as will presently be explained, the spiritual dynamic of charity comprises (a) an element that corresponds to the chinks in a coat of mail, and (b) an element that corresponds to the protective scales (the coins) that cover those gaps.

* * *

וביאור הענין: כי גדולה צדקה מכל המצות

The meaning of this [is as follows]: Charity is greater than all the commandments,

שמהן נעשים לבושים להנשמה

for [their performance] produces “garments” for the soul.⁵

The performance of the commandments provides the “garments” that enable the soul to withstand the intense degree of Divine revelation to which it will be exposed in *Gan Eden*, instead of being nullified by it.

הנמשכים מאור אין סוף ברוך הוא

[These garments] are drawn forth from the [infinite] light of the blessed *Ein Sof*,

Deriving from a source which is infinite, they enable the soul to cope with the infinite degree of revelation which it will encounter in *Gan Eden*.

מבחינת סובב כל עלמין

from the level of *sovev kol almin*.

Unlike the mode of life-giving Divine illumination called *memaleh kol almin* (lit., “filling all worlds”), which becomes integrated and manifest within the creatures it animates, the mode of Divine illumination called *sovev kol almin* (lit., “encompassing all worlds”) is not limited to the finite spiritual capacity of created beings; it transcends and affects them from afar, so to speak.

(כמבואר הפירוש ממלא כל עלמין וסובב כל עלמין בלקוטי אמרים, עיין שם)

([6](#)The meaning of *memaleh kol almin* and *sovev kol almin* has been explained in *Likkutei Amarim*; [7](#) see there.)

באתערותא דלתתא, היא מצות ה' ורצון העליון ברוך הוא

[These garments are brought into being] by an “arousal from below,” i.e., the [fulfillment of the] commands of G-d and the will of the Supreme Being.

Since the commandments emanate from G-d's Supreme Will, from the level of *sovev kol almin*, they serve as the source for the above-mentioned garments.

ועיקר המשכה זו מאור אין סוף ברוך הוא, הוא לבוש ואור מקיף ל" ספירות דאצילות, בריאה, יצירה, עשיה

The essence of this efflux from the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light is a garment and encompassing light for the Ten *Sefirot* of [the Four Worlds:] *Atzilut*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*,

המשתלשלות מעילה לעילה ומדרגה למדרגה כו'

which evolve from cause to cause and from rung to rung,

הנקראות בשם ממלא כל עלמין

[these *Sefirot*] being referred to as *memaleh kol almin*.

The Alter Rebbe now answers the following question: Since the *Sefirot* themselves are the Divinity of the Four Worlds, why do they need the infinite *Ein Sof*-light as a garment?

פירוש: כי אור אין סוף ברוך הוא מתלבש ומאיר בתוך כל השתלשלות העשר ספירות דאצילות, בריאה, יצירה, עשיה

This means that the *Ein Sof*-light vests itself and radiates in an indwelling manner within the entire evolving chain of the Ten *Sefirot* of [the Worlds of] *Atzilut*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*;

והוא המאציל העשר ספירות דאצילות המשתלשלות לבריאה, יצירה, עשיה

[moreover,] it gives rise to the Ten *Sefirot* of [the World of] *Atzilut* which evolve into [the Worlds of] *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*,

The *Sefirot* of *Atzilut* thus serve as the Divine illumination for the Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*. This is made possible —

על ידי צמצום עצום המבואר בעץ חיים

by means of an immense contraction (*tzimtzum*) which is explained in *Etz Chayim*.

This contraction involves not only a quantitative lessening of spiritual illumination, but more importantly a qualitative diminution; the hitherto infinite light is contracted to so great a degree that it can emanate and illuminate in a finite manner.

ונקרא אור פנימי

[The resultant light] is referred to as an indwelling light (*or pnimi*) — a light that vests itself in an inward manner within created beings, inasmuch as it is contracted to match the spiritual capacity of the particular created being in which it is clothed.

ועל ידי קיום המצות, נמשך אור מקיף הנ"ל, ומאיר תוך העשר ספירות דאצילות, בריאה, יצירה, עשיה, ומתייחד עם האור פנימי

Now, by the fulfillment of the commandments, the above-mentioned encompassing light is elicited and radiates within the Ten *Sefirot* of [the Worlds of] *Atzilut*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, thereby uniting with the indwelling light.

When this occurs, the infinite and transcendent light (*or makkif*) permeates the indwelling light (*or pnimi*) of *Seder Hishtalshelut* — the self-obscuring and chain-like descent of the Divine life-force through which increasingly material worlds come into being.

ונקרא יחוד קודשא בריך הוא

This is referred to as the unification of the Holy One, blessed be He, the epithet “holy” (*kadosh*) signifying His separateness from the world, hence the level of *sovev kol almin*,

ושכינתיה, כמו שכתוב במקום אחר

and His *Shechinah*, the indwelling light which is so called because the Divine Presence descends and dwells (שכן) within the created worlds, as is explained elsewhere.⁸

It is explained in another context that the performance of *mitzvot* results in this union of the Holy One, blessed be He, with His *Shechinah*. This is why we say יחוד לשם (“For the sake of the union of the Holy One, blessed be He, with His *Shechinah*”) before we perform certain *mitzvot*: for it is they that fuse the light of *sovev kol almin*, known as “the Holy One, blessed be He,” with the light of *memaleh kol almin*, known as the *Shechinah*. Thus, the main radiation of Divine light drawn down through the performance of commandments, is effected within the evolution of the *Sefirot* of the Four Worlds.

ומהארה דהארה מאור מקיף הנ"ל, על ידי צמצום רב

And from a reflection of a reflection of the above-mentioned encompassing light, by means of a powerful contraction,

נעשה לבוש לבחינת נפש, רוח, נשמה, של האדם בגן עדן התחתון והעליון

a garment is made in the Lower and Upper Garden of Eden for the [soul-levels called] *Nefesh-Ruach-Neshamah* of man,

שיוכלו ליהנות ולהשיג איזה השגה והארה מאור אין סוף ברוך הוא, כמו שמבואר במקום אחר

enabling them to derive pleasure and attain some apprehension and illumination from the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light which is diffused in the Garden of Eden, as is explained elsewhere.⁹

For, unaided, the finite soul would never be able to apprehend this infinite radiance.

וזה שאמרו רז"ל: שכר מצוה בהאי עלמא ליכא

This is the meaning of the teaching of our Sages, of blessed memory:¹⁰ “In this world there is no reward for [the fulfillment of] the commandments.”

They do not say that “in this world there is no reward granted”; rather, that “there exists no reward in this world.”

כי בעולם הזה הגשמי ובעל גבול וצמצום רב ועצום מאד מאד

For in this world, which is physical, and in a state of limitation, a state of great and most extreme contraction,

אי אפשר להתלבש שום הארה מאור אין סוף ברוך הוא

it is impossible that any reflection of the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light should become invested,

כי אם על ידי י' ספירות, הנקראים גופא בזוהר הקדוש

except by means of the Ten *Sefirot*, which, in the sacred *Zohar*,^{[11](#)} are referred to as the “Body”:

The Alter Rebbe will soon explain that just as body and soul are incomparable, so too are the *Sefirot* infinitely distant from the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light.

As a reward for performance of the commandments one is enabled to draw down the infinite degree of light, but this light cannot possibly descend within this world, which is bounded. Thus, “In this world there is no reward for [the fulfillment of] the commandments.” No such revelation can possibly be clothed in this world, for whatever illuminates and clothes itself in this world derives merely from the level of the Ten *Sefirot*, which the *Zohar* terms the “Body”. Thus, for example:

חסד דרועא ימינא כו'

“[The *Sefirah* of] *Chesed* (‘kindness’) is [called] the [Supernal] ‘right arm,’ [Gevurah (‘severity’) is [called] the ‘left arm,’]” and so on.

לפי שכמו שאין ערוך לו להגוף הגשמי, לגבי הנשמה

For just as there is no comparison between the physical body and the soul,

כך אין ערוך כלל ל' ספירות דאצילות, לגבי המאציל העליון, אין סוף ברוך הוא

so there is no comparison whatever between the Ten *Sefirot* of *Atzilut* and the Supreme Emanator, the [infinite] *Ein Sof*.

כי אפילו חכמה עילאה, שהיא ראשיתן, היא בבחינת עשיה גופנית לגבי אין סוף ברוך הוא

For in relation to the *Ein Sof* even the Supreme *Chochmah* (“wisdom”), which is the first of the *Sefirot*, is on the plane of material action,

כמו שמבואר בלקוטי אמרים

as is explained in *Likkutei Amarim*.^{[12](#)}

ואי לזאת, במעשה הצדקה וגמילות חסדים, שאדם אוכל מפירותיהן בעולם הזה

Therefore, through the practice of charity and deeds of kindness, whose fruits man enjoys partially in this world,^{[13](#)}

Since some minute quantity of the reward for the fulfillment of these commandments is enjoyed within this world, it follows that a microscopic ray of the infinite light of *sovev kol almin* does descend into this world. This is possible, because:

יש נקבים, על דרך משל, בלבוש העליון המקיף על גופא, הם הכלים די' ספירות

there appear, metaphorically speaking, gaps in the supernal garment that envelops the “Body”, [which is] the vessels of the Ten *Sefirot*.

להאיר מהם ולהשפיע אור ושפע

Through these [gaps] light and abundance are irradiated and diffused,

מחסד, דרועא ימינא, אורך ימים בעולם הזה הגשמי

so that from [the *Sefirah* of] “*Chesed*, [which is] the right arm,” [there results] longevity in this physical world;

ועושר וכבוד מדרועא שמאלא

and from “the left arm,” which is the *Sefirah* of *Gevurah*, [there result] wealth and honor,

וכן בתפארת

and likewise with beauty, that emanates from the *Sefirah* of *Tiferet*,

והוד והדר וחדוה וכו'

and majesty (*hod*), splendor (*hadar*) and gladness (*chedvah*), etc., from the respective *Sefirot* of *Hod*, *Yesod*, etc.¹⁴

אך כדי שלא ינקו החיצונים למעלה מאור ושפע המשתלשל ויורד למטה מטה עד עולם הזה הגשמי

But in order to prevent the forces of evil from drawing, on high, from the light and abundance which evolves and descends netherwards, as far down as this physical world,

When this spiritual energy descends to such a lowly level, it is possible for the *kelipot* and *sitra achra* to derive nurture from it as well. In order to forestall this,

וכן, למטה, להגין על האדם ולשמרו ולהצילו מכל דבר רע בגשמיות וברוחניות

and likewise, here below, in order to shield man, and to guard him and save him from all physical and spiritual harm, which could conceivably result if the *kelipot* and *sitra achra* were to derive nurture from this source,

לזאת חוזר ומאיר אור המקיף, וסותם הנקב, על דרך משל

the encompassing light is reflected back, and, figuratively speaking, fills the breach,

Once the encompassing light has (so to speak) shone down into this world through the chink produced by man's charitable deeds, it is then reflected back in order to fill the very same breach. This deprives the forces of evil of any possible nurture via the same avenue,

כי הוא מבחינת אין סוף וסובב כל עלמין, כנ"ל

for this [encompassing light] belongs to the category of Infinitude and *sovev kol almin*, as mentioned above — and this infinitely transcendent degree of light (called or *makkif*) is a source from which the forces of evil are unable to derive any sustenance.

We thus see why *tzedakah*, producing its own provident “gaps” and its own protective “scales”, is likened to a coat of mail. Moreover:

וזהו שאמרו רז"ל: מצטרפת לחשבון גדול דייקא

And this is [what underlies] the [above-quoted] teaching of our Sages, of blessed memory: “[Just as with chain mail all the individual scales add up to form a large coat of mail, so it is with charity: all the individual coins] add up to a *great* amount.” The word “great” is used advisedly,

(כי גדול הוי' ומהולל מאד, בלי סוף ותכלית וגבול (חס ושלום

in the spirit of the verse,¹⁵ “Great is *Havayah* and exceedingly glorified”— without end, limit or restriction (¹⁶heaven fend).

Thus, by means of the coins given to charity one draws down spiritual light from the level denoted by the phrase, “Great is *Havayah*.” The Four-Letter Divine Name alludes to the Ten *Sefirot* — for the letter yud represents the level of *Chochmah*; the first letter *hei* represents the level of *Binah*; *vav* represents the six *middot*, the spiritual emotions; and the final *hei* represents *Malchut*.¹⁷ These *Sefirot* are sustained by the *Ein Sof* and partake of its infinite greatness.

אך מי הוא הגורם לירידת האור והשפעת לעולם הזה הגשמי מ" ספירות, הנקראים גופא

But what causes the descent to this physical world of the light and abundance from [a source as lofty as] the Ten *Sefirot* [of the World of *Atzilut*], which are referred to as the Body?

הוא היחוד הנ"ל

It is the above-mentioned union of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His *Shechinah* — the infinite degree of radiation permeating the *Sefirot* and the subsequent worlds — and this union is brought about by the performance of the *mitzvot*;

שהיא תוספת הארה והשפעה מבחינת אור אין סוף, המאציל העליון ברוך הוא

for it is an additional radiation and effluence from the light of the *Ein Sof*, the Supreme Emanator [of the Ten *Sefirot*],

ביתר שאת על ההארה וההשפעה שבתחילת האצילות וההשתלשלות וכו'

in a measure exceeding the radiation and effluence at the beginning of the emanation in the World of *Atzilut* and subsequent evolution.

Inasmuch as the additional measure of infinite radiation and effluence far transcends *Atzilut* — so much so, that in comparison to it the World of *Atzilut* and our grossly corporeal World of *Asiyah* are equally distant — it enables the radiation of *Atzilut* to find its way into this world.

וראשית תוספת ההארה וההשפעה היא לראשית ה' ספירות

And the additional radiation and effluence is first bestowed upon [the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah*, which is] the first of the Ten *Sefirot*.

וזה הוא: וכובע ישועה בראשו

This is the meaning of [the above-quoted phrase], “and a helmet of salvation (ישועה) upon his head.”

ישועה הוא מלשון: וישע ה' אל הבל ואל מנחתו

For ישועה shares a root with וישע, which is the verb in the phrase,¹⁸ “And G-d turned toward Abel and his gift.”

The word *yeshuah* thus means “turning toward” and (by extension) “drawing down.”

והוא ירידת האור והשפע דש"ע נהורין שבזוהר הקדוש

This alludes to the drawing down of the light and abundance of the *shin-ayin nehorin*, the “three-hundred-and-seventy lights” spoken of in the holy *Zohar*.¹⁹

This light is much loftier than the Ten *Sefirot* of *Atzilut*: The letter *shin*, whose numerical value is 300, alludes to the three intellectual faculties of *ChaBaD* insofar as they exist at the spiritual level termed “hundreds”; the letter *ayin*, whose numerical value is 70, hints at the seven emotive attributes, each of which incorporates ten elements. This lofty illumination — the “helmet of salvation” — is drawn down upon the “head”, i.e., the beginning, of the Ten *Sefirot*.

וכמו שכתוב: יאר ה' פניו אליך

As it is written,²⁰ “May G-d make His Face (i.e., His inner being) shine upon you” — upon His people in this lowly world.

יאר פניו אתנו סלה

[It is also written]:[21](#) “May He make His Face (i.e., His inner being) shine with us forever.”

אתנו: הוא על ידי מעשה הצדקה

[That which ensures that this Divine light be] “with us,” is the practice of charitable deeds.

וזה הוא: זורע צדקות מצמיח ישועות

And this is the meaning of the phrase,[22](#) “He who sows *tzedakot* (‘charities’) brings forth *yeshuot* (‘salvations)’”; i.e., the distribution of charity results in the salvation brought about by the light of the above-mentioned *shin-ayin nehorin*.

* * *

וככה יאר ה' פניו אליהם

So[23](#) may G-d make His Face shine upon you,

צדקתם עומדת לעד

and[24](#) “your *tzedakah* shall endure forever.”

That which is revealed now as a result of an act of *tzedakah* is merely the “fruit”; the essence of the reward is revealed only at the Time to Come, at the time of the Revival of the Dead — and until that time it remains concealed. Only then will the light of *sovev kol almin* truly permeate and clothe itself within this world, as explained below in Epistle 32.

וקרנם תרום בישועת מצמיח קרן ישועה, צמח צדקה מהכובע ישועה הנ"ל

May your horn (i.e., power) be exalted by the salvation (*yeshuah*) of the One[25](#) “Who causes the horn of salvation to sprout” — by a sprouting of the *tzedakah* [which G-d does for His people], from the “helmet of salvation” mentioned above,

כנפשו תדרשנו

as[26](#) is the wish of one who seeks Him.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Yeshayahu* 59:17. [2.](#) The Hebrew word means both “charity” (its primary meaning in this work) and “righteousness”. [3.](#) “This recalls the Alter Rebbe’s interpretation of the teaching, למעלה מה דע, ממך — ‘Know [that] that which is Above [comes about] from you’ (*HaYom Yom*, entry for 13 *Iyar*).” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [4.](#) *Bava Batra* 9b. [5.](#) “As explained below, in Epistle 29.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [6.](#)

Parentheses appear in the original text. [7.](#) Ch. 48. [8.](#) “Cf. [*Tanya*] Part I, ch. 41. However, we cannot say that [the Alter Rebbe] intended to indicate this chapter, for if this were so he would have added ‘in *Likkutei Amarim*,’ as he had just done in this same epistle with regard to *sovev kol almin*.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [9.](#) See below, Epistle 29. [10.](#) *Kiddushin* 39b. [11.](#) “[The level termed ‘Body’ is] infinitely lower than its soul — the *Ein Sof*-light.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [12.](#) “The reference is evidently to Part II, chs. 8-9, which furnishes a more extensive explanation of this subject than is offered here. Even less explanation than here is offered in the Alter Rebbe’s Note to Part I, ch. 2; it is thus clear that the above reference cannot be to this source. It is true that in *Iggeret HaTeshuvah*, ch. 4 (and elsewhere), the Alter Rebbe when applicable specifies ‘Part II’ of *Likkutei Amarim* — but this is done only where he wishes to cite an exact location, as we see from his concluding words (‘ch. 11’). This is not the case here.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [13.](#) *Kiddushin* 40a. [14.](#)

“It would seem that the Alter Rebbe omitted [the *Sefirah* of] *Netzach*. Furthermore, what does he mean by ‘etc.’?”

The above alignment evidently follows *Zohar* II (98a-b, cited in *Tzemach Tzedek* on *Tehillim* 104:1), in which majesty (*hod*), splendor (*hadar*) and gladness (*chedvah*) correspond respectively to [the three *Sefirot* of] *Netzach*, *Hod* and *Yesod*. (According to what is stated there we may also understand why the Alter Rebbe used these three appellations rather than *Netzach*, *Hod* and *Yesod*.) As to the concluding ‘etc.’, this possibly refers to the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*, which is the end product — the ‘etc.’ — of the foregoing *Sefirot*.” (— Note of the Rebbe.)

[15.](#) *Tehillim* 48:2. [16.](#) Parentheses appear in the original text. [17.](#) See above, *Iggeret HaTeshuvah*, ch. 4. [18.](#) *Bereishit* 4:4. [19.](#) See *Zohar* I, 4b; III, 133b; *et passim*. [20.](#) *Bamidbar* 6:25. [21.](#) *Tehillim* 67:2. [22.](#) Liturgy, Morning Prayers. [23.](#)

“Here begins the Alter Rebbe’s request to those who received the letter — those who were to give the charity.” (— Note of the Rebbe.)

In the original, the recipients of the letter are here addressed in the polite third person of classical Hebrew — “upon *them*,” “their *tzedakah*,” and so forth.

[24.](#) Cf. *Tehillim* 112:3. [25.](#) Cf. Liturgy, weekday *Shemoneh Esreh*. [26.](#) Cf. *Eichah* 3:25.



Epistle 4

אין ישראל נגאלין אלא בצדקה, שנאמר: ושביה בצדקה

“Israel shall be redeemed only by virtue of *tzedakah*,”¹ as it is written,² “And her repatriates [shall be redeemed] through *tzedakah*.”

Tzedakah, whose root connotes both “righteousness” and “charity”, thus brings about the redemption of the Jewish people from exile and their ultimate return to Zion. The same root appears in the next verse to be quoted:

כתיב: צדק לפניו יהלך

It is written:³ “*Tzedek* shall go (*yehaleich*) before Him.”

והוה ליה למימר: ילך

Now, one should have expected the verse to say *yeileich*.

Yehaleich, by contrast, is a causative form of the verb, seeming to imply that righteousness or charity causes some *other* entity to “go before Him.”

אך הענין על פי מה שכתוב: לך אמר לבי, בקשו פני

This concept may be understood by considering the verse,⁴ “In Your behalf my heart says, ‘Seek My face.’”

As *Rashi* explains it, the simple meaning of the verse is that “On Your behalf and as Your messenger my heart tells me to seek out Your face” (i.e., G-d’s inwardness, or innermost essence, for the word פנים is related to both meanings, “face” and “interior”). And in this spirit the verse concludes: “Your countenance, G-d, do I seek”; i.e., “I am indeed doing so: I am seeking Your countenance.”

However, if *panai* does in fact refer to G-d’s countenance and inwardness, why would it be necessary to conclude, “Your countenance, *G-d*, do I seek”? Surely it would suffice to say, “Your countenance do I seek,” since we have already been informed that we are speaking of G-d’s countenance.

The Alter Rebbe therefore explains that the word *panai* (“my face”) refers to the inwardness of the Jewish heart, while *panecha* (“Your countenance”) refers to the inwardness of *G-d*.

פירוש: בקשו פנימית הלב

This means [that man is being urged to] “seek the inwardness of the heart,” that hidden element within his own heart that must be sought after if it is to be revealed.

כי הנה בלהב יסוד האש האלקית שבלב

For in the flame of the Element of the Divine Fire that is in the heart, i.e., within the soul's ardent love of G-d which derives from the Element of Fire within the soul, as mentioned in *Tanya*, Part I, ch. 3,

(נוסח אחר: הנה בהלב [יסוד האש האלקית שבלב])

([5](#)A variant reading: “For in the heart, the Element of Divine Fire within the heart,”)

יש ב' בחינות: בחינת חיצוניות ובחינת פנימיות

there are two aspects: the aspect of *chitzoniyyut* (“outwardness”, i.e., externality, as opposed to essence) and the aspect of *pnimiyut* (“inwardness”).

חיצוניות הלב היא התלהבות, המתלהבת מבחינת הבינה והדעת בגדולת ה' אין סוף ברוך הוא

The *chitzoniyyut* of the heart is the ardent [love] that flares up on account of one's understanding and knowledge of the greatness of G-d, the blessed *Ein Sof*,

[להתבונן] בגדולתו, ולהוליד מתבונה זו אהבה עזה כרשפי אש וכו'

by meditating [6](#) on His greatness, and from this contemplation giving birth to a strong love resembling [7](#) “flashes of fire.”

This, then, is the *chitzoniyyut*, the external level, of the G-dly soul: a revealed love of G-d in one's heart which results from meditation on G-d's greatness.

ופנימיות הלב היא הנקודה שבפנימיות הלב ועומקא דליבא

And the *pnimiyut* of the heart is the innermost point in the heart — the depth of the heart,

שהיא למעלה מעלה מבחינת הדעת והתבונה, שיוכל האדם להתבונן בלבו בגדולת ה'

which transcends by far the categories of knowledge and understanding with which man can meditate in his heart on G-d's greatness.

Unaided, man would never be able to achieve such a profound love through meditation alone; it is granted to the soul as a gift, as will soon be explained, and man's task is to search and discover it within himself.

וכמו שכתוב: ממעמקים קראתיך ה', מעומקא דליבא

As it is written: [8](#) “From out of the depths do I call unto You, O G-d”; [i.e.,] from the depths of the heart. [9](#)

“Depths” appears in the plural, for the heart harbors depths, with yet profounder depths beyond.

(ועל דרך משל: כמו במילי דעלמא, לפעמים יש ענין גדול מאד מאד, שכל חיות האדם תלוי בו, ונוגע עד נקודת פנימיות הלב, ועד בכלל

(By way of analogy, there is a parallel in worldly matters. Sometimes there is an extremely important matter upon which a man's entire vitality hinges; it touches him as far as — and including — the innermost point of his heart,

וגורם לו לפעמים לעשות מעשים ולדבר דברים שלא בדעת כלל)

causing him to do things and say things without any reason whatever),¹⁰ for it touches the essence of his soul that transcends logic and reason.

וזה לעומת זה

And¹¹ “the one corresponds to the other”:

The spiritual realm corresponds to the physical. Just as worldly affairs sometimes touch a person so strongly that he acts without reason:

ככה הוא ממש בעבודה שבלב

It is precisely so with the “service of the heart.” A Jew's love for G-d may be so great that it touches his soul's essence which utterly transcends logic and reason.

והיינו לפי שבחינת נקודת פנימית הלב היא למעלה מבחינת הדעת המתפשט ומתלבש במדות שגולדו מחב"ד, כנודע

As is known, this is because the innermost point of the heart transcends the faculty of reason which extends and vests itself in the emotive attributes born of *ChaBaD*, i.e., born of the three intellectual stages — wisdom, understanding, knowledge — that together constitute the intellectual process called *ChaBaD*.

רק היא בחינת הארת חכמה עליונה, שלמעלה מהבינה והדעת

Rather, [the *pnimiyut* of the heart] is a radiation from the supreme *Chochmah*, which transcends *Binah* and *Daat*,

ובה מלובש וגנוז אור ה' ממש

and in this [supreme *Chochmah*] there is vested and concealed the actual light of G-d;

כמו שכתוב: ה' בחכמה גו'

as it is written,¹² “By wisdom (*Chochmah*) G-d [founded the earth].”

The two quoted Hebrew words literally mean, “G-d [is] in *Chochmah*”; i.e., G-d’s infinite light is clothed in *Chochmah*.

והיא היא בחינת ניצוץ אלקות שבכל נפש מישראל

And this is precisely the spark of Divinity in every soul of Israel.[13](#)

It is this Divine spark, utterly transcending reason, that gives birth to the love of G-d in the *pnimiyut* of the heart, that likewise transcends all reason.[14](#)

A question arises: Since this love emanates from the Divine spark found within the soul of all Jews, why do they not *all* attain this level of Divine service?

ומה שאין כל אדם זוכה למדרגה זו, לעבודה שבלב מעומקא דליבא בבחינת פנימיות

The reason that not every person merits this rank in the service of the heart — service from the depth of the heart in a state of *pnimiyut* —

היינו לפי שבחינה זו היא אצלו בבחינת גלות ושביה

is that within him this faculty is in a state of exile and captivity.

והיא בחינת גלות השכינה ממש

And this is actually the state of the exile of the *Shechinah*,

כי היא היא בחינת ניצוץ האלקות שבנפשו האלקית

for it is precisely the [*Shechinah*] which is the spark of Divinity that is in one’s Divine soul.

Thus, when the “spark” is in exile, the *Shechinah* is in exile as well. Moreover, being in exile, the spark cannot rouse the soul to serve G-d with the loftier manner of love that stems from the innermost depths of the heart.

וסבת הגלות הוא מאמר רז"ל: גלו לבבל, שכינה עמהם

The cause of the exile of the Divine spark of the soul is,[15](#) as in the words of our Sages, of blessed memory:[16](#) “When [the Jewish people] were exiled to Babylon, the *Shechinah* went with them.”

In terms of the individual sparks of the soul this means that when a spark is in a state of “Babylon” — i.e., when an individual acts in a “Babylonian” manner — then the *Shechinah* is in exile together with him.

דהיינו, מפני שהלביש בחינת פנימית נקודת לבבו בזה לעומת זה

This is so because he has vested the innermost point of his heart in [that aspect of the universe which is] the opposing counterpart [to holiness],

דהיינו, בלבושים צואים דמילי דעלמא ותאות עולם הזה, הנקרא בשם בבל

namely, in the soiled garments — mundane matters and worldly desires — which are known as “Babylon”.

He has thereby banished the Divine spark within his soul — the personal *Shechinah* within himself, so to speak — to this all-pervasive “Babylon”.

והיא בחינת ערלה המכסה על הברית ונקודה הפנימית שבלב

This [exile] corresponds to the “foreskin” that covers the covenant and the innermost point of the heart.

ועל זה נאמר: ומלתם את ערלת לבבכם

Of this it is written,¹⁷ “And you shall excise the foreskin of your heart.”

In principle, the spiritual service of circumcision is that of repentance.¹⁸ With regard to exile our Sages teach that¹⁹ “if Israel repent they will be immediately redeemed.” Repentance thus leads to the redemption (on a personal scale) of the Divine spark within each individual soul, and (on a cosmic scale) of the *Shechinah*, from their respective exiles. In spiritual terms, the act of circumcision likewise removes a veil of concealment, and allows the innermost point of the heart to be revealed.

והנה במילה יש שני בחינות: מילה ופריעה

Now, in circumcision there are two stages: *milah* (“excision”) and *periah* (“uncovering”),

שהן ערלה גסה וקליפה דקה

[which remove respectively] the coarse foreskin and the thin membrane.

וכן בערלת הלב יש גם כן תאות גסות ודקות

With respect to the “foreskin” of the heart, which the Torah commands us similarly to circumcise, there are likewise coarse and subtle desires, corresponding to the two grades of skin.

מילה ופריעה

[These two grades of worldly desire respectively require] *milah* and *periah*,

ומל ולא פרע כאלו לא מל

and²⁰ “if one performed *milah* (‘circumcision’) without *periah* (‘uncovering’), it is as if he had not circumcised,”

Just as this is the law with regard to actual circumcision, so too is it true when it comes to circumcising the desires of the heart: if a person removes only his coarse desires and does not proceed to remove the subtler ones as well, it is as if he had not circumcised his heart at all,

מפני שסוף סוף עדיין נקודת פנימית הלב היא מכוסה בלבוש שק דק

because, after all is said and done, the innermost point of the heart is still covered by a garment of thin sackcloth [of *kelipah*];

בבחינת גלות ושביה

it is in a state of exile and captivity.

And there it will remain — until the individual redeems it by performing a spiritual *periah*, and removing his subtler desires as well.

והנה על מילת הערלה ממש, כתיב: ומלתם את ערלת לבבכם, אתם בעצמכם

Now, concerning the excision of the foreskin itself it is written: “And you — yourselves — shall excise the foreskin of your heart.”

Each and every Jew is able to remove this *himself*, for repentance tears down the veil with which his desires obscure the innermost point of his heart.

אך להסיר הקליפה הדקה, זהו דבר הקשה על האדם

But the removal of the thin membrane is a difficult matter for man,

ועל זה נאמר בביאת המשיח: ומל ה' אלקיך את לבבך גוי', לאהבה את ה' אלקיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך למען חייך

and of this it is written²¹ that with the coming of *Mashiach*, “The L-rd your G-d will circumcise your heart, to love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart and all your soul, for the sake of your life,”

כלומר, למען כי ה' לבדו הוא כל חייך ממש

because G-d alone is literally your whole life.

In this state, the individual's love of G-d will not be a mere *manifestation* of his soul, but a love that constitutes his very life. And just as a person does not regard his life as being

something apart from himself, so too will this love not be sensed as a distinct entity, but as an intrinsic component of himself.

שלכן אהבה זו היא מעומקא דליבא, מנקודה פנימית ממש כנ"ל, ולמעלה מבחינת הדעת

That is why this love, the love that follows the Divine excision of the heart's thin membrane, stems from the depth of the heart, from the truly innermost point, as mentioned above, and transcends the faculty of *Daat*.

ולכן משיח בא בהיסח הדעת לכללות ישראל

Therefore, too, *Mashiach* will come when Israel in general are [22](#) “caught unawares.”

והיא גילוי בחינת נקודה פנימית הכללית

[His coming] is the manifestation of the innermost point which is universal [to all Jews],

ויציאת השכינה הכללית מהגלות והשביה, לעד ולעולמי עולמים

and [likewise] the emergence of the universal *Shechinah* [of the entire community of Israel] from exile and captivity forever more.

Just as each individual's Divine spark — his personal *Shechinah*, so to speak — is redeemed from captivity through means that transcend reason and *Daat*, in such a manner too will the universal *Shechinah*, and with it the entire House of Israel, be redeemed.

Thus, the ultimate circumcision of the heart, and in its wake the ultimate manifestation of the love of G-d, will take place when *Mashiach* comes. Nevertheless, it is possible even now to liberate one's personal *Shechinah* — one's Divine spark — at least on a temporary basis, during the time of prayer. This the Alter Rebbe now goes on to say.

וכן כל ניצוץ פרטי מהשכינה שבנפש כל אחד מישראל

Similarly, every particular spark of the *Shechinah*, inherent in the soul of every individual Jew,

יוצאת מהגלות והשביה לפי שעה

emerges for the moment from exile and captivity

בחיי שעה, זו תפלה

during that [23](#) “momentary life which is prayer” —

ועבודה שבלב מעומקא דלבא

during the service of his heart, from the depth of his heart,

מבחינת נקודה הפנימית הנגלית מהערלה

from the innermost point which becomes divested of the [concealing] “foreskin”—

ועולה למעלה לדבקה בו בתשוקה עזה

and soars upwards to cleave to Him with a fierce passion,

בבחינת למען חיידך

in the spirit of the phrase, “for the sake of your life,” for the individual senses that G-dliness is his entire life.

והוא גם כן בבחינת היסח דעת האדם

And [in] this, too — in this momentary deliverance of the innermost point of the heart during the service of prayer — a man may be considered to be in a state of *hessech daat*, “unaware” or “absentminded”, so to speak,

כי בחינה זו היא למעלה מדעת האדם והתבוננותו בגדולת ה'

for this state, the state in which the Divine spark within man, his personal *Shechinah*, is momentarily revealed, transcends the *Daat* of man and his meditation on the greatness of G-d.

רק היא בחינת מתנה נתונה מאת ה' מן השמים

Rather, it is a kind of gift granted by G-d from heaven

מהארת בחינת פנים העליונים

from the radiation of the Supernal Countenance,

שכתוב: יאר ה' פניו אליך

as it is written,²⁴ “May G-d make His countenance shine upon you,”

וכמו שכתוב: ומל ה' אלקיך גו'

and as it is written, “And the L-rd, your G-d, will circumcise i.e., remove the insensitivity of [your heart]” — and this is a state which exists even now on a temporary basis.

אך מודעת זאת כי אתערותא דלעילא היא באתערותא דלתתא דוקא

But it is well known that an arousal from above comes only in response to an arousal from below,

A man's soul is stimulated from above only in response to the spiritual service that he initiates here below. Even an effusion of Divine benevolence that comes exclusively from above, and can neither be brought into being nor drawn down by man's service alone, also awaits a previous arousal from below,

בבחינת העלאת מיין נוקבין

as an elevation of *mayin nukvin*; i.e., by an arousal of the “feminine waters” by which the recipient elicits the *mayin dechurin* — the downward flow (“masculine waters”) — emanating from the Giver.

כמו שאמרו רז"ל: אין טיפה יורדת מלמעלה כו'

As our Sages, of blessed memory, said:²⁵ “No drop [of rain] descends from above [without two corresponding drops first ascending from below].”

ולכן צריך האדם לעשות בעצמו תחלת מילה זו

A man must therefore perform the beginning of this *milah* by himself,

להסיר ערלת הלב וקליפה הגסה ודקה, המלבישות ומכסות על בחינת נקודת פנימית הלב

to remove the “foreskin” of the heart and the coarse and thin husks which clothe and cover its innermost point,

שהיא בחינת אהבת ה' בחינת למען חיך, שהיא בגלות בתאוות עולם הזה

this [innermost point being] a love of G-d in the spirit of the phrase, “for the sake of your life” — i.e., a love that springs from an awareness that G-dliness is the person's entire life — [this love of G-d being] in exile among the desires of this world.

שהם גם כן בבחינת למען חיך

These [physical desires] likewise exist in the spirit of the phrase, “for the sake of your life,”

בזה לעומת זה, כנ"ל

in [that aspect of the universe which is] the opposing counterpart [to holiness], as mentioned above.

It is thus possible for an individual to be so dedicated to his passions and desires that they are his entire life. For just as this state exists in holiness, it also has its counterpart in the

opposite direction, whereby one is immersed in desires to the innermost core of his heart and being.

והיינו על ידי נתינת הצדקה לה' מממונו, שהוא חיותו

And this [removal of the spiritual foreskin] is achieved by giving charity to G-d from one's money, which is his vitality,

It has been noted earlier, in Part I, ch. 37, that since money enables a man to purchase life's essentials, parting with it in favor of charitable ends is equated to giving his "very vitality" to G-d,

ובפרט מי שמזונותיו מצומצמים, ודחיקא ליה שעתא טובא

especially with a person whose income is limited and who is very hard pressed at the time,

שנותן מחייו ממש

for — when he gives — he gives of his very life.

ובפרטות אם נהנה מיגיע כפיו

This is especially so if he supports himself by the toil of his hands.

שאי אפשר שלא עסק בהם פעמים רבות בבחינת נקודת פנימית הלב, מעומקא דלבא

For it is impossible that in his work he did not often involve "the innermost point of the heart," the depth of his heart,

כמנהג העולם בעסקיהם במשא ומתן, וכהאי גוונא

as is the way of the world when people are occupied with business and the like.

והרי עתה הפעם כשמפזר מיגיעו

Thus, now that he disburses the fruits of his toil unstintingly, despite his circumstances,

ונותן לה' בשמחה ובטוב לבב

and gives unto G-d with joy and with a gladsome heart,

הנה בזה פודה נפשו משחת

he thereby redeems his soul from the pit.[26](#)

דהיינו בחינת נקודת פנימית לבבו, שהיתה בבחינת גלות ושביה בתוך הקליפה גסה או דקה

That is, [he redeems] the innermost point of his heart which was in a state of exile and captivity within the coarse or thin *kelipah*.

כמו שכתוב: מכל משמר נצור לבך

For thus it is written:²⁷ “Guard your heart with the greatest vigilance” (lit., “Guard your heart from every *mishmar*”),

משמר, פירוש: בית האסורים

“*mishmar*” meaning a prison.

The verse is thus exhorting us to “guard our hearts from being imprisoned and exiled in *kelipot* and desires.”

ועתה נפדה מהחיצונים בצדקה זו

Thus, through present charity, [the innermost point of the heart] is now redeemed from the forces of evil in which it had been imprisoned.

וזה גם כן לשון פריעה: ענין פריעת חוב, שנתחייב ונשתעבד לחיצונים שמשלו בו על נקודת פנימיות לבבו

This also explains the term *periah*, which suggests²⁸ *periat chov* (“removing a debt”), for [the individual in question] had become indebted and subjected to the forces of evil that had ruled within him over the innermost point of his heart.

וזהו: ושביה בצדקה

Through this we can understand the meaning of [the above-quoted phrase], “and her (former spiritual) captives²⁹ [shall be redeemed] through *tzedakah*.”

וזהו: צדק לפניו יהלך

In these terms, too, we can understand the meaning of [the above-quoted phrase], “Righteousness (or charity) shall go (*yehaleich*) before Him (*lefanav*).”

לפניו הוא מלשון פנימיות

The word *lefanav* shares a root with *pnimiyut* (“inwardness”),

ויהלך הוא מלשון הולכה

and *yehaleich* — the causative form of the verb, which appears in this verse in place of the expected form, *yeilech* (“shall go”) — shares a root with *holachah* (“leading”). It thus implies that charity does not itself “go before Him”: rather, it causes some other entity to “go before Him.”

שמוליך את פנימיות הלב לה'

For [*tzedakah*] leads the innermost point of [a man's] heart towards G-d,

ואחר כך ישים לדרך ה' פעמיו

and then³⁰ “he sets his steps³¹ towards the way of G-d”—

כמו שכתוב: והלכת בדרכיו

as it is written,³² “And you shall walk in His ways,”

אחרי ה' אלקיכם תלכו

[and likewise,]³³ “You shall go after the L-rd your G-d”—

בכל מעשה המצות, ותלמוד תורה כנגד כולן

with [his] entire performance of the commandments, and with [his]³⁴ “study of Torah, which is equivalent to them all.”

שכולן עולין לה' על ידי פנימית הלב

For they all ascend to G-d through the inwardness of the heart, which is revealed through the service of *tzedakah*,

ביתר שאת ומעלה מעלה מעלייתן לה' על ידי חיצוניות הלב

[and this ascent is] more intense and reaches far higher than their ascent to G-d through the externality of the heart,

הנולד מהתבונה והדעת לבדן, בלי הארת פנים מלמעלה, אלא בבחינת הסתר פנים

[for this ascent] is born only of man's contemplation and knowledge [of G-dliness], without an illumination of the [Divine] “countenance” (i.e.,inwardness) from above, but in a state in which “the countenance is hidden.”

כי אין הפנים העליונים מאירים למטה אלא באתערותא דלתתא, במעשה הצדקה הנקרא שלום

For the Supernal “countenance” does not radiate downwards except through an arousal initiated from below, through an act of charity, charity being called “peace”.

וזה שכתוב: פדה בשלום נפשי

And this is the meaning of the verse that says,³⁵ “He has redeemed my soul in peace” — or, “*through* peace.” This, as explained by our Sages,³⁶ refers to *tzedakah* and acts of loving-kindness that are known as “peace”.

נפשי דייקא

[The verse speaks] expressly of “my soul,”³⁷ inasmuch as it refers to the *Shechinah* found in the soul of each and every Jew, for the Divine spark that vitalizes the soul of every Jew is redeemed through “peace” — through *tzedakah*.

וזהו גם כן הטעם שנקרא הצדקה: שלום

This is also the reason for which charity is called “peace”,

לפי שנעשה שלום בין ישראל לאביהם שבשמים, כמאמר רז”ל

because according to the teaching of our Sages,³⁸ of blessed memory, by virtue of charity “peace is made between Israel and their Father in heaven,”

דהיינו על ידי פדיון נפשותיהן, הם חלק ה' ממש, מידי החיצונים

through the redemption of their souls, which are truly a part of G-d, from the grip of the forces of evil.

The Alter Rebbe wrote this letter, like most of the letters that comprise *Iggeret HaKodesh*, in connection with the charitable fund of Kollel Chabad in the Land of Israel. This fund supported R. Mendelev Horodoker and his colleagues, together with their disciples, who had settled there. Hence the Alter Rebbe concludes:

ובפרט צדקת ארץ ישראל

This is especially the case with charity for the Land of Israel,

שהיא צדקת ה' ממש

for it is truly the charity of G-d, since it is directed to a place where the Divine Name is revealed,

כמו שכתוב: תמיד עיני ה' אלקיך בה

[to a Land of which] it is written,³⁹ “The eyes — i.e., the most quintessential efflux and attention — of the L-rd your G-d are constantly upon it.”

והיו עיני ולבי שם כל הימים

[In this vein it is also written,]⁴⁰ “And My eyes and My heart will be there at all times.”

והיא שעמדה לנו לפדות חיי נפשנו מעצת החושבים לדחות פעמינו

It is this [charity for the Holy Land] that has stood by us to redeem the life of our souls from the counsel of those who seek to repel our steps, i.e., those who desire to harm us.

ותעמוד לנו לעד, לשום נפשנו בחיים אמיתים מחיי החיים

And this [charity] will stand by us forever — to set our souls in the true life of the Fountainhead of Life,

לאור באור חיים, אשר יאר ה' פניו אתנו סלה

so that we will be⁴¹ “enlightened with the light of life” which G-d⁴² “will make His Face radiate with us, *Selah*.”

אמן, כן יהי רצון

Amen, may this be His will.

FOOTNOTES ¹. *Rambam, Hilchot Matnot Aniyim*, beginning of ch. 10. On the source and wording of this teaching, see the note of the Rebbe at the conclusion of Epistle 9. ². *Yeshayahu* 1:27. ³. *Tehillim* 85:14. ⁴. *Ibid.* 27:8. ⁵. Parentheses and brackets are in the original text. ⁶. According to a variant reading, להתבונן would mean “by making them meditate.” ⁷. Cf. *Shir HaShirim* 8:6. ⁸. *Tehillim* 130:1. ⁹. *Zohar* II, 63b. ¹⁰. The parentheses close here in the original text. However, the Rebbe points out that they should in fact close further on, after the words, “in every soul of Israel.” ¹¹. *Kohelet* 7:14. ¹². *Mishlei* 3:19. ¹³. See note 10, above. ¹⁴. “Cf. *Tanya*, Part I, ch. 19.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) ¹⁵. “It would seem that the text should read, כמאמר — ‘as our Sages.’ ” (— Note of the Rebbe.) ¹⁶. *Megillah* 29a. ¹⁷. *Devarim* 10:16. The same Hebrew word means both “excision” and “circumcision”. ¹⁸. See *Sefer HaLikkutim Dach: Tzemach Tzedek, s.v. Milah*. ¹⁹. *Sanhedrin* 98a; *Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah* 7:5. ²⁰. *Mishnah, Shabbat* 137b. ²¹. *Devarim* 30:6. ²². *Sanhedrin* 97a. The phrase הדעת היסח commonly implies that *Daat* is absent because it has been forgotten; the Alter Rebbe’s interpretation makes *Daat* absent because it has been transcended. ²³. See *Shabbat* 10a. ²⁴. *Bamidbar* 6:25. ²⁵. *Zohar* III, 247b; cf. *Taanit* 25b. ²⁶. Cf. *Iyov* 33:28. ²⁷. *Mishlei* 4:23. ²⁸. “See *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 37: ‘And the blood from the *periah* to provide nurture.’ Similarly at the conclusion of *Tikkun* 24. See also *Sefer HaMitzvot* by the *Tzemach Tzedek, Mitzvat Eglah Arufah; Levush on Yoreh Deah* 265:10.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) ²⁹. The Hebrew ושביה can mean either “her returning expatriates” or “her captives.” ³⁰. *Tehillim* 85:14, continuing the verse which began, “*Tzedek* shall go before Him,” ³¹. “Regarding the term פעמיו (‘his steps’) — and so too פעמינו (‘our steps’) later on — the *Tzemach Tzedek* (in his comment on this verse in *Tehillim*) refers the reader to the *maamar* entitled *Paamon VeRimon* (which appears in *Or HaTorah, Parshat Tetzaveh*).” (— Note of the Rebbe.) ³². *Devarim* 28:9. ³³. *Ibid.* 13:5. ³⁴. *Mishnah*, beginning of *Peah*. ³⁵. *Tehillim* 55:19. ³⁶. *Berachot* 8a, and *Rashi ad loc.* ³⁷. “One would have expected the verse to say, ‘[He has redeemed] me’ [rather than ‘my soul’], as in the verse, ‘You have redeemed me’

(*Tehillim* 31:6).” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [38. Tosefta, Peah](#), ch. 1. [39. Devarim](#) 11:12. [40. I Melachim](#) 9:3. [41. Iyov](#) 33:30. [42. Tehillim](#) 67:2.

Epistle 5

ויעש דוד שם

“And David made a name.”[1](#)

The simple meaning of the verse is either (as *Rashi* explains) that David gave the Jewish people a good name by burying the dead of their enemies, or (as other commentators explain) that David made a name for himself through his heroism.

ופירש בזוהר הקדוש, משום שנאמר: ויהי דוד עושה משפט וצדקה לכל עמו כו'

The holy *Zohar*[2](#) relates the above phrase to the verse:[3](#) “And David executed justice and *tzedakah* with all his people.”

The “name” that he thereby made is thus the Divine Name. In the words of the *Zohar*:

בכה רבי שמעון ואמר: מאן עביד שמא קדישא בכל יומא, מאן דיהיב צדקה למסכני כו'

“Rabbi Shimon wept and said: ‘Who makes the Holy Name every day? He who gives charity unto the poor.’ ”

Two questions, however, present themselves: (a) How can we possibly say that the Holy Name is “made”? (b) How is the Name “made” through the giving of charity?

ויובן בהקדים מאמר רז"ל על פסוק: כי ביה ה' צור עולמים

This may be understood in the light of the comment of our Sages,[4](#) of blessed memory, on the verse,[5](#) “For by [the Divine Name that is composed of the letters] *yud-hei*, G-d is the strength of the worlds.”

The Hebrew word here translated “strength” (lit.: “rock”) is צור, whose root letters imply an additional meaning, namely (in this context): “By means of [the Divine Name that is composed of the letters] *yud-hei*, G-d *formed* (or *created*) the worlds.”[6](#)

בה' נברא עולם הזה, ביו"ד נברא עולם הבא

On the above-quoted verse the Sages comment: “This world was created by the letter *hei* [of the Divine Name *yud-hei*]; the World to Come was created by the letter *yud* [of the Divine Name *yud-hei*].”

In what respect is this world connected with the letter *hei* and the World to Come with the letter *yud*? The Alter Rebbe answers this question by first explaining the concept of the World to Come and *Gan Eden*, the Garden of Eden.

פירוש: שהתענוג שמתענגים נשמות הצדיקים, ונהנין מזיו השכינה המאיר בגן עדן עליון ותחתון

This means that the delight which the souls of the righteous experience, as they enjoy the splendor of the *Shechinah* which radiates in the upper and lower Gardens of Eden,

הוא שמתענגים בהשגתם והשכלתם

consists of their pleasure in their apprehension and conception,

שמשכילים ויודעים ומשיגים

for they conceive (with the faculty of *Chochmah*), know (with the faculty of *Daat*) and understand (with the faculty of *Binah*)

איזה השגה באור וחיות השופע שם מאין סוף ברוך הוא, בבחינת גילוי, לנשמתם ורוח בינתם

some degree of apprehension of the light and vitality which effuses there, in a revealed manner, from the blessed *Ein Sof* unto their soul and their spirit of understanding,

Spiritual life-force finds its way down into *this* world in so concealed a manner that all we know of it is the mere fact of its existence (*yediat hametziut*). In *Gan Eden*, by contrast, the spiritual life-force issues forth in such a manner that its very essence is apprehended (*hassagat hamahut*),

להבין ולהשיג איזה השגה, כל אחד ואחד לפי מדרגתו ולפי מעשיו

so that each and every one can understand and attain some perception according to his level and his deeds.

Likkutei Levi Yitzchak, authored by the saintly father of the Rebbe, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, explains the distinction between “his level” and “his deeds” as follows.

“His level” alludes to those souls which are to be found in the Upper Garden of Eden, whose comprehension is commensurate with the level of their devout intent and the level of their *re’uta delibba* (lit., “the desire of the heart”), i.e., the unbounded yearning of the innermost point of their souls to cleave rapturously to their Maker. This state of divine service results from intellectual endeavor, which is denoted by the term “level”. (In ch. 9

of *Shaar HaYichud VehoEmunah*, for example, the Alter Rebbe adds this term to the phrase that speaks of the intellectual activity known by its acronym as *ChaBaD*.)

“His deeds,” by contrast, refers to those souls in the Lower Garden of Eden, which earn the above-described spiritual delights through the actual performance of practical *mitzvot*. These souls, therefore, are rewarded “according to their deeds.”⁷

In either case, it is clear that the delight that souls experience in *Gan Eden* is the intellectual delight of the apprehension of G-dliness.

ולכן נקרא עולם הבא בשם בינה, בזוהר הקדוש

That is why in the *Zohar*⁸ the World to Come is referred to as *Binah* (“understanding”), for that world is permeated by the light of the *Sefirah* of *Binah*,⁹ which enables souls to apprehend and understand G-dliness.

והשפעה זו נמשכת מבחינת חכמה עילאה

This flow issues from the plane of Supernal *Chochmah*,

שהוא מקור ההשכלה וההשגה הנקרא בשם בינה

which is the source of the conception and apprehension known as *Binah*.

Chochmah is the initial, intuitive, seminal flash of perception; *Binah* is the process of mental gestation that systematically develops and expands that inspiration into comprehensive understanding.

והוא קדמות השכל, קודם שבא לכלל גילוי השגה והבנה

For [*Chochmah*] is the primordial stage of the intellect, before apprehension and understanding become manifest;

רק עדיין הוא בבחינת העלם והסתר

rather, [*Chochmah*] at this stage is still in a state of obscurity and concealment,

The Alter Rebbe is speaking here of the particular level of *Chochmah* that transcends intellect and comprehension. It differs from the more external level of *Chochmah* which is the germ of intellect and is already illumined by it, though it too is as yet the unparticularized seminal point of a concept which is still to be analyzed and comprehended by the faculty of *Binah*. Preceding this, the primordial level of *Chochmah* discussed here utterly transcends revealed intellect; it is still obscure,

רק שמעט מזעיר שם זעיר שם שופע ונמשך משם לבחינת בינה

except for some miniscule measure that here and there flows forth and issues from it to the faculty of *Binah*,

The dual form of the Biblical idiom borrowed here (cf. *Yeshayahu* 28:10) implies that the light of this primordial level of *Chochmah* undergoes two distinct stages of *tzimtzum*, or self-contraction. The first stage limits this light; the second attenuates it so that it is able to descend into *Binah*,

להבין ולהשיג שכל הנעלם

making it possible [for a soul] to understand and apprehend a concept which is [intrinsically] concealed.

This higher form of Supernal intellect is the “radiance of the *Shechinah*,” a ray of G-d’s infinitude that illuminates *Gan Eden*. Ordinarily, no created being — even a soul of such stature that it inhabits the Upper *Gan Eden* — could possibly fathom this degree of intellect. In order for it to be understood by mortal man’s soul, it must undergo the twofold descent mentioned above. Nonetheless, even after this descent it still pertains to the very essence (*mahut*) of G-dliness that is comprehended by the soul in *Gan Eden*.

ולכן נקרא בשם נקודה בהיכלא, בזוהר הקדוש

In the holy *Zohar*,^{[10](#)} therefore, [*Chochmah*] is referred to as “the dot in the palace.”^{[11](#)}

Chochmah is the “dot” or “point” of intellect that illumines the “palace” of *Binah*. Nevertheless, even when already housed in *Binah*, it still remains a seminal point of intellect that transcends the details that constitute the comprehension of *Binah*.

וזו היא תמונת יו"ד של שם הוי"

[Indeed,] this is the shape of the *yud* of the Four-Letter Name of G-d.

The letter *yud* is shaped like a point, alluding^{[12](#)} to the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah*, which is a mere point.

ונקרא עדן, אשר עליו נאמר: עין לא ראתה גו'

[*Chochmah*] is also referred to as Eden, of which it is said:^{[13](#)} “No eye has beheld it”; i.e., it is a kind of illumination that transcends and defies comprehension.

ונקרא: אבא יסד ברתא

Moreover, [*Chochmah*] is referred to^{[14](#)} as “the ‘father’ who founded the ‘daughter’.”

Chochmah is the “father”, or source, of the letters of speech, which are called the “daughter”, the level of *Malchut*.

One might have expected the letters of speech to derive from the emotive faculties (the *middot*) or from *Binah*, for surely a person articulates letters of speech when he seeks to express an emotion or to speak of an idea that he has comprehended. The Alter Rebbe, however, now goes on to explain that the letters of speech in fact derive from *Chochmah*, which transcends comprehension.

פירוש: כי הנה התהוות אותיות הדבור היוצאות מה' מוצאות הפה אינה דבר מושכל

This means: The formation of the letters of speech which proceed from the five organs of articulation¹⁵ is not an intellectual process.

The letters do not emanate from the soul as a result of any intellectual imperative.

ולא מוטבע בטבע מוצאות הללו להוציא מבטא האותיות

It is also not inherent in the nature of these organs [that they must] pronounce the letters

על ידי ההבל והקול המכה בהן

— by means of the breath and the sound that strikes them —

על פי דרך הטבע, ולא על פי דרך השכל

by either a natural faculty or by an intellectual faculty.

כגון השפתיים, על דרך משל, שאותיות בומ"פ יוצאות מהן

With the lips, for example, by means of which the letters *beit*, *vav*, *mem* and *pei* are uttered,

Since the lips are the most visible of the organs of speech, the Alter Rebbe chooses for his example the letters which they form; one can readily see that pronouncing these letters is impelled neither by the nature of the lips themselves nor by the faculty of intellect.

אין הטבע ולא השכל נותן ליציאת מבטא ארבע חלקי שינויי ביטוי אותיות אלו על פי שינויי תנועת השפתים

neither nature nor the intellect compels the utterance of the four varying types of pronunciation of these letters in accordance with variations in the movement of the lips,

שמתנועעות בהבל אחד וקול אחד, הפוגע בהן בשווה

which are moved by the same breath and the same sound that strikes them equally.

Since the letter *beit* and the letter *vav*, for example, are both formed by the same breath and the same sound, the distinction between them must be made by the movements of the

lips: when the letter *beit* is pronounced the lips are pursed in one way and when the letter *vav* is pronounced they are pursed differently. This being so, one would expect that it would take a conscious mental effort to move the lips in one specific manner to pronounce the letter *beit* and in another specific manner to pronounce the letter *vav*.¹⁶ Alternatively, if it were dependent on nature, the speaker would naturally want to move his lips in the different ways necessary for the formation of one letter or the other.

ואדרבה, שינוי התנועות שבשפתים הוא לפי שינוי ביטוי האותיות שברצון הנפש לבטא בשפתים כרצונה

On the contrary: the change in the movements of the lips depends on the difference in pronunciation of the letters the soul wishes to utter by means of the lips,

כרצונה לומר אות ב' או ו' או מ' או פ'

when it desires to pronounce the letter *beit*, or *vav*, or *mem*, or *pei*, and the lips will instinctively and spontaneously move accordingly.

ולא להיפך, שיהיה רצון הנפש וכונתה לעשות שינוי תנועות השפתים

It is not the other way around, that it is the will and intention of the soul to make a change in the motions of the lips

כמו שהן מתנועעות עתה בביטוי ד' אותיות אלו

as they are moving now in the utterance of these four letters.

וכנראה בחוש, שאין הנפש מתכוונת ויודעת לכוין כלל שינוי תנועות השפתים בשינויים אלו

As is empirically evident, the soul does not at all intend or know how to intend the change in the motions of the lips [which articulate] those distinctions [between the various letters].

Since the soul neither intends nor even knows how to direct the lips to move in the manner required to form particular letters, it is obviously the mere desire to utter certain letters that results in the automatic movement of the lips in the appropriate manner.

ויותר נראה כן בביטוי הנקודות

This is even more evident with the pronunciation of the vowels.

שכשהנפש רצונה להוציא מפיה נקודת קמץ, אזי ממילא נקמצים השפתים

For when the soul wishes to utter the *kamatz* vowel, the lips spontaneously become compressed,

ובפתח נפתחים השפתים

and with the *patach* vowel the lips open¹⁷ — of their own accord,

ולא שרצון הנפש לקמוץ ולא לפתוח כלל וכלל

and not at all because of the will of the soul to compress or to open [them].

ואין להאריך בדבר הפשוט ומובן ומושכל לכל משכיל

There is no need to go any further into a matter which is simple, comprehensible, and intelligible to every intelligent person,

שמבטא האותיות והנקודות הוא למעלה מהשכל המושג ומובן

namely, that the pronunciation of the letters and vowels transcends the apprehended and comprehended intellect,

אלא משכל הנעלם וקדמות השכל שבנפש המדברת

but rather derives from the hidden intellect, and the primordial stage of the intellect which is in the articulate soul.

ולכן אין התינוק יכול לדבר, אף שמבין הכל

This is why an infant cannot speak, even though it understands everything, for speech does not result from revealed and apprehended intellect, but from the more rarefied “hidden intellect” which in the infant has yet to be developed.

We thus see that the letters of speech derive from *Chochmah*. This, then, is the meaning of “the ‘father’ who founded the ‘daughter’”: *Chochmah* is the “father” or source of the letters of speech, which are called the “daughter”, or the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*.

* * *

Until this point the Alter Rebbe has explained the Talmudic teaching that the World to Come was created by the letter *yud*: the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah*, which this letter represents, is the spiritual source of *Gan Eden* which is in the World to Come.

However, according to the above, since the letters of the Supernal creative speech derive from *Chochmah*, it would seem that this world, which was also created by the letters of Divine speech, was likewise created from the letter *yud* that represents *Chochmah*. Why, then, do our Sages teach that only the World to Come was created from the letter *yud*, while this world was created from the letter *hei*?

The Alter Rebbe therefore now goes on to explain that the letters of speech are composed of “matter” and “form” — the “body” and “soul” (or: the external and internal aspects) of

the letters. While the “form” of the letters does indeed derive from *Chochmah*, the “matter” of the letters of speech merely derives from the heart.

So, too, Above: the internal aspect of the letters derives from *Chochmah*; from this aspect are created the higher spiritual beings which are able to apprehend G-dliness. However, the external aspect of the Supernal letters of speech derives from the “breath” — the *hei* of the Divine Name. It is from this lesser level that this physical world was created.

In the words of the Alter Rebbe:

אך האותיות הן בבחינת חומר וצורה, הנקרא פנימית וחיצונית

However, the letters exist on planes of “matter” and “form”, which are also referred to as their “internal” aspect (i.e., the “form”, which is their “soul”) and their “external” aspect (i.e., the “matter”, which is their “body”).

כי הגם שמקורן הוא מקדמות השכל ורצון הנפש

Although their source is the primordial stage of the intellect and the will of the soul, for as soon as the soul desires to speak these letters are formed, as explained above,

זו היא בחינת צורת שינוי המבטא שבכ”ב אותיות

this is but the “form” of the differentiation in the pronunciation of the twenty-two letters.

אבל בחינת החומר וגוף התהוותו, והוא בחינת חיצוניותו, הוא ההבל היוצא מהלב

The “matter” and “body” of their formation, however, i.e., the aspect of their “externality”, is the breath issuing from the heart.

שממנו מתהווה קול פשוט היוצא מהגרון

From this breath is formed a simple sound which proceeds from the throat,

ואחר כך נחלק לכ”ב הברות וביטוי כ”ב אותיות

and which is then divided into the twenty-two kinds of enunciation and expression of the twenty-two letters,

בה' מוצאות הידועות: אחה"ע מהגרון

[these divisions taking place] through the five known organs of speech: *alef*, *chet*, *hei* and *ayin*¹⁸ through the throat;

גיכ"ק מהחיד כו'

gimmel, yud, kaf and *kuf* through the palate, and so on; e.g., *beit, vav, mem* and *pei* from the lips, and so on;

ומבטא ההבל הוא אות ה', אתא קלילא כו'

while the breath itself, which has its own sound independent of the letter being spoken, is uttered by the letter *hei*¹⁹ — “the light letter,” inasmuch as it lacks the substance of a complete letter,

והוא מקור החומר וגוף האותיות טרם התחלקותן לכ"ב

which is the source of the “matter” and “body” of the letters before their division into twenty-two.

The *hei* is thus the source of each letter’s “body”.

ולכן אמרו רז"ל שעולם הזה נברא בה'

And that is why our Sages, of blessed memory, said that “this world was created by the *hei*”: it was created by the external aspect, or “body”, of the Supernal letters whose source is the *hei* of the Divine Name.

* * *

והנה הגם שהיא ה' תתאה, ה' אחרונה שבשם הוי"

Now, though this is the “lower *hei*,” the latter *hei* of the Four-Letter Name of G-d,

Supernal speech is of the level of *Malchut*, as alluded to in the verse, “The king’s utterance reigns.”²⁰ The *hei* that is the source of speech is thus the lower *hei* of the Tetragrammaton, the letter which denotes the level of *Malchut*.

ורז"ל דרשו זה על פסוק: כי ביה

while our Sages, of blessed memory, expounded this — that the World to Come was created by the letter *yud* and this world by the letter *hei* — from their reading of the verse, “For by *yud-hei* [did G-d create the worlds],”

Since these are the first two letters of the Divine Name, how are we taught here that the statement that “this world was created by the letter *hei*” refers to the lower letter *hei*, the source of the breath of the letters of speech?

היינו לפי שמקורה וראשיתה לבא לבחינת גילוי מהעלם היו"ד

this is because its source and the beginning of its progress into a state of manifestation from the obscurity of the *yud*

הוא מושפע ונמשך מבחינת ה' עילאה

is influenced and drawn forth from the level of the upper *hei*.

The obscurity of the *yud* of *Chochmah* is the source of every manner of revelation, both of the World to Come as well as of this world. As this relates to the letters: it serves as the source of revelation both for the “form” as well as the “matter” of the letters. It is only that in the resulting revelation of the letters, the “form” of the letters and the revelation of the World to Come emanate from the letter *yud* — from *Chochmah* — itself, while the revelation of the “matter” or external aspect of the letters emanates from the “breath of the heart,” from the latter *hei* of the Divine Name.

שיש לה התפשטות אורך ורוחב

[The form or shape of the letter *hei*] has dimensions of length and width

להורות על בחינת בינה

to indicate the faculty of *Binah*, for the upper *hei* of the Divine Name denotes the level of *Binah*,

שהיא התפשטות השכל הנעלם בבחינת גילוי והשגה, בהרחבת הדעת

which is the expansion of the “concealed intellect” into a state of manifestation and apprehension, extending into *Daat*,

והשפעתה מסתיימת בלב

and its diffusion — the diffusion of the flow of *Binah* — culminates in the heart.

וכמו שכתוב בתיקונים, דבינה לבא, ובה הלב מבין

Thus it is written in the *Tikkunim*^{[21](#)} that “*Binah* is the heart, and by means of it the heart understands.”

Thus, the diffusion of *Binah* takes place within the heart.

ומשם יוצא ההבל מקור גילוי גוף האותיות הדבור

From there issues the breath, the original manifestation of the “body” of the letters of speech

המתגלות בה' מוצאות מהעלם היו"ד

which become revealed from the concealment of the *yud* through the five organs of speech.

ותמונת ה' תתאה בכתיבתה גם כן בהתפשטות אורך ורוחב

The shape of the lower *hei* which, in its written form, also has dimensions of length and width,

מורה על התפשטות בחינת מלכותו יתברך, מלכות כל עולמים

indicates the extension of [G-d's] blessed Sovereignty, “the sovereignty of all worlds,”²²

למעלה ולמטה ולד' סטריין

which extends upward and downward, and in the four directions,

המתפשטות ונמשכות מאותיות דבר ה', כמו שכתוב בקהלת: באשר דבר מלך שלטון, כמו שכתוב במקום אחר

[all these directions] extending and issuing from the letters of the “word of G-d”; as it is written in *Kohelet*, “The king’s utterance reigns,” as explained elsewhere.

Just as a king of flesh and blood rules through his faculty of speech, by issuing commands, so too does Supernal speech extend G-d’s reign in all the dimensions of the created universe.

[ולהבין מעט מזעיר ענין ומהות אותיות הדבור באלקות, שאין לו דמות הגוף ולא הנפש, חס ושלום

²³[As for understanding somewhat the concept and nature of “letters of speech” in relation to Divinity, inasmuch as [G-d] has no form of a body, nor of a soul, heaven forbid,

כבר נתבאר בדרך ארוכה וקצרה (בלקוטי אמרים, חלק ב', פרק י"א וי"ב, עיין שם)]

this has already been explained comprehensively yet concisely ²⁴(in *Likkutei Amarim*, Part II, chs. 11 and 12; see there).]

* * *

אך ביאור הענין למה אמרו רז"ל שעולם הזה דוקא נברא בה'

We now come to an exposition of why our Sages, of blessed memory, said that specifically this world was created by the *hei*.

According to the explanation provided above, not only this physical world, but all of creation resulted from the letter *hei*, i.e., from the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* as expressed in Divine speech.

The Alter Rebbe resolves this apparent anomaly by explaining that it is indeed true that all creation derives from the infinite variety of permutations and combinations of the

letters which constitute Divine speech. Nevertheless, the loftier and more spiritual created beings derive from the internal aspect of Divine speech, which stems from *Chochmah*, and they therefore have an intellectual perception of G-dliness. Physical creation, by contrast, is of too lowly a level to be able to receive its life-giving Divine light and energy from the “soul” (i.e., the internal aspect) of the letters of G-d’s creative speech; it merely receives this from the “body” (i.e., from the external aspect) of these letters.

The creation of physicality thus resembles the breath emanating from the heart, that forms the physical voice. Above, in like manner, the physical world is formed from Supernal breath, the “body” of the letters.

Hence our Sages teach that this world was created by the letter *hei* — for this letter denotes the Divine breath, as explained above.

It is this that the Alter Rebbe now goes on to say:

הנה ידוע לכל חכמי לב

This is known to all the wise of heart²⁵

כי ריבוי העולמות וההיכלות אשר אין להם מספר

concerning the multitude of worlds and *heichalot*, palaces or chambers, which are innumerable,

כמו שכתוב: היש מספר לגדודיו

as it is written, with reference to these countless worlds and *heichalot*,²⁶ “Do His regiments have a number?”

ובכל היכל וגדוד, אלף אלפין ורבוא רבבן מלאכים

Each *heichal* and regiment comprises [a finite but prodigious number of] angels, [as it is written],²⁷ “A thousand thousands [serve Him] and myriads of myriads [stand before Him].”²⁸

וכן נרנח"י, מדרגות לאין קץ

Likewise, incalculable like the above *heichalot* and regiments, are the levels of [souls, belonging to the five general categories of] *nefesh*, *ruach*, *neshamah*, *chayah* and *yechidah*, in rungs to no end, for each of these five categories branches out into levels of inexhaustible number.

ובכל עולם והיכלות מריבוי היכלות שבאצילות, בריאה, יצירה

And so too [there are numberless levels] in all the worlds and *heichalot*, from among the multitudes of *heichalot* that exist in the Worlds of *Atzilut*, *Beriah* and *Yetzirah*.

The three above-mentioned worlds are “higher” than the World of *Asiyah* (“the World of Action”), which includes both the spiritual and physical worlds of *Asiyah*.

הנה כל ריבויים אלו, ריבוי אחר ריבוי עד אין קץ

All these hosts [of created beings], then, one multitude beyond another *ad infinitum*,

הכל נמשך ונשפע מריבוי צירופי כ”ב אותיות דבר ה’

all issue and flow from the multitudinous combinations of the twenty-two letters of the “word of G-d,”

המתחלקות גם כן לצירופים רבים עד אין קץ ותכלית ממש

which, in turn, divide into a further profusion of combinations, truly *ad infinitum*.

כמו שכתוב בספר יצירה: שבע אבנים בונות חמשת אלפים וארבעים בתים

As stated in *Sefer Yetzirah*,²⁹ “Seven ‘stones’ (i.e., letters) build five thousand and forty ‘houses’ (i.e., words);

מכאן ואילך, צא וחשוב מה שאין הפה יכול לדבר בו

from here onwards — i.e., from the sum of the factorial of eight and onwards — go ahead and calculate that which the mouth is unable to express.”

In this way the letters of Divine speech may be multiplied infinitely by various permutations and combinations, thus giving rise to a correspondingly infinite range of created beings.

But if the distinctions between all these beings lie merely in the ways in which their respective letters are combined, why are there also many and varying *qualitative* levels, “one surpassing the other”? This is the question that the Alter Rebbe now proceeds to address.

והגם שיש במעלות ומדרגות המלאכים ונשמות כמה וכמה מיני מעלות ומדרגות חלוקות לאין קץ

Though among the rungs and levels of the angels and souls there are so many distinct kinds of qualitative as well as quantitative levels and rungs *ad infinitum*,

גבוה על גבוה

one surpassing the other,

הנה הכל נמשך לפי חילופי הצירופים והתמורות בא"ת ב"ש כו'

[these variations of level exist because] they all come into being according to permutations in the various letter-combinations and letter-substitutions of *alef-tav*, *beit-shin*, and so on,³⁰ (of the twenty-two letters which *themselves* come into being according to permutations in the various letter-combinations and letter-substitutions of *alef-tav*, *beit-shin* [and so on]),³¹

(וכמו שכתוב בפרק י"ב)

(³²as explained in ch. 12 [of *Shaar HaYichud VehaEmunah*]).³³

Now, although there exists such a teeming superabundance of distinct and varying levels of created beings:

אך דרך כלל הנה כולם בעלי חכמה ודעת, ויודעים את בוראם

In a general way they all possess wisdom and knowledge, and they know their Creator,

מפני היות חיותם מפנימיות האותיות, הנמשכות מבחינת חכמה עילאה, וכנ"ל

because their life-force stems from the inwardness of the letters which issue from the Supreme *Chochmah*, as mentioned above.

We may therefore truly say that the beings encompassed by the general term of [creatures of] the World to Come were all created by the letter *yud*, for their vitality stems from the inwardness and radiance of the letters of Divine speech that derive from the *yud* of the Four-Letter Name of G-d.

* * *

אך העולם הזה השפל, עם החיות שבתוכו

This lowly world, however, with the life-force that is found within it,

קטן מהכיל ולסבול אור וחיות מבחינת צורת האותיות ופנימיותן

is too small to contain and endure the light and life-force that proceed from the "form" and "inwardness" of the letters;

להאיר ולהשפיע בו בלי לבוש והסתר

[this lowly world is too small for this light and life-force to be able] to radiate and diffuse in it without any garment or concealment

כמו שמאירות ומשפיעות לנשמות ומלאכים

as they radiate and diffuse to the souls and angels, which receive the radiation from the inwardness of the letters without the garment and concealment of the “matter” and “body” of the letters which consists of the “breath”.[34](#)

רק ההארה וההשפעה באה ונשפע לעולם הזה מבחינת חומר וגוף האותיות וחיצוניותם

Instead, the radiation and diffusion comes and flows to this world from the “matter”, “body”, or “externality” of the letters.

שהוא בחינת ההבל

This is called “breath”, just as the “body” or external aspect of the letters of man’s speech derives from physical breath,

המתחלק לז' הבלים שבקהלת, שעליהם העולם עומד

and it divides into the seven “breaths” of [the second verse of] *Kohelet*,[35](#) on which the world stands; as taught in the holy *Zohar*,[36](#) “The world exists only by virtue of the [seven] ‘breaths’ uttered by King Solomon.”

והוא מוצא פי ה', המתלבש בעולם הזה וכל צבאיו להחיותם

This is “the utterance that issues forth from G-d’s mouth,” i.e., this is the letter *hei*, which is vested in this world and all its hosts to animate them;

ובתוכו מלובשת בחינת צורת אותיות הדיבור והמחשבה

in [this utterance] is vested the “form” of the letters of speech and thought,

ממדותיו הקדושות ורצונו וחכמתו וכו'

emanating from His holy attributes, and His will and wisdom, and so on,

This is similar to the letters (i.e., the potential and as-yet- inarticulate components) of a man’s speech or thought, which attain a state of revealed expression through his emotions: since, for example, he loves and desires something, he thinks and speaks about it. The emotions themselves, however, derive from his will and mind. The same is true Above: the letters of speech and thought are revealed by the Divine attributes and emanate from them, though ultimately they derive from G-d’s will and wisdom.

המיוחדות באין סוף ברוך הוא, בתכלית

which are utterly incorporated in the blessed *Ein Sof*.

Thus, the radiance emanating from the “form” of the letters — a radiance that emanates from G-d’s attributes, wisdom and will — is merely found בתוכו, *within* the internality of

the Divine utterance that creates and vitalizes this world; it is not manifest. That which serves as the source of the creation and vitality of this world is the externality or “body” of the letters, the “breath” of Divine speech.

וזה שאמר האר"י ז"ל, שבחינת חיצוניות הכלים דמלכות דאצילות, המרומזות בה' של שם ה' ברוך הוא, הם ירדו ונעשו נשמה לעולם העשיה)

([37](#) And this is what Rabbi Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, stated [38](#) — that the external aspects of the vessels of [the *Sefirah* of] *Malchut* of [the World of] *Atzilut*, [these external aspects being] alluded to by the [lower] *hei* of the Four-Letter Name of G-d, descended and became the soul for the World of *Asiyah*.)

וכן כתוב בתקונים, שהי"ד הוא באצילות כו', וה' תתאה מקננת בעשיה

It is likewise stated in the *Tikkunim*, [39](#) that the *yud* is in [the World of] *Atzilut*, [the upper *hei* in the World of *Beriah*, the *vav* in the World of *Yetzirah*,] and the lower *hei* nests in [the World of] *Asiyah*.

These four letters of the Divine Name *Havayah* are the aspect of G-dliness that is revealed within the Four Worlds, [40](#) as follows:

In the World of *Atzilut*, the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah* (the *yud* of the Divine Name) is manifest. *Chochmah* signifies the highest form of self-nullification, the awareness that “He is One Alone and apart from Him there is nothing,” as explained in the Note to Part I, ch. 35. This *Sefirah* permeates the entire World of *Atzilut*, so that whatever exists at that state of being experiences this degree of self-nullification before G-d.

The upper *hei* of the Divine Name, the *Sefirah* of *Binah* (“comprehension”), illuminates the World of *Beriah*. Hence all the inhabitants of this world, both souls and angels, are characterized by a high degree of perception of Divinity.

The World of *Yetzirah* is illumined by the letter *vav* of the Divine Name, representing the six *middot*, the Divine emotive attributes. The created beings of this world therefore serve G-d with their spiritual emotions, with ecstatic love and fear.

The World of *Asiyah* is animated by the lower *hei* of the Tetragrammaton, the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*. This is the world of action, the level of active Divine service that is motivated by an acceptance of the yoke of the heavenly kingdom.

However, this refers only to the *soul* of the World of *Asiyah* that emanates from the combinations of the letters of Divine speech at their innermost dimension. This level is clothed and concealed within the “matter” or “body” of the letters — the “breath”. The actual creation and animation of the World of *Asiyah* derives only from the externality of Divine speech, i.e., from the “breath”. It is for this reason that this world is physical and corporeal.

* * *

We learned above that the *Zohar* teaches: “Who makes the Holy Name every day? He who gives charity to the poor.” The relevance of this answer, however, remained obscure. Now, therefore, equipped with the foregoing insights, we revert to the question with which this epistle opened: How does giving *zedakah* to the poor “make a Name” for G-d?

The Alter Rebbe explains as follows:

והנה באדם התחתון, למשל, מי שהוא חכם גדול להשכיל נפלאות חכמה

Now with terrestrial man, for example, when one who is so great a sage as to comprehend the wonders of wisdom

ומצמצם שכלו ומחשבתו באות אחד מדבורו

contracts his conception and thought into a single letter of his speech,

הנה זה הוא צמצום עצום וירידה גדולה לחכמתו הנפלאה

this is a stupendous contraction and a great descent for his wondrous wisdom.

ככה ממש, על דרך משל, ויתר מזה לאין קץ, היה צמצום גדול ועצום ורב

Precisely as in this analogy but infinitely more so, there was an immensely great and mighty contraction

כאשר בדבר ה' שמים נעשו בששת ימי בראשית, וברוח פיו כל צבאם

when during the Six Days of Creation “the heavens were made by the word of G-d, and all their hosts by the breath of His mouth,”^{[41](#)}

היא אות ה' של שם הויה ברוך הוא, אתא קלילא

i.e., by the letter *hei* — “a light letter” — of the Four-Letter Name of G-d.

This is not only a single letter, but also an insubstantial one.

כמו שכתוב: בהבראם, בה' בראם

Thus it is written,^{[42](#)} “[These are the chronicles of heaven and earth] *behibar'am*” (i.e., ‘when they were created’). By revocalizing the Hebrew letters of this word, the Sages^{[43](#)} read it as if it were simultaneously pronounced *b'hei bra'am*. The verse would now mean, “These are the chronicles of heaven and earth; with the letter *hei* He created them.”

היא מקור ה' מאמרות שנמשכו ממאמר ראשון: בראשית, דנמי מאמר הוא

[This letter *hei*] is the source of the nine creative utterances which issued from the first utterance: *Bereishit* (“In the beginning”), which itself is a creative utterance,[44](#)

היא בחינת חכמה, הנקראת ראשית

and identical with the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah*,[45](#) which is called *reishit* (as in the phrase, *reishit chochmah* — “the beginning of wisdom”[46](#)).

The descent of *Chochmah*, the source of the other nine creative utterances, into *Malchut*, the lowest of the *Sefirot*, involves an intense degree of contraction.

אך אז היתה המשכה וירידה זו בלי אתערותא דלתתא כלל

But at that time, at the beginning of creation, this downward flow from *Chochmah* to *Malchut* occurred without any arousal from below whatever,

כי אדם אין לעבוד גו'

[as it is written,][47](#) “For there was no man to work”[48](#) and bring about this arousal;

רק כי חפץ חסד הוא

it occurred solely[49](#) “because He desires [to act with] kindness,”

ועולם חסד יבנה

as it is also written,[50](#) “The world is built by kindness.”

וזהו: בהבראם, באברהם

And this is the meaning of [another interpretation of the verse, “These are the chronicles of heaven and earth] *behibar'am*” (i.e., ‘when they were created’). By transposing the Hebrew letters of this word, the Sages[51](#) read this word as if it were simultaneously pronounced *beAvraham* (i.e., ‘through [the attribute that characterizes] Abraham’),

כי חסד לאברהם כו'

since[52](#) “kindness is to Abraham.” Since Abraham embodies the attribute of *Chesed*, the verse thus intimates that heaven and earth were created through the attribute of *Chesed*.

אך אחר בריאת האדם לעבדה כו'

But after the creation of man “to work it,”[53](#) his life-long task being to draw down to this world a flow of Divine energy by means of an “arousal from below,” i.e., by means of his own spiritual labors,

אזי כל אתערותא דלעילא, לעורר מדת חסד עליון, הוא באתערותא דלתתא

every arousal from Above, to arouse the attribute of Supreme kindness, depends on an arousal from below,

בצדקה וחסד שישראל עושים בעולם הזה

through the acts of charity and kindness⁵⁴ that Jews perform in this world.

Thus, these good deeds draw down Divine influence from the *yud* of the Divine Name, from the level of *Chochmah*, to the final *hei* of the Name, the level of *Malchut*. In this way, then, good deeds bring together and “make” the Name of G-d, and draw it downward in its entirety.

לכן אמרו רז"ל: כל האומר אין לי אלא תורה, בלי גמילות חסדים, אפילו תורה אין לו

That is why our Sages, of blessed memory, have said:⁵⁵ “Whoever says that he has nothing but Torah,” and thus no kindly deeds, “does not have even Torah;

אלא לעסוק בתורה ובגמילות חסדים

rather, one ought to engage in Torah and in the performance of acts of lovingkindness.”

כי הנה הגם דאורייתא מחכמה נפקת, ובאורייתא מתקיים עלמא, ובאינון דלעאן בה

For though the “Torah derives from *Chochmah*,”⁵⁶ and “the world subsists by virtue of the Torah”⁵⁷ and “those who discourse in it,”⁵⁸

כי בדבורם ממשיכים הארות והשפעות נוסח אחר: והשראות חכמה עילאה מקור התורה, לבחינת אותיות הדבור, שבהן נברא העולם

because by speaking of Torah subjects they elicit illuminations and effusions⁵⁹ from Supreme *Chochmah*, the source of Torah, into the plane of the letters of speech with which the world was created,

כמאמר רז"ל: אל תקרי בניך אלא בוניך

as our Sages, of blessed memory, said, with regard to Torah scholars,⁶⁰ “Do not read *banayich* (‘Your children’) but *bonayich* (‘Your builders’), for they build the world through their study of Torah, —

הרי המשכה זו היא בחינת ירידה גדולה

nevertheless, this flow of *Chochmah* to the letters of speech is a great descent.

ולזה צריך לעורר חסד עליון, הנמשך כמים ממקום גבוה למקום נמוך

To accomplish this it is necessary to arouse Supernal *Chesed* which, like water, is drawn down from a high place to a low place

באתערותא דלתתא, בצדקה וחסד תתאה

by means of an arousal from below, through acts of charity and kindness here below,

שממשיכים חיים וחסד, להחיות רוח שפלים וגדכאים

whereby one diffuses life and kindness,⁶¹ “to revive the spirit of the humble and downcast.”

By doing so one draws down Supernal kindness, so that the vitality of *Chochmah* descends to the letters of speech, the source of all creation.

וזה שכתוב: אל יתהלל חכם בחכמתו גו', כי אם בזאת יתהלל גו', כי אני ה' עושה חסד גו'

And this is the meaning of the verse,⁶² “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, but in this let him glory — [in understanding and knowing Me,”⁶³ but in such a manner that it brings about the fulfillment of the phrase that follows]: “for I am G-d Who acts with kindness.”

We thus see that wisdom is justifiably glorified when it leads to an act of kindness which in turn evokes a reciprocal act of kindness from Above.

כי החסד הוא הממשיך חיי החכמה למטה

For it is *Chesed*, the kindly conduct of man here below, that results in the fulfillment of the verse, “I am G-d Who acts with kindness,” i.e., with the *Chesed* of *Asiyah*, and that causes the vitality of *Chochmah* to issue downwards into the letters of speech, the source of all created beings.

ואם לא, הרי נקראת חכמתו לבדו

In the absence of this [kindly conduct], [the Torah study] that such a person undertakes is called “His wisdom” alone: it remains in heaven as an untapped resource in which that wise man cannot glory,

בלי המשכת חיים ממנה, חס ושלו

and there is no downward flow of life from it, G-d forbid.

ובזה יובן מה שכתב האריז"ל, שיש ב' מיני נשמות בישראל

The above enables one to understand the statement of Rabbi Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, that there are two kinds of souls among Jews:

נשמות תלמידי חכמים, העוסקים בתורה כל ימיהם

the souls of Torah scholars, who engage in the study of Torah all their lives,⁶⁴

ונשמות בעלי מצות, העוסקים בצדקה וגמילות חסדים

and the souls of those who perform the commandments, occupying themselves with charitable and kindly deeds.

דלכאורה, הרי גם תלמידי חכמים צריכים לעסוק בגמילות חסדים

Now surely scholars, too, need to occupy themselves with acts of kindness;

כמאמר רז"ל, שאפילו תורה אין לו

as our Sages, of blessed memory, taught, "[Whoever says that he has nothing but Torah," and thus no kindly deeds], "does not have even Torah."

How, then, could the *AriZal* have stated that people with a certain kind of soul invest their lives exclusively in Torah study? The Alter Rebbe's answer, which follows, takes it for granted that even fulltime Torah scholars of course spend some of their time in doing good deeds.

אלא שהתלמידי חכמים, שתורתן עיקר ורוב ימיהם בה

However, as regards Torah scholars whose study of the Torah is their principal occupation and most of their time is spent in it, with only a minor part of their time spent on the performance of kindly deeds,

הנה פעולת אתערותא דלתתא, לעורר חסד עליון

the effect of their arousal from below, to arouse Supernal *Chesed*,

להמשיך ולהוריד אור אין סוף המלוכש בחכמה עילאה, מקור תורת ה' שבפיהם

to call forth and bring downward the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light vested in Supernal *Chochmah*, the source of G-d's Torah which is in their mouths,

הוא רק לעולם הנשמות שבבריא, על ידי עסק התלמוד

extends only to the realm of the souls that are in *Beriah*, through their occupation with *Gemara*,

The study of *Gemara*, inasmuch as it involves reasoning and intellectual give-and-take, corresponds to the World of *Beriah*, the realm of comprehension.

ולמלאכים שביצירה על ידי לימוד המשנה

and extends to the angels that are in the World of *Yetzirah*, through their occupation with *Mishnah*.

The *Mishnah* consists of statements of law — “kosher” or “non-kosher”, “pure” or “impure”. Such bipartite divisions, which are a reflection in the material world below of the divergent attributes of *Chesed* and *Gevurah* in the realms above, are related to the World of *Yetzirah*, which is the realm of *middot*, the spiritual emotions.

יען היות חיות הגשמות והמלאכים נשפעות מצירופי אותיות הדבור, היא תורה שבעל פה

For the animation of souls and angels derives from the combinations of the letters of speech, i.e., the Oral Torah; as it is written in *Patach Eliyahu*,⁶⁵ “[The *Sefirah* of] *Malchut* [corresponds to] the mouth, which we call the Oral Torah.”

ומקור האותיות הוא מחכמה עילאה, כנזכר לעיל

The source of the letters, however, is in Supernal *Chochmah*, as mentioned above.

Thus, through their study of the Oral Torah, scholars draw down Supernal *Chochmah* into the combinations of the letters of speech; this in turn provides vitality to [unborn] souls and angels.

אך להמשיך ולהוריד הארה וחיות מבחינת הבל העליון, ה' תתאה, לעולם הזה השפל

However, in order to call forth and bring downward an illumination and vitality from the level of the Supreme Breath, the “lower *hei*,” to this lowly world,

שהוא צמצום גדול ביתר עז

which entails a greater and extreme contraction,

לא די באתערותא דלתתא של תלמידי חכמים, העוסקים מיעוט ימיהם בצדקה וגמילות חסדים

the arousal from below by the Torah scholars, who for only a small part of their time engage in charitable and kindly deeds, is not sufficient.⁶⁶

אלא על ידי אתערותא דבעלי מצות, העוסקים רוב ימיהם בצדקה וגמילות חסדים

[This is effected] only through an arousal by those who perform the commandments, who are occupied with deeds of charity and kindness for the major part of their life

(וכמו שכתוב בלקוטי אמרים בחלק א', פרק ל"ד)

(⁶⁷as explained in *Likkutei Amarim*, Part I, ch. 34).

The Alter Rebbe explains there that even if a man distributes no more than a fifth of his income for charity, that fifth elevates the other four parts with it to G-d, for thereby all his exertion becomes a dwelling for Him. Moreover, his acts of kindness will arouse G-d's "right hand of kindness."

ולכן נקראו תמכי אורייתא

That is why [people who are mainly occupied with such *mitzvot*] are called⁶⁸ "the supporters of [the] Torah [itself]," and not only of those who study the Torah, for by their activities they draw down the light of the Torah from its root and source so that it will illuminate this physical world below.

והן בחינות ומדריגות נצח והוד

These [people] represent the levels of *Netzach* and *Hod*, which are analogous to⁶⁹ "the two thighs" which enable a man to stand upon the ground; the function of the *Sefirot* of *Netzach* and *Hod* is similar,

להיותן ממשיכין אור התורה למטה לעולם העשיה

because they cause the light of Torah to issue downwards to the World of *Asiyah*.

ובזה יובן למה נקרא הצדקה בשם מעשה

Now it is clear⁷⁰ why charity is referred to as an "act",

כמו שכתוב: והיה מעשה הצדקה שלום

as in the verse,⁷¹ "And the act of charity will be peace."

על שם שפעולתה להמשיך אור ה' לעולם העשיה

For the effect of charity is to elicit the light of G-d down to the World of *Asiyah*.

וזהו דקדוק לשון זוהר הקדוש: מאן דעביד שמא קדישא, דעביד דייקא

And this is the meaning of the subtle phraseology of the holy *Zohar*: "He who makes the Holy Name," expressly saying "who makes."

כי באתערותא דלתתא, בצדקה וחסד תתאה, מעורר חסד עליון

For by an arousal from below, through charity and mortal *Chesed*, one arouses the Supernal *Chesed* —

להמשיך אור אין סוף מבחינת חכמה עילאה, יו"ד של שם

to elicit the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light from Supernal *Chochmah*, the *yud* of the Divine Name,

לה' של שם, בחינת הדבור ורוח פיו יתברך

to the *hei* of the Name, to the “speech” and “breath” of G-d’s blessed mouth,

כדי להשפיע לעולם העשיה

in order to draw down [Divine light] to the World of *Asiyah*.

ועל דרך משל, להבדיל הבדלות אין קץ: כמו שאדם אינו מדבר אלא לאחרים

And, analogously speaking, though infinitely incomparable: a human being speaks only to others

(ולא כשהוא בינו לבין עצמו)

(72and not when he is alone),

ואז מצמצם שכלו ומחשבתו בדבורו אליהם

and then when speaking to them he contracts his intellect and thought.

והמשכילים יבינו

The intelligent will understand.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *II Shmuel* 8:13. [2.](#) *III*, 113b. [3.](#) *II Shmuel* 8:15. [4.](#) *Menachot* 29b; *Yerushalmi*, *Chagigah* 2:1. [5.](#) *Yeshayahu* 26:4. [6.](#) This additional interpretation rests on an alternative version of our text from Tractate *Menachot*, which is supplied by *Tosafot* on *Berachot* 51a (*s.v.* זוכה. [7.](#) “See *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle 29 (p. 150b): The garments [of the soul] in the Upper *Gan Eden* are produced by this yearning (*re’uta*) and this devout intent (*kavanah*), while in the Lower *Gan Eden* they are produced by the actual performance of practical *mitzvot*. So, too, in *Kuntres Acharon*, beginning of p. 155a et al. See also *Likkutei Torah*, *Parshat Vaetchanan*, at the beginning of the *maamar* entitled *VeZot HaMitzvah*.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [8.](#) *II*, 158a; *Zohar Chadash* 93a. [9.](#) “[The influence of this *Sefirah* is felt] in the Lower *Gan Eden* as well, (although in relation to the Upper *Gan Eden* it is the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*). See *Or HaTorah*, *Chayei Sarah* (p. 114a); *Likkutei Torah*, *Vaetchanan*, p. 10b, et al.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [10.](#) *I*, 6a, et al. [11.](#) “This is discussed at length in *Likkutei Torah*, beginning of *Parshat Re’eh*; see the sources cited there.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [12.](#) “Cf. the Note at the beginning of ch. 12 of *Shaar HaYichud VahaEmunah*: ‘The shape of each letter indicates the pattern of the flow and manifestation of the light.’ ” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [13.](#) *Yeshayahu* 64:3. [14.](#) *Zohar III*, 248a. [15.](#) The larynx, palate, tongue, teeth and lips. [16.](#) “This is analogous to the musical notes of a harp, that are produced by plucking different strings. (Cf. *Hemshech* 5666, p. 447).” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [17.](#) The Hebrew names for the vowels

קמץ and פתח respectively mean “compressing” and “opening”. [18.](#) “The reason for the change in order (אָהע"ע instead of the alphabetical order of אָהע"ע) may be understood by reference to the statement in *Zohar* II, 123a. (See also *Etz Chayim, Shaar Derushei HaTzelem*, p. 2.)” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [19.](#) *Akdamut* Millin, verse 6 (*Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 400). [20.](#) *Kohelet* 8:4. [21.](#) Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar*. [22.](#) *Tehillim* 145:13. [23.](#) Brackets are in the original text. [24.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [25.](#) “This accords with the explanation in *Torah Or* (and *Or HaTorah*) on this phrase [in the context of *Shmot* 28:2-3].” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [26.](#) *Iyov* 25:3. [27.](#) *Daniel* 7:10. [28.](#) “The Alter Rebbe cites this as well (as he does also in Part I, ch. 46, p. 65b), thus inviting a question as to what is added thereby (see *ibid.*, beginning of ch. 48). It could be argued that he thereby adduces that though these ‘regiments’ derive from letters and are therefore (finite and) countable, they nevertheless comprise as well an aspect of infinity.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [29.](#) 4:12. [30.](#) According to the rules of substitution, the first letter (א) can be substituted by the last letter (ת); the second letter (ב) can be substituted by the second-last letter (ש), and so on. There are also other schemes of transposition, e.g., of letters of similar sound; of letters articulated by the same organ of speech; and so on. [31.](#) This parenthetical gloss was added by the Rebbe. [32.](#) Parentheses appear in original text. [33.](#) “[The above-described successive *stages* of letter-permutation cause the light of Divine speech] to *descend* from the loftiest rung to the lofty rung below it, [creating creatures of lesser standing by a mere] ‘radiation of a radiation’ [as in ch. 12, loc. cit.]. By contrast, mere *differences* in letter-permutation would not produce [creatures of] lesser standing.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [34.](#) “[This ‘garment’ or ‘breath’] retains no separate identity from that which is clothed in it, and does not conceal it.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [35.](#) “See also *Or HaTorah* on this verse.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [36.](#) I, 146b. [37.](#) Parentheses appear in original text. [38.](#) See *Etz Chayim, Shaar* 47, ch. 2, *et al.* [39.](#) See *Tikkun* 6 (p. 23a); *Etz Chayim, Shaar* 42, conclusion of ch. 4. [40.](#) “As explained in Part I, ch. 39.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [41.](#) *Tehillim* 33:6. [42.](#) *Bereishit* 2:4. [43.](#) *Menachot* 29b. [44.](#) *Rosh HaShanah* 32a. [45.](#) Cf. the Aramaic paraphrase of *Targum Yerushalmi* on *Bereishit* 1:1: בהוּכְמָא. [46.](#) *Tehillim* 111:10. [47.](#) *Bereishit* 4:5. [48.](#) “By inserting this verse (‘there was no *man*’), the Alter Rebbe evidently intends to negate the possibility that [unborn] souls too might initiate a comparable ‘arousal from below.’ This perspective allows us to better understand the emphasis in the phrase, ‘any arousal from below *whatever*.’” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [49.](#) *Michah* 7:18. [50.](#) *Tehillim* 89:3. [51.](#) *Bereishit Rabbah* 12:9. [52.](#) *Michah* 7:20. [53.](#) *Bereishit* 2:15. [54.](#) “It will be noted that though the opening passage of this Epistle speaks of *tzedakah* alone, there are many variations thereafter: charity and kindness; acts of lovingkindness; charity and lovingkindness; charity and acts of lovingkindness; and so on.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [55.](#) *Yevamot* 109b. [56.](#) *Zohar* II, 121a, *et al.* [57.](#) *Op. cit.* 200a, *et al.* [58.](#) *Ibid.* I, 47a, *et al.* [59.](#) A variant reading: “indwellings”. [60.](#) *Berachot* 64a. [61.](#) Cf. *Yeshayahu* 57:15. [62.](#) *Yirmeyahu* 9:22-23. [63.](#) “For this too is wisdom; moreover, its mainstay.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [64.](#) “All the other souls are included in the second category; hence the term ‘all their lives’ is not mentioned there.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [65.](#) *Tikkunei Zohar*, Introduction II. [66.](#) “Though insufficient, it is indispensable, for the downward flow must be drawn down through the Worlds of *Beriah* and *Yetzirah*.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [67.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [68.](#) *Zohar* I, 8a, paraphrasing *Mishlei* 3:18. See also *Zohar* III, 53b; *Vayikra Rabbah* 25:1; *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah* 251:9; *et al.* [69.](#) *Tikkunei Zohar*, loc.

cit. [70](#). “Though this comment would appear to be less appropriate here than in Epistle 12, its inclusion here may be appreciated in the light of a statement by the *Ramaz* (*Nitzutzei Orot*, in *Zohar* III, *loc. cit.*).” (— Note of the Rebbe.) [71](#). *Yeshayahu* 32:17, expounded at length in Epistle 12, below. [72](#). Parentheses are in the original text.



Epistle 6

וזורע צדקה שכר אמת במשלי י"א

“He who sows *tzedakah* has a ‘reward’ of truth” (*Proverbs* 11).[1](#)

פירוש: ששכר זריעת הצדקה היא מדת אמת

This means that the attribute of truth is the (G-d-given) reward for sowing *tzedakah*.

The term “this means” is generally used to forestall an alternative interpretation. Here, too, by this term the Alter Rebbe stresses that we are to understand the Hebrew word *secher* to mean “reward” rather than its being understood to mean “closing off and restraining” (water or whatever, in order to concentrate it). The latter interpretation is that of *Rashi*; a parallel term is the word ויסכרו in the verse,[2](#) “And the wellsprings of the deep were sealed.”

Furthermore, even the *Targum* and other commentaries who do read *secher* to mean “payment of a reward,” can be understood to mean that the individual who sows charity receives a true reward, i.e., an everlasting reward, rather than a reward that consists of truth.

The Alter Rebbe therefore specifies: “This means” that the reward granted from above for sowing *tzedakah* is — the attribute of truth.

וכתיב: תתן אמת ליעקב

It is also written,[3](#) “You give truth unto Jacob,” which would appear to indicate once again that the attribute of truth is granted from Above.

According to the commentaries of *Rashi* and *Targum*, however, this verse does not describe a state of affairs. Rather, it petitions that G-d give truth (“Give truth unto Jacob”), that He fulfill for Jacob’s children the truthful promises that He had made to Jacob. Hence this verse does not prove that the attribute of truth is a gift granted from Above.

The Alter Rebbe therefore goes on to specify that this verse is to be understood in the same light as the verse quoted at the outset of this epistle, as follows:

ושבחה דקודשא בריך הוא מסדר נביא כו', כמו שכתוב בזוהר הקדוש

And [here] the prophet [*Micah*] speaks the praises of the Holy One, blessed be He, as is written in the holy *Zohar*.⁴ I.e., rather than petitioning G-d, this verse extols Him for fulfilling his promise of granting the attribute of truth to Jacob.

פירוש: שהקדוש ברוך הוא, הוא הנותן מדת אמת ליעקב

This means that it is the Holy One, blessed be He, Who gives the attribute of truth unto Jacob.

וצריך להבין: וכי אין אמת ליעקב, חס ושלום, עד שהקדוש ברוך הוא יתן לו מלמעלה

Now this needs to be understood: Does Jacob have no truth, heaven forbid, until the Holy One, blessed be He, gives it to him from above?

אך הנה מודעת זאת דמדת יעקב היא מדת רחמנות

However, it is well known⁵ that the attribute of Jacob is the attribute of compassion.

Abraham epitomizes *Chesed*, the attribute of kindness; Isaac epitomizes *Gevurah*, the attribute of severity; the predominant attribute of Jacob is *Tiferet*, or *Rachamim*, compassion. The inward aspect of the soul's divine service when motivated by *Chesed* is — the love of G-d; the inward aspect of the soul's divine service when motivated by *Gevurah* is — the awe of G-d; so, too, divine service when motivated by compassion has its distinctive inward aspect:

ועבודת ה' במדת רחמנות

And the service of G-d through compassion

היא הבאה מהתעוררות רחמים רבים בלב האדם על ניצוץ אלקות שבנפשו

derives from the arousal, in a man's heart, of profound compassion for the Divine spark in his soul,

הרחוקה מאור פני ה', כאשר הולך בחשך הבלי עולם

which is distant from the light of G-d's Countenance whenever [the man] goes about in the darkness of the vanities of the world.

When a man finds himself straying forlorn in a state of spiritual darkness, he can thus awaken within himself a feeling of compassion for the soul-spark within him that he himself has banished from the light of its Divine Source.

והתעוררות רחמנות זו היא באה מהתבונה והדעת בגדולת ה'

This arousal of compassion itself derives from (and is proportionate to) [a man's] understanding and deep cognition of the greatness of G-d:

איך שאפילו העולמות העליונים, למעלה מעלה עד אין קץ, כלא ממש חשיבי קמיה

[he reflects upon] how even the most infinitely sublime worlds are considered as truly naught before Him.

כי כל שפעם וחיותם אינו רק מזיו והארה מאות אחד משמו יתברך

For all their [G-d-given] bounty and vitality derives from a mere gleam or reflection of a single letter of His blessed Name,

כמאמר: ביו"ד נברא עולם הבא כו'

as it is written,⁶ “The World to Come was created [merely] by the letter *yud* [of the Divine Name].”

The spiritual worlds, all of which are included in the term “World to Come,” were thus all created by means of the single letter *yud* of the Divine Name.

והנה בזיו והארה זו, שהוא התפשטות החיות משמו יתברך להחיות עליונים ותחתונים

Now it is in this radiation and reflection, which is an extension of the life-giving energy [that flows] from [G-d's] blessed Name to animate the higher and lower beings,

הוא שיש הבדל והפרש בין עליונים לתחתונים

that there is a distinction and difference with respect to higher and lower beings,

שעולם הזה נברא בה' וכו'

so that “this world was created through the letter *hei*,” and so on, while the higher worlds were created through the letter *yud*.

As explained in the previous epistle, this lowly corporeal world receives its vitality only from the “matter” or “body” of the letters of Supernal speech, which in turn derives from the letter *hei* of the Divine Name. The higher worlds, however, receive their vitality from the “form” or “soul” of these letters, and this derives from the level of *Chochmah*, represented by the *yud* of the Divine Name. However, these different modes in which the

life-giving influence of the Divine Name is diffused to the upper and lower worlds respectively, relate only to the radiation and reflection of the Divine Name; they do not relate to G-d's Essence.

(Moreover, any name is a mere reflection of the essence of the entity named. A person's name, for example, is not his essence: it merely reflects it; it is merely a means of relating to another person. In the same way, the Divine Name is merely a reflection of the essence of the Divine.)

Until now the Alter Rebbe has spoken in general terms of the differences between the higher and lower worlds.

וכן כל שינויי הפרטים שבכל עולם ועולם

Also, all the variety of details within each world

הוא לפי שינויי צירופי האותיות

is determined by differences in the combinations of the letters through which they were created.

וכן שינויי הזמנים בעבר, הווה ועתיד

So, too, the distinctions between the temporal dimensions of past, present and future,

ושינויי כל הקורות בחילופי הזמנים

and all the variety of events throughout the changing times, —

הכל משינויי צירופי האותיות

all of these, too, are determined by differences in the combinations of the letters.

שהן הן המשכת החיות ממדותיו, יתברך שמו

For [these combinations of letters] are the conduits of the life-giving force that proceeds from attributes of [G-d] (Blessed be His Name),

(כמו שכתוב בלקוטי אמרים חלק ב', פרק י"א)

([7](#)as explained in *Likkutei Amarim*, Part II, ch. 11).

All the above-mentioned differences are to be found only in the flow of vitality which emanates from G-d's attributes and which then descends through the letters of His creative speech.

אבל לגבי מהותו ועצמותו יתברך, כתיב: אני ה' לא שניתי

But as for His blessed Being and Essence, it is written:⁸ “I, G-d, have not changed” as a result of creation —

בין בבחינת שינויי ההשתלשלות, מרום המעלות עד למטה מטה

neither (a) in terms of changes in the progression from the uppermost of levels to the nethermost,

שכמו שהוא יתברך מצוי בעליונים, כך הוא ממש בשוה בתחתונים

for just as He is present in the higher worlds, so [is He present] in precisely the same measure in the nether worlds, since from His perspective there is absolutely no difference between them: all are equally distant from Him, “for no thought can apprehend Him at all, even in the higher worlds,”

(וכמו שכתוב בלקוטי אמרים חלק א', פרק נ"א)

(⁹as is explained in *Likkutei Amarim*, Part I, ch. 51),

The higher and lower worlds differ only in relation to the stream of life-giving energy that flows forth from Him: this vitality is more *revealed* in the higher worlds than in the lower.

ובין בבחינת שינויי הזמן

nor (b) in terms of temporal changes [is there any difference from G-d's perspective];

שכמו שהיה הוא לבדו הוא, יחיד ומיוחד, לפני ששת ימי בראשית, כך הוא עתה אחר הבריאה

for just as He was alone, one and unique, before the Six Days of Creation, so He is now after Creation.

But how can G-d's absolute unity remain unaltered, despite the advent of a whole created universe?

והיינו: משום שהכל כאין ואפס ממש, לגבי מהותו ועצמותו

This is so because everything is absolutely as nothing and naught in relation to His being and essence,

וכמו אות אחד מדבורו של אדם, או אפילו ממחשבתו, לגבי כללות מהות הנפש השכלית ועצמותה

just as a single letter of a man's speech, or even of his thought, [is of absolutely no consequence] in relation to the entire being and essence of the rational soul,

I.e., this is true not only of a letter of speech but also of thought, even though the soul-garment of thought is more abstract and subtle than speech and is thus closer to the soul.

It is the intellect of the rational soul that causes the emergence of the emotions; this, in turn, leads to thought and speech. Thus, in comparison to the essence of the soul itself, which transcends even intellect by far, one letter of speech or even of thought is of absolutely no consequence.

However, the above analogy is merely offered:

על דרך משל, לשכך את האזן

metaphorically speaking, to appease the ear, in order to give finite mortals some inkling of the insignificance of creation in the eyes of the Creator,

ובאמת אין ערוך אליך, כתיב

while in fact, as it is written,¹⁰ “There is no comparison unto You.”

Unlike the single letter of thought or speech that bears some degree of comparison to the soul, albeit an infinitesimal one, creation stands in no proportion whatever to the Creator.

וכמו שכתוב במקום אחר (בלקוטי אמרים חלק ב', פרק ט', עיין שם)

This is explained elsewhere (¹¹in *Likkutei Amarim*, Part II, ch. 9); see there.

וזהו שאומרים: המלך המרומם לבדו מאז

This underlies what we say in the Sabbath prayers:¹² “The King Who is exalted, alone from aforesaid.”

פירוש: כמו מאז, קודם הבריאה, היה הוא לבדו הוא

This means that just as aforesaid, before the creation, He was alone, and apart from Him nothing existed,

כך עתה הוא מרומם כו' ומתנשא מימות עולם

so now, too, He is exalted and elevated beyond “the days of the world.”

פירוש: שהוא רם ונשא למעלה מעלה מבחינת זמן, הנקרא בשם ימות עולם

This means that He is exalted and elevated, transcending the dimension of time, which is known as “the days of the world.”

והיינו: לפי שחיות כל ימות עולם הוא רק מבחינת המלך

This is so because the life-force of all “the days of the world,” the life-force of the dimension of time, derives solely from the spiritual level known as “the King,” i.e., from the Sefirah of Malchut,

The axis of past, present and future — the element of time — relates only to the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*; concerning this level we may differentiate between the phrases, “He reigned,” “He reigns,” and “He shall reign.” However, the *Sefirot* and attributes that are above *Malchut* transcend the element of time,

וכמו שמבואר במקום אחר

as is explained elsewhere.^{[13](#)}

Since G-d utterly transcends creation, which is absolutely of no consequence in relation to His Essence:

ואי לזאת, הרחמנות גדולה מאד מאד על הניצוץ השוכן בגוף החשוך והאפל, משכא דחויא

It follows that there is extremely great cause to feel compassion for the spark, which is^{[14](#)} “a part of G-d Above,” that dwells in the dark and gloomy body — the^{[15](#)} “hide of the snake.”

העלול לקבל טומאה ולהתגאל בכל התאוות, רחמנא ליצלן

For [the body] is liable to contract impurity by indulging in prohibited things that derive from the three utterly impure *kelipot*, and to become defiled by various lusts (May the Merciful One spare us) involving things which, though permitted, derive from *kelipat nogah*,

לולי שהקדוש ברוך הוא מגן לו

if not for G-d’s serving the man as a shield,

ובותן לו עוז ותעצומות ללחום עם הגוף ותאוותיו ולנצחן

and giving him strength and might to wage war with the body and its passions and to triumph over them.

Even when the body does not actually lust after physical pleasures, the very fact that it is so inclined points to its lowly state — and it is within such a body that the Divine spark is obliged to spend its days.

וזהו שאומרים: אדון עוזנו כו' מגן ישענו כו'

And this is the meaning of [the continuation of the prayer],^{[16](#)} “Master of our strength, Shield of our salvation.”

After extolling G-d as “the King who is exalted, alone from aforetime,” and beseeching Him in His “abundant mercies to have compassion on us,” we continue with the above-quoted phrases. With these words we affirm that G-d provides us with an encompassing light and power, far transcending man’s own puny powers, that enables us to triumph over the body and its passions.

* * *

והנה מודעת זאת דיש ב' מיני דחילו ורחימו

Now it is well known¹⁷ that there are two types of awe [of G-d] and [two types] of love [of G-d].

הראשונות הן הנולדות מהתבונה ודעת בגדולת ה', ובדברים המביאין לידי אהבת ה' ויראתו

The first ones are born of an understanding and cognition of the greatness of G-d, and of those matters that lead to the love of G-d and to the fear of Him, such as G-d’s closeness to the Jewish people.

והאחרונות הן הבאות אחר כך מלמעלה, בבחינת מתנה

The latter ones are those that come afterwards, from Above, as a gift,

After one has acquired a love and fear of G-d as a result of his own contemplation, he is then granted from Above a heightened measure of love and fear.

וכמו שמבואר במקום אחר על פסוק: עבודת מתנה אתן את כהונתכם

as explained elsewhere¹⁸ in comment on the verse,¹⁹ “I shall grant [you] your priestly service as a gift.”

שהיא מדת אהבה

This [priesthood] refers to the attribute of love,

וכן הוא גם כן ביראה

and it is likewise with regard to awe. I.e., there is a degree of fear of G-d that is likewise granted as a gift from Above.

והנה ודאי אין ערוך כלל בין הראשונות, שהן תולדות השכל הנברא

Now there is surely no comparison between the first ones, the lower levels of love and fear, which are the products of the created intellect,

לגבי האחרונות, שהן מהבורא יתברך שמו

and the latter ones, which are [a gift] from the Creator, blessed be His Name.

Just as there can be absolutely no comparison between Creator and created, so too can there be no comparison between the love and fear generated by each of these two levels.

ולכן הן הן הנקראות בשם אמת

That is why it is these [latter degrees of love and fear] that are referred to as “truth”,

כי חותמו של הקדוש ברוך הוא אמת

for “the seal of the Holy One, blessed be He, is truth,”²⁰

שהוא אמת האמיתי, וכל האמת שבנבראים כלא חשיבי קמיה

for He is the true Truth, and in relation to Him all truth among created beings is considered as nothing.

Since G-d is absolute truth, the love and fear that emanate from Him are deemed “truth” as well.

אך איזה הדרך שיזכה האדם לאמת ה'

But which is the way whereby a man can merit [the loftier love and fear that are termed] “the truth of G-d”?

הנה הוא על ידי שיעורר רחמים רבים לפני ה' על הניצוץ שבנפשו

It is by arousing great compassion in G-d's eyes for the spark in his soul.

שהיא מדתו של יעקב, מבריה מהקצה אל הקצה

This [attribute of compassion] is the attribute of Jacob, who²¹ “bolts from one end through to the other,”

דהיינו: מרום המעלות עד למטה מטה

that is, from the uppermost of all levels to the nether-most,

להמשיך אמת ה' לעולם השפל הזה החשוך

causing the “truth of G-d” to flow to this lowly, dark world;

וכמו שכתוב: כי אשב בחשך, ה' אור לי

as it is written,²² “When I sit in darkness, G-d is a light unto me.”

וזהו: כי גבר עלינו חסדו גו'

And this is the meaning of the phrase,²³ “For His kind-ness has prevailed over us.”

I.e., G-d's kindness has prevailed over the darkness of this world, illuminating even that aspect of a man's soul that is clothed within his body.

In answer to the question asked above, then, it is now clear that the way by which one can arrive at “G-d's truth” is by the arousal of Divine compassion.

אך התעוררות רחמים רבים לפני ה' צריכה להיות גם כן באמת

However, [this] arousal of G-d's great compassion also needs to be done in truth.

וגם כשהוא באמת שלו, איך יוכל על ידי אמת שלו לעורר רחמים עליונים מאמת ה'

But even when it is true in mortal terms, how — by means of relative truth — can one arouse Supernal com-compassion from the truth of G-d?

אך העצה לזה היא מדת הצדקה

The solution recommended for this is to practice the attribute of charity,

שהיא מדת הרחמים על מאן דלית ליה מגרמיה

which is the attribute of compassion for him who has nothing of his own,

להחיות רוח שפלים כו'

to²⁴ “revive the spirit of the lowly.”

ובאתערותא דלתתא, אתערותא דלעילא: ה' מעורר ישנים ומקיץ נרדמים

And the arousal from below elicits an arousal from Above: G-d²⁵ “rouses those who sleep and awakens those who slumber”;

הם בחינת רחמים רבים וחסדים עליונים הנעלמים

[i.e., He rouses His] great compassion and the Supernal attributes of kindness which are concealed,

As with a sleeping person's dormant soul-powers, “sleep” and (more deeply) “slumber” here signify two degrees of dormancy in the essentially concealed states of Divine compassion and kindness.

לצאת מההעלם אל הגילוי והארה רבה

so that they emerge from concealment into manifestation and into a great illumination,

לאור באור החיים, אמת ה' לעולם

so that [a man is][26](#) “illuminated with the light of life” — with[27](#) the “truth of G-d unto the world.”

* * *

וזהו לשון זריעה הנאמר בצדקה

This, then, is the meaning of the idiom of “sowing” related to charity, as in the verse with which this epistle opened, “He who sows charity,” or as in the verse,[28](#) “Sow for yourselves for charity.”

להצמיח אמת העליון, אמת ה'

one [thereby] causes the Supernal truth, the truth of G-d, to sprout, just as a plant that sprouts *reveals* that which was previously sown.

ובפרט בצדקה וחסד של אמת שעושים עם ארץ הקודש, תבנה ותכונן במהרה בימינו אמן

[This is achieved] especially through acts of charity and true kindness that are done for the benefit of the Holy Land (May it be built and established speedily in our days, Amen!),

לקיים מה שכתוב: אמת מארץ תצמח

thereby realizing the verse,[29](#) “Truth shall sprout forth from the land,” where ‘land’ alludes both to the Land of Israel here below and to the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* Above,

על ידי זריעת הצדקה בה

by sowing charity in it.

וחסד ורחמים רבים הנאספים ונלקטים לתוכה

And the kindness and great compassion that are gathered into it and gleaned in it,

הם מעוררים גם כן חסדים עליונים הצפונים ונעלמים בנוסח אחר: בה

correspondingly arouse the Supreme graces that are hidden and concealed[30](#),

כמו שכתוב: אשר צפנת גו'

as it is written,[31](#) “[How great is Your kindness] which You have hidden,”

so that [the land] is established and set up firmly.

Both *Eretz Yisrael* and the *Sefirah* of Malchut of *Atzilut* must be buttressed; the latter, because of its descent in order to serve as a source of created beings that are lower than the World of *Atzilut*.

וזהו שכתוב: בצדקה תכונני

And of this it is written,³² “Through tzedakah shall you be firmly established,” referring to the establishment of the “Congregation of Israel” here below, as well as to its spiritual counterpart Above — the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, which is also known by the same name.

FOOTNOTES ¹. Verse 18, where the letters *sin* and *chaf* of שֶׁכֶּר are each vocalized with a *segol*. ². Bereishit 8:2. ³. *Michah* 7:20. ⁴. III, 131b. ⁵. “Cf. [Tanya], Part I, ch. 45.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) ⁶. *Menachot* 29b; *Yerushalmi*, *Chagigah* 2:1. See also above, Epistle 5. ⁷. Parentheses are in the original text. ⁸. *Malachi* 3:6. ⁹. Parentheses are in the original text. ¹⁰. *Tehillim* 40:6. ¹¹. Parentheses are in the original text. ¹². *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 170. ¹³. “Cf. *Shaar HaYichud VehaEmunah*, ch. 7. However, we cannot assume that the Alter Rebbe is referring directly to this chapter, for then he would have stated so explicitly, as above (‘in *Likkutei Amarim*, Part II’). At any rate, this does not warrant a lengthy discussion at this point.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) ¹⁴. *Tanya*, beginning of ch. 2. ¹⁵. See Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar*, p. 10b; also elsewhere. ¹⁶. *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 171. ¹⁷. See *Likkutei Amarim*, Part I, ch. 14; Part II, *Chinuch Katan*. ¹⁸. *Ibid.*, Part I, ch. 14. ¹⁹. *Bamidbar* 18:7. ²⁰. *Shabbat* 55a. ²¹. *Shmot* 26:28. ²². *Michah* 7:8. ²³. *Tehillim* 117:2. ²⁴. *Yeshayahu* 57:15. ²⁵. *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 166. ²⁶. *Iyov* 33:30. ²⁷. Cf. *Tehillim* 117:2. ²⁸. *Hoshea* 10:12. See also below, Epistle 8. ²⁹. *Tehillim* 85:12. ³⁰. An alternative version adds here: “in it”. ³¹. *Tehillim* 31:20. ³². *Yeshayahu* 54:14.



Epistle 7

אשרינו מה טוב חלקנו, ומה נעים גורלנו כו'

“Fortunate are we. How good is our portion, how pleasant is our lot....”¹

In this prayer, which is recited as part of the introductory morning prayers preceding *Hodu*, we offer thanks to G-d for our “portion” and “lot” — His self-revelation to every

individual Jew. These same terms appear together in a similar context in the following two successive verses:²

ה' מנת חלקי וכוסי וגו', חבלים נפלו לי וגו'

“G-d is the allotment³ of my portion and of my cup; [You support my lot]. The tracts [apportioned by lot] have fallen unto me pleasantly; [yea, I have a goodly heritage].”

These verses together indicate that the Jews’ pleasant portion and lot is an irradiation of G-dly light. A question, however, arises: Why is the G-dliness that illumines our souls referred to by both terms, both as “our portion” and as “our lot,” when “portion” can refer to any one of several identical benefactions, while “lot” indicates something which is granted exclusively to a particular individual who wins a lottery, for example, having been chosen by “lot”?

להבין לשון חלקנו וגורלנו

In order to understand the terms “our portion” and “our lot,”

צריך לבאר היטב לשון השגור במאמרי רז"ל: אין לו חלק באלקי ישראל

one must properly explain a common⁴ expression in the teachings of our Sages, of blessed memory, viz.: “He has no part in the G-d of Israel.”

כי הגם דלכאורה לא שייך לשון חלק כלל באלקות יתברך

Now it would seem that a term like “part” cannot possibly be applied to G-d,

שאינו מתחלק לחלקים, חס ושלום

because He is not divisible into parts, Heaven forbid.

G-d is the ultimate in simple and uncompounded unity, the very antithesis of divisibility; nevertheless we find that our Sages here use the term “part” in relation to G-d. How can this be?

We must perforce conclude that though G-d Himself is indivisible, the G-dly illumination that descends into Jewish souls can be described with the word “part”, inasmuch as it is revealed in parts, so to speak, as shall soon be explained.

אך הענין, כמו שכתוב ביעקב: ויקרא לו אל אלקי ישראל

This concept can be understood by considering a verse concerning Jacob:⁵ “And he called Him ‘E-l, G-d of Israel.’ ”

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain the meaning of the verse in order to answer a number of simple questions: (a) Until this verse the name “Jacob” is used consistently; why does this verse suddenly change to “Israel”? (b) How does this conclusion of the verse relate to its beginning, “And he set up an altar”? (c) What is novel about the epithet, “E-l, G-d of Israel”?

פירוש

The meaning [of this verse is as follows]:

כי הנה באמת הקב"ה כשמו כן הוא

In truth, the Holy One, blessed is He, is true to His Name.

On the one hand, the phrase “Holy One” (in the Hebrew original, קדוש) implies that G-d stands above and apart from creation, while “blessed be He” (where the Hebrew ברוך, lit., “blessed”, also means to descend and be revealed) implies that the level of G-dliness which previously was “holy” and “apart” — the indirect “He” in the phrase quoted — is drawn down into the world in a revealed manner, as will soon be explained.

כי אף דאיהו ממלא כל עלמין עליונים ותחתונים

Though He permeates all the upper and lower worlds,

מרום המעלות עד מתחת לארץ הלזו החומרית

from the peak of all levels to this lowly corporeal world,

G-d permeates and is present to an equal degree in all worlds. It should be noted that the term “permeates all worlds” used here, does not refer to the degree of contracted G-dliness that is generally said to “fill all worlds” according to their individual capacity to retain it. Rather, here the Alter Rebbe refers to G-d’s permeating all worlds to an equal degree.

כמו שכתוב: הלא את השמים ואת הארץ אני מלא

as it is written,⁶ “Do I not fill the heavens and the earth” —

אני ממש

i.e., “I, My very self,”

דהיינו מהותו ועצמותו, כביכול, ולא כבודו לבד

meaning G-d’s very Being and Essence, as it were, and not only His glory —

In another verse we find,⁷ “The earth is filled with His glory.” That verse alludes merely to the “glory” and radiation of G-dliness. Here, however, the words “I fill” refer to G-d’s very Essence permeating all worlds.

Now, although G-d Himself permeates and is to be found in all worlds:

אף על פי כן הוא קדוש ומובדל מעליונים ותחתונים, ואינו נתפס כלל בתוכם, חס ושלום

He is nevertheless “holy” in the sense of “apart from” the upper and lower worlds, and is not at all contained in them, Heaven forbid,

כתפיסת נשמת האדם בגופו, על דרך משל

in the way, by analogy, that the soul of man is contained in his body, and is affected by the changes within it. Unlike the soul, G-d is not at all affected by the worlds in which He is to be found,

כמו שכתוב במקום אחר באריכות

as explained elsewhere at length.⁸

ולזאת

For this reason, i.e., since G-d is entirely distinct and apart from all worlds,

לא היו יכולים לקבל חיותם ממהותו ועצמותו לבד, כביכול

they could not receive their life-force from His Being and Essence in itself, as it were.

רק התפשטות החיות אשר הקב"ה מחיה עליונים ותחתונים

Rather, the diffusion of the life-force whereby the Holy One, blessed be He, animates the upper and lower worlds

הוא, על דרך משל, כמו הארה מאירה משמו יתברך

is, metaphorically speaking, like a radiation shining forth from His Name,

G-d’s Name is itself a mere radiation; from it there emanates yet another radiation.

שהוא ושמו אחד

for He and His Name are One — for which reason a ray that emanates from His Name is able to animate the various worlds.

וכמו שכתוב: כי נשגב שמו לבדו

Thus it is written,⁹ “For [even] His Name alone is exalt-ed”; i.e., G-d’s Name is exalted “alone”, standing apart from all the worlds which it transcends,

רק זיוו והודו על ארץ ושמים

while only His reflection and¹⁰ “His splendor are on the earth and the heavens.”

Thus, all of creation exists from but a radiation of G-d’s Name, which, as previously mentioned, is itself merely a radiation.

והארה זו מתלבשת ממש בעליונים ותחתונים, להחיותם

This radiation actually vests itself in the upper and lower worlds in order to animate them.

At this level, the G-dly life-force is not merely present in created beings and worlds, but actually vests itself in them: it contracts and adapts to the spiritual capacity of each particular world in which it is vested, and is integrated within it.

ונתפשת בתוכם על ידי ממוצעים רבים

It is contained in them by means of many intermediaries, i.e., levels that are related both to the levels above and below them, thereby enabling them to serve as conduits for the transference of the radiation,

וצמצומים רבים ועצומים

and by means of numerous and intense contractions,

“Numerous” describes the quantitative diminution of Divine light and life-force; “intense” alludes to their qualitative diminution, whereby the light that emerges after the contraction is entirely different from the light that originally emanated before being screened and contracted.

בהשתלשלות המדרגות, דרך עלה ועלול וכו’

in a downward, chainlike progression through the levels of the various worlds, in a sequence of cause and effect, and so on.

Within every world the lower level develops from the higher level by way of cause and effect, the higher level serving as the cause and source of the lower.

After all these contractions and descents, then, the light manifests itself within the various worlds by becoming vested in them.

והנה הארה זו, אף שלמעלה היא מאירה ומתפשטת בבחינת בלי גבול ותכלית

Now although above, in the lofty worlds of infinitude, this illumination radiates and extends itself in unlimited and infinite fashion,

להחיות עולמות נעלמים לאין קץ ותכלית

to animate worlds that are infinitely concealed,

I.e., there are infinite kinds of worlds, each of which is of infinite degree,

כמו שכתוב באדרא רבא

as is written in the *Idra Rabba*,^{[11](#)}

אף על פי כן, ברדתה למטה על ידי צמצומים רבים

nevertheless, as [this radiation] descends by means of numerous contractions,

להחיות הנבראים והיצורים והנעשים

to animate the beings that have been created, formed and made,

In their Hebrew original, these three verbs allude respectively to the beings that inhabit the Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*. Accordingly, we understand that previously reference was being made to the World of *Atzilut* and to those infinite worlds that are “higher” than *Atzilut*.

היא נחלקת דרך כלל למספר תרי”ג, כנגד תרי”ג מצות התורה

it is divided primarily into 613 [rays], corresponding to the 613 commandments of the Torah.

שהן הן תרי”ג מיני המשכות הארה זו, מאור אין סוף ברוך הוא

These [commandments] are in fact 613 kinds of conduits which transmit this radiation from the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light,

להאיר לנשמת האדם, הכלולה מרמ”ח אברים ושס”ה גידים

[whose function is] to illumine man’s soul, which comprises 248 “organs” and 365 “sinews”, totalling 613 elements.

אשר בעבורה עיקר תכלית ירידת והמשכת הארה זו למטה

For it was mainly for the sake of [man’s soul] that this radiation was caused to flow down below

לכל הנבראים והיצורים והנעשים

to all those beings which have been created, formed and made, their respective locations in the Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* being “below” the loftier worlds of infinite degree,

שתכלית כולן הוא האדם, כנודע

since the ultimate purpose of all these [beings], as is known, is man.

Thus, G-d’s Being is indeed utterly uncompounded, so that there cannot possibly be any division into “parts”. Nevertheless, with regard to the radiation that descends below, (whose main purpose is that it permeate the Jewish soul,) the concept of “parts” does apply.

The above-mentioned rays are the 613 basic “parts” into which the radiance is diffused. More specifically, as the Alter Rebbe now goes on to say, each of these general “parts” subdivides into an infinite number of smaller “parts”.

והנה מספר זה הוא בדרך כלל

Now this number — i.e., the above division of the Divine radiance into 613 “parts”, corresponding to the 613 command-ments — is the primary, basic division.

אבל בדרך פרט, הנה כל מצוה ומצוה מתחלקת לפרטים רבים לאין קץ ותכלית

More specifically, however, every single commandment subdivides into infinite details.

והן הן גופי הלכות פרטיות שבכל מצוה, שאין להם מספר

These are the essentials of the detailed rulings of every commandment, which are without number,

כמו שכתוב: ששים המה מלכות, הן ס’ מסכתות כו’

as it is written,¹² “Sixty are the queens,” which [as our Sages¹³ comment] alludes to the sixty tractates....

ועלמות אין מספר, הן ההלכות כו’

[The same verse continues:] “...and maidens without number,” which [as our Sages comment] alludes to the innumerable rulings of the individual laws,

שהן המשכת רצון העליון כו’

for they are a downward flow from the Supreme Will..., which is infinite.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to say that just as the soul is made up of 248 “organs” and 365 “sinews” so that it may absorb the luminosity of the 613 general radiations, so, too, are souls further divisible, so that they may absorb the infinite degrees of the more differentiated radiations.

וכן הוא ממש בנשמת האדם

It is precisely so with man’s soul, which has the means to absorb the innumerable details of the downward flow of Divine radiance.

כי הנה כל הנשמות שבעולם היו כלולות באדם הראשון

For all the souls in the world were comprised in Adam.[14](#)

ודרך כלל היתה נשמתו נחלקת למספר תרי"ג: רמ"ח אברים ושס"ה גידים

Basically, his soul was divisible into 613 elements, consisting of 248 “organs” and 365 “sinews”.

אך דרך פרט נחלקת לניצוצות אין מספר

More specifically, however, his soul was divisible into innumerable sparks,

שהן נשמות כל ישראל מימות האבות והשבטים, עד ביאת המשיח ועד בכלל

which are the souls of all of Israel from the days of the Patriarchs and the [founders of the Twelve] Tribes, up to and including the time of the coming of *Mashiach*,

שיקוים אז מה שכתוב: והיה מספר בני ישראל כחול הים, אשר לא ימד ולא יספר מרוב

when [the promise of] Scripture will be fulfilled: “And the number of the Children of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, that cannot be measured nor counted,”[15](#) “because of its great quantity.”[16](#)

We understand from the above that Adam’s soul (which comprised the innumerable sparks of individual souls) was capable of receiving the infinitely numerous detailed emanations from the radiance of the Supreme Will, which ultimately animates all of the individual Jewish souls.

* * *

At this point the Alter Rebbe resumes the thought begun earlier, where it was pointed out that Jacob referred to G-d as “*E-I*, G-d of Israel,” for the soul of Jacob (otherwise known as Israel) was illumined with all the aspects of the Divine radiance, just as was the soul of Adam.

והנה שופריה דיעקב מעין שופריה דאדם הראשון

Now “The consummate beauty of Jacob resembles the consummate beauty of Adam,”¹⁷

שתיקן חטא אדם הראשון

for he rectified the sin of Adam.¹⁸

והיתה נשמתו גם כן כלולה מכל הנשמות שבישראל, מעולם עד עולם

His soul, too, comprised all the souls of Israel, “from world to world,” i.e., both those of the “Revealed World” as well as the “Concealed World.”

והיה מרכבה לתורה שלמעלה, שנקראת בשם אדם

Moreover, he was a vehicle for the Torah in its heavenly state, which is referred to as Adam,

This phrase reflects the wording of a verse which begins with the words,¹⁹ התורה זאת אדם... — “This is the law: A man...” Interpreted on the level of *derush*, these words have been taken literally to mean: “This is the Torah — Adam.”

כמו שכתוב: ועל דמות הכסא דמות כמראה אדם וגו'

as it is written,²⁰ “And on the likeness of the throne there was a likeness as the appearance of Adam” [lit., “of a man”], and the latter term, as is explained in the *Kabbalah*,²¹ refers to the Torah.

וכמו שכתוב: וזאת לפנינו בישראל גו'

It is likewise written:²² “And this (זאת) was the custom in former time in Israel...”

That, at least, is the plain meaning of the phrase quoted. On the interpretative level of *derush*, however, each of the three Hebrew words is here construed as follows: זאת (as taught in the *Zohar*) connotes “Torah”; לפנינו — “within”; בישראל — “in Israel the Patriarch.” At this level, the quoted phrase thus means that “the Torah is [implanted] within, in Israel the Patriarch.”

אין זאת אלא תורה

and “זאת refers only to the Torah.”²³

שהיתה כלולה ומלובשת בנשמת ישראל סבא, הכלולה מכל הנשמות

For the Torah was contained and vested within the soul of “Israel the Patriarch,” which compounded all the souls. (The quoted phrase refers both to Jacob in the mortal world and to his Supernal source, which is also known by this name.)

Now in addition, Jacob, or “Israel the Patriarch,” was a vessel capable of receiving the radiance of the Torah. Hence:

וזהו: ויקרא לו אל אלקי ישראל

This is the meaning [of the above-quoted phrase], “And he called Him *E-l*, G-d of Israel”:

אל: לשון המשכת הארה מאור אין סוף ברוך הוא מההעלם אל הגילוי

Since the Name *E-l* denotes the Divine attribute of *Chesed*, which finds expression in G-d’s desire to communicate His hidden light, [Jacob’s use of] the Name *E-l* signifies [man’s] calling forth the radiation from the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light, which is clothed in the Torah, from concealment to manifestation,

להאיר בבחינת גילוי בנשמתו

so that it should illumine manifestly in man’s soul.

וכמו שכתוב: אל הויה ויאיר לנו

Thus, too, it is written:²⁴ “*E-l* is the L-rd, and He has given us light,” indicating likewise that the Divine Name *E-l* connotes illumination.

Thus, when we say that Jacob called G-d “*E-l*,” we imply that he called forth and drew down into his soul an all-encompassing revelation of the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light that comprises all the particular details of the Torah and its *mitzvot*.

ואחריו כל ישרי לב, העוסקים בתורה ובמצות, מאיר אור ה' אין סוף ברוך הוא בבחינת גילוי בנשמתם

and after [Jacob], the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light shines openly into the souls of all the upright of heart who engage in the Torah and the *mitzvot*.

“The upright of heart”²⁵ alludes to those individuals within whom the G-dly illumination found in the intellect descends to the heart, where it inspires them with a love and an awe of G-d. These spiritual emotions in turn add vitality to their study of Torah and their performance of the *mitzvot*.

The Divine radiation felt by these individuals is termed “our portion” (חלקנו), as in the quotation with which this epistle opened). This is the particular G-dly illumination which permeates a Jew’s soul through his performance of each and every commandment, and which is a portion and part of the all-encompassing illumination comprising 613 “parts”.

וזמן גילוי זה ביתר שאת ויתר עז, ההארה במוחם ולבם

The most elevating and most powerful²⁶ manifestation of this [Divine] radiance in their mind and heart

הוא בשעת התפלה, כמו שכתוב במקום אחר

occurs at the time of prayer, as is explained else-where.²⁷

It is by means of the ladder of prayer that all of a man's *mitzvot* ascend; this same ladder also serves as the conduit through which the resultant Divine radiance and revelation descend to this world.

Until now the Alter Rebbe has explained the term “our portion.” He now goes on to explain the term “our lot” (in the above-quoted verse, גורלנו נעים ומה — “and how pleasant is our lot”), signifying something bestowed exclusively, and merited only by lot.

והנה אף שגילוי זה, על ידי עסק התורה והמצוות, הוא שווה לכל נפש מישראל בדרך כלל

Though this manifestation [of light] through a person's involvement in the Torah and the commandments is, generally, equal in every individual Jew,

כי תורה אחת ומשפט אחד לכולנו

for we all have²⁸ “one Torah and one law,”

All Jews are equally obliged to study the Torah and to observe its *mitzvot*; generally speaking, the resultant illumination from Above is likewise drawn down equally to them all.

אף על פי כן, בדרך פרט, אין כל הנפשות או הרוחות והנשמות שוות בענין זה

nevertheless, in a more specific way, in regard to this manifestation of light that radiates through the study of Torah and the performance of the commandments, not every *nefesh* (the lowest level of the soul) and *ruach* (“spirit”, a higher level of the soul) and *neshamah* (a yet higher level of the soul) is equal,

לפי עת וזמן גלגולם ובואם בעולם הזה

for this depends on the period and time of their reincarnation and their coming into this world.

Most souls of present generations are incarnations of souls that had descended into this world in earlier times; they descended once again in order to rectify some aspect of their previous incarnation. The degree of radiation the soul receives from Above through the

performance of a particular *mitzvah* depends upon the era in which the soul finds itself in this world.

וכמאמר רז"ל: אבוך במאי הוי זהיר טפי, אמר ליה: בציצית

Our Sages, of blessed memory, quote the question:²⁹ “With what [commandment] was your father most careful?” To which the answer was, “With [the commandment of] *tzitzit*.”

This means that the performance of this commandment kindled within this man a particularly luminous revelation, and it was this G-dly light that inspired his scrupulous performance. In the spirit of this teaching, and in view of the fact that the three root letters of the word זהיר (translated above as “careful”) also mean “luminous”, the above-quoted question has been under-stood [by the *Mitteler Rebbe*] as follows:³⁰ “As a result of which commandment was your father most *luminous*?”

וכן אין כל הדורות שוין

Likewise, not all the generations³¹ are the same.

Not only do souls differ: generations differ as well. There have been generations whose primary spiritual challenge was the study of Torah; in other generations it was charity;³² and so on. The reason for this is that the souls of those generations were especially illuminated by the performance of those specific commandments.

כי כמו שאברי האדם, כל אבר יש לו פעולה פרטית ומיוחדת

For just as with the organs of man, each organ has its particular and distinctive function,

העין לראות והאזן לשמוע

the eye to see and the ear to hear,

כך בכל מצוה מאיר אור פרטי ומיוחד מאור אין סוף ברוך הוא

so, too, through each commandment — the commandments being known as the “Organs of the King”³³ — there radiates a particular and distinctive light from the [infinite] Ein Sof-light.

ואף שכל נפש מישראל צריכה לבוא בגלגול לקיים כל תרי"ג מצות

And although every Jewish soul needs to be reincarnated in order to fulfill all 613 commandments,

How, then, can we say that a soul that descends to this world in a given period will receive its G-dly illumination as an individualized bequest, thereby necessitating particular scrupulousness in specific commands?

מכל מקום לא נצרכה אלא להעדפה וזהירות וזריזות יתירה

this [heightened attention focused on a particular commandment] is necessary only for the sake of an additional measure of vigilance and zeal,

ביתר שאת ויתר עז, כפולה ומכופלת

[a zeal] doubly and exceedingly elevated and powerful,

למעלה מעלה מזהירות שאר המצות

far surpassing one's zeal in [the fulfillment of] the other commandments.

וזהו שאמר: במאי הוי זהיר טפי, טפי דייקא

Hence the word “most” used by the above-quoted individual when he asked, “With what [commandment] was [your father] most careful?”

For scrupulous observance indeed applies to all commandments: the question was only, which command earned his keenest attention.

והנה יתרון האור הזה הפרטי לנשמות פרטיות

Now, the superiority of this individual light [that is bestowed] upon individual souls through the performance of a particular commandment

אינו בבחינת טעם ודעת מושג

is not in the category of apprehensible reason,

אלא למעלה מבחינת הדעת

but transcends it.

שכך עלה במחשבה לפניו יתברך

For thus it arose in G-d's thought, so to speak — that certain souls be granted additional illumination through the performance of particular commandments.

ודוגמתו למטה הוא בחינת הגורל ממש

And its model below is truly the concept of a “lot”.

For the fact that one person wins a “lot” while others do not, is likewise not in the category of apprehensible reason. Rather, so has it been deemed from Above; as the verse indicates,³⁴ “The lot is cast into the lap, and from G-d is its disposition.”

This, then, is the meaning of “how pleasant is our lot.” The disposition of a particular degree of G-dly illumination to a specific soul through the performance of a select command is wholly dependent upon a consideration that transcends logic: it is a “lot” determined from Above.

FOOTNOTES ^{1.} *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 17. ^{2.} *Tehillim* 16:5-6. ^{3.}

The Rebbe here refers the reader to *Tanya*, Part I, ch. 18, which states that “the blessed *Ein Sof* is garbed in the faculty of wisdom in the human soul, of whatever sort of a Jew he may be, ...[and this faculty of *Chochmah*] is beyond any graspable knowledge or intelligence.”

[I.e., G-d apportions His light to various individuals in a superrational manner — by lot, so to speak.]

^{4.} Commenting on the term “common”, the Rebbe notes: “So far, I have found the above-quoted expression (‘He has no part...’) in one place only (in *Midrash Tanchuma*, end of *Parshat Tazria*). In many places, by contrast, we find, ‘You have no part [in the G-d of Israel],’ (as in *Bereishit Rabbah* 2:4, with further references indicated there, and as quoted in *Torah Or*, beginning of p. 30a). We likewise find, ‘They have no part [in the G-d of Israel]’ (*Berachot* 63b). [Why, then, does the Alter Rebbe quote the less frequent form?] It is quite possible that [with a statement as drastic as this] the Alter Rebbe did not want [to address the reader in] the second person nor [apply it to others in] the plural form — a reluctance that may readily be appreciated.” ^{5.} *Bereishit* 33:20. ^{6.} *Yirmeyahu* 23:24. ^{7.} *Yeshayahu* 6:3. ^{8.} *Likkutei Amarim*, Part I, ch. 42. ^{9.} *Tehillim* 148:13. ^{10.} *Tehillim* 148:13. ^{11.} *Zohar* III, 127b ff. ^{12.} *Shir HaShirim* 6:8. ^{13.} Cf. *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 6:9. ^{14.} See *Bereishit Rabbah* 40:2. ^{15.} *Hoshea* 2:1. ^{16.} Note of the Rebbe: “The conclusion of this quotation is drawn from another verse” [viz., *Bereishit* 16:10]. ^{17.} *Bava Metzia* 84a, et al. ^{18.} *Zohar* III, 111b, et al. ^{19.} *Bamidbar* 19:14. ^{20.} *Yechezkel* 1:26. ^{21.} See *Zohar* I, 71b ff. ^{22.} *Ruth* 4:7. ^{23.} *Zohar* III, 81b. ^{24.} *Tehillim* 118:27. ^{25.} [In the Hebrew original, this phrase reads לֵב יִשְׂרָאֵל. On this the Rebbe comments:] “For the word יִשְׂרָאֵל comprises the words יֵשֶׁר אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.” [In this phrase, the first two letters of יֵשֶׁר are each vocalized with a *kamatz*. As explained in *Likkutei Torah, Parshat Shlach*, p. 40c, these two words imply that G-d’s power finds direct expression in the souls of those described as לֵב יִשְׂרָאֵל.] ^{26.} Cf. *Bereishit* 49:3. ^{27.} Note of the Rebbe: “Cf. Epistle 24, below.” ^{28.} *Bamidbar* 15:16. ^{29.} *Shabbat* 118b. ^{30.} *Sefer HaToldot Admur HaEmtza’i*, p. 25; *Sefer HaSichot* 5702, p. 21; *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5701, p. 240. ^{31.} Note of the Rebbe: “It would seem that this [variation with the different generations] is already included in the differences of ‘period and time’ discussed above. It would be worth examining the manuscripts of *Iggeret HaKodesh*; possibly the above text should read, ‘the commandments.’” ^{32.} Note of the Rebbe: “See *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistles 5 and 9.” ^{33.} *Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun* 30. ^{34.} *Mishlei* 16:33.

Epistle 8

זורע צדקות, מצמיח ישועות

[It is written:] “He sows *tzedakot* and causes deliverance to sprout forth.”¹

Tzedakot, the plural form of *tzedakah*, can mean both “acts of righteousness” and “acts of charity.”

הנה מה שכתוב לשון זריעה במצות הצדקה

The use of the idiom “sowing” in relation to the commandment of charity,

וכמו שכתוב בפסוק: זרעו לכם לצדקה גו'

and likewise in the verse,² “Sow for yourselves for *tzedakah*, [and reap according to the measure of *Chesed*],”

יובן על פי מה שאמרו רז"ל: רבי אליעזר יהיב פרוטה לעני, והדר מצלי, דכתיב: אני בצדק אחזה פניך

may be understood in the light of a teaching of our Sages:³ “Rabbi Eliezer would give a coin to a poor person, and would then pray, for it is written,⁴ ‘Through *tzedek* will I behold Your face,’” and *tzedek* (“righteousness”) is closely related to *tzedakah* (“charity”).

פירוש

This means, i.e., the reason prayer is deemed “seeing G-d’s face,” and the reason why this is attained by prefacing prayer with charity is:

כי גילוי אלקותו יתברך, המתגלה במחשבתו של אדם וכונתו בתפלה

that the manifestation of Divinity — which is revealed in the thought of man and in his devotion during prayer,

כל חד לפום שיעורא דיליה

in each individual according to his own measure —

הוא בתורת צדקה וחסד ה' מעולם ועד עולם על יראיו

is [granted to man] by way of Divine charity, and by [the descent of]⁵ “G-d’s lovingkindness from world to world upon those who fear Him....”

כלומר, שאור ה' אין סוף ברוך הוא, המאיר למעלה בעולמות עליונים בהארה רבה, בבחינת גילוי רב ועצום

This means that the light of G-d, the [infinite] *Ein Sof*, radiates with so (quantitatively) great and so (qualitatively) intense a manifestation in the higher worlds above,

עד שבאמת הן בטלין במציאות, וכלא ממש חשיבי קמיה

that they (and the beings which inhabit them) are truly in a state of self-nullification, and considered as truly naught before Him,

ונכללין באורו יתברך

and are absorbed in His light.

והן הן ההיכלות עם המלאכים והנשמות שבהן, המבוארים בזהר הקדוש בשמותם למקומותם, בסדר התפלה שסדרו לנו אנשי כנסת הגדולה

These [higher worlds] are the *heichalot*, with the angels and souls within them, that are spoken of in the sacred *Zohar* by their names and according to their places [and levels, as alluded to] in the liturgy arranged for us by the Men of the Great Assembly.

הנה משם מאיר האור כי טוב לעולם השפל הזה

Now, this⁶ “light, which is good,” radiates from there to this lowly world,

על יראי ה' וחושבי שמו

upon⁷ “those that fear G-d and meditate upon His Name,”

החפצים לעבדו בעבודה שבלב, זו תפלה

who desire to worship Him with the⁸ “service of the heart, meaning prayer.”

וכמו שכתוב: וה' יגיה חשכי

As it is written,⁹ “And G-d will enlighten my darkness,” even in this world, which is so lowly that G-dliness is generally not manifest here.

והנה ירידת הארה זו למטה, לעולם הזה, נקראת בשם חסד ה'

Now, the descent of this illumination downwards to this world, is called “G-d’s kindness,”

For though this illumination is drawn down as a response to the divine service of the Jew, it outshines it out of all proportion. Its bestowal upon the lower worlds is thus truly an act of “G-d’s kindness,”

המכונה בשם מים, היורדים ממקום גבוה למקום נמוך כו'

which is referred to as water,[10](#) for it descends from a high place to a low place....[11](#)

“G-d’s kindness” is drawn down through man’s “arousal initiated from below.” It is thus the coin that one gives a pauper that grants the giver the gift of “beholding G-d’s face” — the internal aspect of G-dliness — during prayer. In this way, man’s kindness and *tzedakah* elicit G-d’s kindness and *tzedakah*.

However, the following must be understood: Since the Divine illumination must inevitably result from G-d’s attribute of kindness and His *tzedakah*, why is man’s service necessary at all?

The Alter Rebbe answers this question by explaining that parallel to the above attribute, there also exists a Divine attribute of severity and contraction, that seeks to limit and screen the diffusion of the G-dly light. It is man’s practice of kindness and *tzedakah* that ensures that the attribute of severity and *Gevurah* will not hinder the flow of Divine radiance that is to be revealed to him during prayer.

והנה מודעת זאת שיש למעלה גם כן מדת הגבורה והצמצום

Now it is well known that Above there is also an attribute of *Gevurah* and *tzimtzum*

לצמצם ולהסתיר אורו יתברך, לבל יתגלה לתחתונים

that serves to contract and conceal the Divine light so that it will not become revealed to the lower worlds.

How is it, then, that this illumination is nevertheless revealed below?

אך הכל תלוי באתערותא דלתתא

However, everything depends on [man’s] arousal from below.

שאם האדם מתנהג בחסידות, להשפיע חיים וחסד כו'

For if a man conducts himself with kindness, by bestowing life and *Chesed*..., through acts of charity that sustain the unfortunate,

למעלה מעורר כך

he arouses its equivalent Above, so that Divine kindness and illumination are bestowed upon him as well.

כמו שאמרו רז"ל: במדה שאדם מודד בה, מודדין לו

For, as our Sages, of blessed memory, said,¹² “With the measure a man metes, it shall be measured to him.” When an individual acts in a kindly manner towards his fellow, he will be treated with kindness from Above.

אלא דלכאורה זו אינה מן המדה, כי אם להשפיע לו חיי העולם הבא לבד, כנגד מה שהוא משפיע חיי עולם הזה

It would appear, however, that this [Divine response] is not of the same measure. [Such an individual would appear to deserve] only that the life of the World to Come be granted to him, corresponding to his bestowal of life in this world,

The appropriate reward for man’s bestowal of physical life in *his* world should surely be a corresponding bestowal of spiritual life in a higher world, the World to Come.

אבל לא להשפיע לו חיי הארת אור ה' נוסח אחר: אין סוף ברוך הוא ממש

but not that he be granted the life that comes from the illumination of the actual light of G-d,¹³

שיאיר ויגיה חשכו בעבודה שבלב, זו תפלה

to illumine and enlighten his darkness in “the service of the heart, meaning prayer.”

שהיא בחינת ומדרגת תשובה עילאה, כנודע

For the latter is a grade and level of “higher-level repentance” (*teshuvah ilaah*), as is well known,¹⁴ and as such is far superior to his actions,

שהרי היא למעלה מעלה מכל חיי עולם הבא

inasmuch as it far surpasses all the life of the World to Come.

כמו שאמרו רז"ל: יפה שעה אחת בתשובה ומעשים טובים כו'

As our Sages, of blessed memory, taught:¹⁵ “Better one hour of repentance and good deeds [in this world than all the life of the World to Come],”

וכמו שכתוב במקום אחר באריכות, דעולם הבא אינו אלא זיו והארה וכו'

as explained elsewhere¹⁶ at length — that the World to Come is but a gleam and reflection [of the Divine Presence].

This leaves us with an apparent disproportion — that the practice of *tzedakah* before one's prayers should result in the vastly superior revelation of *teshuvah ilaah* during prayer.

אך הענין הוא, על דרך משל, כמו שזורעין זרעים או נוטעין גרעין

The above concept, however, can be understood by the analogy of sowing seeds of grain or planting kernels of fruit:

שהשבולת הצומחת מהזרע, והאילן ופירותיו מהגרעין

the shoot that sprouts from the seed, and the tree with its fruits from the kernel,

אינן מהותן ועצמותן של הזרע והגרעין כלל

are not the very essence and being of the seed or the kernel at all,

כי מהותם ועצמותם כלה ונרקב בארץ

for their essence and being has been spent and is decayed in the soil, and they are thus not the source of the vegetative property.

וכח הצומח שבארץ עצמה נוסח אחר: עצמו, הוא המוציא והמגדל השבולת והאילן ופירותיו

It is the vegetative property in the soil itself rather than the particular vegetative power that resulted in the seed or the kernel which brings about the growth of the shoot or the tree and its fruit;

The vegetative power of growth is a Divine faculty that enables physical growth to result from a spiritual property, in a manner of creation *ex nihilo*. But if the actual growth of any grain or fruit results from the universal power of vegetative growth and not from a particular seed or kernel, then why plant them in the first place? The answer is:

רק שאינו מוציא ומגלה כחו לחוץ, מהכח אל הפועל

it is only that [the earth's vegetative power] does not manifest its power outwardly, from the potential to the actual,

כי אם על ידי הזרע והגרעין

except by means of the seed or the kernel

שנרקבין בארץ, וכלה כל כחם בכח הצומח שבארץ

that are decayed in the soil and whose whole power — the power of growth that originated in the earth's vegetative property that was implanted in them as they grew — has been consumed by the vegetative property in the soil,

ונתאחדו והיו לאחדים

so that they unite and become one. I.e., the particular power of growth, that resulted in the seed or kernel, unites with the earth's universal vegetative property.

ועל ידי זה מוציא כח הצומח את כחו אל הפועל, ומשפיע חיות לגדל שבולת כעין הזרע

In this way the vegetative property actualizes its potential, and effuses vitality that makes possible the growth of a shoot that is related to the seed that was sown,

אבל בריבוי הרבה מאד בשבולת אחת

though with a very great increase in any single shoot, so that one ear of corn comprises many grains,

וכן פירות הרבה על אילן אחד

and likewise, there are many fruits on a single tree.

וגם מהותן ועצמותן של הפירות מעולה, בעילוי רב ועצום, למעלה מעלה ממהותן ועצמותן של הגרעין הנטוע

Moreover, the very nature and essence of the fruits immensely excels the nature and essence of the planted kernel, in that the bland and tasteless kernel serves as the source for delicious fruit.

וכן כהאי גוונא בפירות הארץ, הגדלים מזרעונין כעין גרעינין, כמו קשואים וכהאי גוונא

The same is true of the produce of the earth which grows from seeds just like kernels, such as cucumbers, and the like.

Thus, fruits and vegetables are not only quantitatively superior to the kernels that served as their respective sources, but are qualitatively superior as well. (The difference between grain and its original seed, however, is only one of quantity.)

והכל הוא מפני שעיקר ושרש חיות הפירות נשפע מכח הצומח שבארץ

All this is so because the stem and root of the vitality of the fruits issues from the vegetative property in the soil,

הכולל חיות כל הפירות

which includes the vitality of all fruits and causes them to grow,

Nevertheless, a kernel — moreover, the kernel of the specific species desired — must be sown, as is now explained:

והגרעינין הזרועים בארץ אינן אלא כעין אתערותא דלתתא

while the kernels that are sown in the ground are only like an “arousal from below,” that is necessary if one is to elicit a reciprocal “arousal from Above,”

הנקרא בשם העלאת מיין נוקבין בכתבי האריז"ל

this [“arousal from below”] being referred to in the writings of Rabbi Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, as the “elevation of *mayin nukvin*” (commonly abbreviated מ"נ) — the arousal of the “feminine waters” that serve as the recipient of the efflux of the “male waters.”

The same applies here as well: The power of vegetative growth is a spiritual power that encompasses all fruits and vegetables. Its spiritual state is such that it is far too lofty to descend spontaneously to a level at which it can make physical produce grow. The actual growth can only come about as a result of the “elevation of the feminine waters” of a particular fruit or grain. This arouses within the universal vegetative proper-ty the particular manifestation necessary for the growth of the specific kind of produce that is inherent in the kernel or seed that is sown.

At any rate, it is clear from the above that vegetative growth entails producing something far superior to that which was sown in the ground.

Reverting to the analogue, the Alter Rebbe will now explain how man’s *tzedakah* and kindness effect a Divine manifestation that utterly transcends man’s service. This results in his receiving as a reward for his actions not only a share in the World to Come — a corresponding measure, albeit quantitatively superior, for both this world and the World to Come are categorized as “worlds” — but also the qualitatively superior revelation of *teshuvah ilaah*, that transcends by far any state that could be called a “world”.

וככה ממש, על דרך משל, כל מעשה הצדקה שעושים ישראל

Now precisely like this, metaphorically speaking, every act of charity that Jews perform

עולה למעלה בבחינת העלאת מ"נ, לשורש נשמותיהן למעלה

ascends, like an “elevation of *mayin nukvin*,” to the Root of their souls Above,

Just as in the analogy, planting a seed will unveil the earth’s vegetative power, so, too, the Jew’s act of charity will elicit the Divine attribute of *Chesed*, since this act serves as the *mayin nukvin* to its spiritual counterpart Above,

הנקרא בשם כנסת ישראל

which is referred to [17](#) as *Knesset Yisrael* (lit., “the Congregation of Israel”),

(a) because it is the source of Jewish souls, and (b) because within it congregate the lights and revelations of the emotive attributes (the *middot*) that derive from *דלעילא ישראל* (“Supernal Israel”), i.e., the bracket of six *Sefirot* known as א”ז of the World of *Atzilut*.

ואימא תתאה, בלשון הזהר

and in the terminology of the *Zohar* [the source of Jewish souls is known as] *imma tataah*, the “lower-level mother,”

Binah, by contrast, is termed *imma ilaah*, the “higher-level mother” (inasmuch as it is the “mother” of the attributes of א”ז), while *Malchut* is referred to as the “lower-level mother” (since it is the “mother” of the world that follows it).

ושכינה, בלשון הגמרא

and in the phraseology of the Talmud [the source of the souls of Israel is known as] the *Shechinah*,

It is so called because it “rests” (from the root שכן; i.e., it descends and is present) in lowly levels. [18](#)

הכלולה מכל מדותיו של הקב”ה, ומיוחדת בהן בתכלית

which comprises, and is utterly united with, all the attributes of the Holy One, blessed is He,

וראשיתן היא מדת החסד

the first of which is the attribute of *Chesed*.

Man’s neighborly acts of *Chesed* ascend, as a form of *mayin nukvin*, to this Divine attribute of *Chesed*, for it is the source of the attribute of *Chesed* within his own soul.

ועל ידי העלאה זו, מתעורר חסד ה’ ממש

Now, through this elevation, the actual “*Chesed* of G-d” — which is immeasurably superior to man’s *Chesed* and to worlds in general — is aroused,

שהוא גילוי אורו יתברך, לירד ולהאיר למטה לנשמות ישראל, בבחינת גילוי רב ועצום

so that a great and intense revelation of His light descends into this lowly [world], where it lights up the souls of Israel,

בשעת התפלה, על כל פנים

at least during the time of prayer, even if not permanently.

חקר אין שלגדולתו אף כי

For though [19](#) “His greatness is unfathomable,” and גדולה (“greatness”) denotes the Divine attribute of *Chesed*, [20](#)

חשיבי כלא קמיה דכולא עד

to the extent that [21](#) “all are esteemed as naught before Him,”

How, then, does it descend below and become capable of being fathomed by the Jewish soul?

הרי במקום שאתה מוצא גדולתו, שם אתה מוצא ענותנותו

even so, [22](#) “Where you find His greatness, there you find His humility,”

Hence, the very greatness and *Chesed* of G-d always find expression in His “humility”, i.e., in His ability to descend and reveal Himself to the nethermost levels,

כמים שיורדין כו'

like “water, which descends [from above to below].”

G-d’s kindness may thus be likened to water in its ability to manifest itself within a Jew’s soul in this lowly world.

וזהו שכתוב: זרח בחשך אור לישרים, חנון ורחום וצדיק

And this is [implied] in the verse: [23](#) “He shone in the darkness as a light unto the upright, [He] that is gracious, and merciful, and *tzaddik*.”

דעל ידי שהאדם חנון ורחום וצדיק, צדקות אהב

For, by being gracious and merciful, and [24](#) “*tzaddik* — fond of *tzedakot*,” i.e., by performing acts of *tzedakah* with kindness and love, man

גורם לאור ה' שיזרח לנשמתו המלובשת בגופו, העומד בחשך

causes the light of G-d to shine into his soul which is vested in his body — which stands in darkness,

שהוא משכא דחויא

since it is the “hide of the snake.” [25](#)

G-d nevertheless causes His light to shine into the soul, even as the soul finds itself within the gloom of the unenlightened body.

וזה נקרא בשם ישועה, כד אתהפכא חשוכא לנהורא

And this state, when²⁶ “darkness is converted to light,” is referred to as “deliverance”, as when a man, delivered from danger, is transported from darkness to radiance.

וזהו מצמיה ישועות

This, then, is the meaning [of the above-quoted phrase], “and causes deliverance to sprout forth,” as a result of one’s having “sown *tzedakah*.”

שישועה זו צומחת מזריעת הצדקה שזורעין בארץ העליונה

For this salvation sprouts from the charity that is sown in the “Supernal Land,”

ארץ חפץ, היא השכינה וכנסת ישראל, שנקראת כן על שם שמתלבשת בתחתונים להחיותם

the “Desired Land,” which is the *Shechinah*, and *Knesset Yisrael*, the source of Jewish souls, so called because it vests itself in the lower worlds to animate them.

כמו שכתוב: מלכותך מלכות כל עולמים

As it is written,²⁷ “Your sovereignty (an allusion to the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*) is the sovereignty (i.e., it serves as the source) of all worlds.”

It is this Supernal “Land” that is sown with a Jew’s *tzedakah*, with the result that Divine revelation sprouts forth during prayer.

ובפרט מן הפרט, כשזורעין בארץ הקודש התחתונה

This applies most particularly when one sows in the nether Holy Land,

The above applies to *mitzvot* in general, all of them being called *tzedakah*, as Scripture states,²⁸ “Our performance of all the commandments will be accounted for us as *tzedakah*.” Particularly so, through the actual performance of *tzedakah*, in the sense of charity. It applies even more particularly when the *tzedakah* is planted in the Holy Land, maintaining those who study Torah and serve G-d there.

המכוונת כנגדה ממש

which truly corresponds to it (i.e., the Holy Land below is truly located “opposite” the Holy Land in heaven).

שהזריעה נקלטת תיכף ומיד ממש בארץ העליונה

For (when such charity is given) the seed [of *tzedakah*] is immediately absorbed in the Supernal Land,

בלי שום מניעה ועיכוב בעולם

without any obstacle and hindrance whatever,

מאחר שאין שום דבר חוצץ ומפסיק כלל בין ארצות החיים

because there is nothing whatsoever that intervenes and intercepts between the “Lands of Life,” i.e., between the Supernal “Land of Life,” which is the source of Jewish souls, and the “Land of Life” below, the physical Holy Land;

כי זה שער השמים

for²⁹ “it is the gate of Heaven,” referring to the location of the Holy Temple in the Holy Land.

מה שאין כן בחוץ לארץ

This is not so, however, outside the Holy Land, where various factors may hinder the implantation of *tzedakah* in the “Land of Life” Above.

ודי למבין

This will suffice for the discerning.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) Liturgy, the morning prayers (*Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 44). [2.](#) *Hoshea* 10:12. [3.](#) *Bava Batra* 10a. [4.](#) *Tehillim* 17:15. [5.](#) *Ibid.* 103:17. [6.](#) Cf. *Bereishit* 1:4. [7.](#) Cf. *Malachi* 3:16. [8.](#) Beginning of Tractate *Taanit*. [9.](#) *II Samuel* 22:29. [10.](#) *Zohar* II, 175b. [11.](#) Cf. *Tikkunei Zohar* 69:105a. [12.](#) *Sotah* 5b. [13.](#) V.L.: “the actual [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light.” [14.](#) *Iggeret HaTeshuvah*, ch. 10. [15.](#) *Avot* 4:17. [16.](#) *Likkutei Amarim*, Part I, conclusion of ch. 4, *et al.* [17.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Cf. Part I beginning of ch. 52: ‘And this source...’ Here is not the place to elaborate upon the differences.” [18.](#) See also later in the present Epistle; and see *Likkutei Amarim*, Part I, ch. 41. [19.](#) *Tehillim* 145:3. [20.](#) Cf. *Likkutei Amarim*, Part II, ch. 4. [21.](#) *Zohar* I, 11b. [22.](#) *Megillah* 31a (according to the text of *Ein Yaakov*). [23.](#) *Tehillim* 112:4. [24.](#) Cf. *ibid.* 11:7. [25.](#) Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar* 10b, *et al.* [26.](#) Cf. *Likkutei Amarim*, Part I, ch. 27. [27.](#) *Tehillim* 145:13. [28.](#) *Devarim* 6:25. [29.](#) *Bereishit* 28:17, and commentaries of *Rashi* and *Targum*, *loc. cit.*



Epistle 9

Like the preceding Epistle, the present one too centers on the theme of *tzedakah*.

If it is to be performed properly, *tzedakah* ought to be given unstintingly, and not only after all one's own needs and desires have been satisfied. Ideally, it should be given in the spirit of an aphorism that was current among the chassidim of the Alter Rebbe:¹ "Inside my slice of bread there is your share too; G-d is providing for you through me."

A man should thus feel obligated to share with others and provide for their needs to the very same degree that he provides for his own wife and children. Performing *tzedakah* in this manner can only be achieved when one distributes one's earnings in an utterly selfless manner, doing so entirely for G-d's sake. Then, even when one provides for his own family's needs he will do so because they are Jewish souls who are part of G-d Above,² and as such he bears a responsibility towards them.

When one acts in this way, he will realize that all needy folk are also Jewish souls and part of G-d Above; he must therefore concern himself with their needs as well. Though the Torah rules that providing for one's own wife and children takes precedence over providing for the needs of others, the essential sense of obligation remains the same.

אהוביי אחיי ורעיי אשר כנפשי

My beloved ones,³ my brethren and friends, who are unto me like my soul:

The previous Lubavitcher Rebbe explains in one of his talks, that when the Alter Rebbe seeks to imbue his followers with the love of their fellow Jews he addresses them as "my beloved friends," for by befriending a fellow Jew one becomes a "beloved friend" of the Alter Rebbe.

Accordingly, it may be said that by heeding the Alter Rebbe's instructions with regard to *tzedakah* one becomes one of the Alter Rebbe's "beloved brethren."

באתי כמזכיר ומעורר ישנים בתרדמת הבלי הבלים

I come [herewith] as one who reminds and awakens those who sleep the slumber of "vanities of vanities,"

Physical things at any time are deemed *hevel*: being airy and insubstantial, they have no true existence. When they serve no loftier purpose than themselves, they may be given the double epithet used above — *havlei havalim*,⁴ airy and foolish trivialities.

ולפקוח עיני העורים

and to open the eyes of the blind.

When the soul finds itself within the body and allows itself to be led by it, it resembles a sighted person whose eyes are bound, and who, intelligent though he may be, is then led

about like an imbecile. If the soul, a part of G-d Above, descends within a body but cannot restrict it from fulfilling its desires, it is considered to be blinded by the body, as the *Tzemach Tzedek* writes in *Or HaTorah*, at the conclusion of *Parshat Behar*.⁵ The “blindness” caused by the body must be healed, so that the soul may once again behold the truth.

יביטו לראות, להיות כל ישעם וחפצם ומגמתם, לכל בהם חיי רוחם

⁶Let them look and see to it that all their striving, longing and aiming, in⁷ everything on which the life of their spirit depends,⁸ should be bound up

במקור מים חיים, חיי החיים

in⁹ “the [Divine] Source of the living waters,” the¹⁰ “Fountainhead of all life,”

כל ימי חייהם, מנפש ועד בשר

throughout all the days of their lives, with respect¹¹ to the soul as well as to the flesh.

Not only during prayer or Torah study or while performing *mitzvot* is a Jew to be bound to G-d, but even while going about his mundane affairs he should be attached to Him as well.

דהיינו, כל מילי דעלמא ועסקי פרנסה לא יהיה כאלו דעבדין לגרמייהו

I.e., in all mundane matters and in the means by which one earns one’s livelihood, one should not be like those who do everything for their own sake, acting only out of their desire to satisfy themselves and their families, rather than for G-d’s sake.

ולא יהיה בית ישראל ככל הגוים

Let not the House of Israel be like all the gentiles,¹²

דזנין ומפרנסין ומוקרין לנשייהו ובנייהו מאהבה

who¹³ feed, provide for and esteem their wives and children out of [self-] love.

I.e., since one loves himself he also loves his wife and children, who are a part of him. Rather, his love should be holy in its selflessness.

כי מי כעמך ישראל גוי אחד בארץ, כתיב

For it is written:¹⁴ “Who is like Your people Israel, a unique nation on earth?”

דהיינו שגם בעניני ארץ לא יפרידו מאחד האמת, חס ושלוש

This means that even in mundane (“earthly”) matters they will not, heaven forfend, separate¹⁵ [them] from G-d’s true Unity,

The concept of the Unity of G-d signifies that apart from Him nothing truly exists.

להעיד עדות שקר, חס ושלום, בקריאת שמע ערב ובוקר, בעינים סגורות

to bear false witness, heaven forfend, while reciting the *Shema* every evening and morning with closed eyes,

ה' אחד, בד' רוחות ובשמים ממעל ובארץ מתחת

[saying,]¹⁶ “G-d is One” — in the four directions, and in the heavens above and on earth below,¹⁷ thus attesting to G-d’s Unity even in the mundane realm,

ובפקוח עיני העורים

while as the eyes of the blind are opened, and here the Alter Rebbe addresses those whose eyes are blinded by corporeal matters:

התעיף עיניך בו ואיננו, חס ושלום

“Can you close your eyes upon Him, as if He is no more?”¹⁸ (heaven forfend).

This means to say that immediately upon opening his eyes after reciting the *Shema*, such a person can view the world as if it were a self-sufficient entity, separate and distinct from its Creator; accordingly, moreover, he conducts his affairs in a selfish manner rather than for the sake of heaven.

אך בזאת יאות לנו

Rather, this [approach] shall be befitting us —

להיות כל עסקינו במילי דעלמא לא לגרמייהו

that¹⁹ all our involvement with mundane affairs should be [conducted] not for its own sake,

כי אם להחיות נפשות, חלקי אלוה

but in order to animate souls, (i.e., to provide sustenance for fellow Jews, whose souls are veritably, so to speak,) portions of G-d,

ולמלאות מחסוריהם בחסד חנם

and to supply what they lack, out of gratuitous kindness.

שבזה אנו מדמין הצורה ליוצרה, ה' אחד

In this way we make the form (the soul) resemble Him Who formed it, viz., “G-d [Who] is One”;

אשר חסד אל כל היום, חסד של אמת

for²⁰ “the *Chesed* of G-d endures throughout the day,” i.e., at all times — a²¹ true *Chesed*, without thought of reward,

להחיות העולם ומלואו בכל רגע ורגע

that animates the universe and all that fills it, at every single moment.

In imitation of G-d, Who thus dispenses kindness and ani-mates all created beings, man too should act kindly toward others and sustain those in need. Indeed, this should be his ultimate purpose when engaging in his work or in commerce: to be able to provide sustenance for the souls of his fellow Jews.

According to the above, however, one should provide for the needs of others to the very same degree that he provides for his own family. Why, then, should the needs of one's own family take precedence over the needs of others? The Alter Rebbe answers this by saying:

רק שאשתו ובניו של אדם קודמין לכל, על פי התורה

It is only that according to the Torah²² a man's wife and children take precedence over all others,

The Alter Rebbe wrote this Epistle in connection with the *tzaddikim*, R. Mendele Vitebsker and R. Avraham Kalisker, as well as their colleagues and disciples, who at the time of writing had already left the diaspora and were living in the Holy Land. The Alter Rebbe therefore goes on to say:

חוץ מצדיקים שבדור, שהן קודמין לבניו

except²³ for the *tzaddikim* of the generation, who take precedence over one's children;

וצדיקים שבארץ ישראל קודמין לצדיקים שבחוץ לארץ

moreover, the *tzaddikim* in the Land of Israel take precedence over the *tzaddikim* in the diaspora,

לבד מזאת שלא הניחו כמותם בחוץ לארץ

apart from the fact that they did not leave anyone in the diaspora comparable to themselves.

ודי למבין

This will suffice for the discerning.

על כן אהוביי אחיי

Therefore, my beloved ones, my brethren:

שימו נא לבבכם לאלה הדברים הנאמרים בקצרה מאד

Direct your hearts to these words which are expressed very briefly,

ואם ירצה ה', פנים אל פנים אדבר בם בארוכה

([24](#)and face to face, please G-d, I will speak of them at length) —

איך היות כל עיקר עבודת ה' בעתים הללו, בעקבות משיחא, היא עבודת הצדקה

how in these times, when the approaching footsteps of *Mashiach* are close upon us, the principal service of G-d is the service of charity.

כמו שאמרו רז"ל: אין ישראל נגאלין אלא בצדקה

As our Sages, of blessed memory, said:[25](#) “Israel will be redeemed only through charity.”

ולא אמרו רז"ל: תלמוד תורה שקול כנגד גמילות חסדים

Our Sages, of blessed memory, did not say that the study of Torah is equivalent to the performance of acts of lovingkindness,

The *Mishnah* states in *Peah*:[26](#) “The study of Torah is equivalent to them all,” i.e., to all the *mitzvot* previously enumerated in the *Mishnah*, and these include *gemilut chassadim*, the performance of acts of lovingkindness,

אלא בימיהם

except in their own days.

שתלמוד תורה היה עיקר העבודה אצלם, ועל כן היו חכמים גדולים, תנאים ואמוראים

For with them the principal area of divine service was the study of the Torah, which is why at that time there were great scholars: *tannaim* and *amoraim*.

מה שאין כן בעקבות משיחא

However, in a time when the approaching footsteps of *Mashiach* are close upon us,

שנפלה סוכת דוד עד בחינת רגלים ועקביים, שהיא בחינת עשיה

as “the *Sukkah* of David has fallen” to a level of “feet” and “heels”, i.e., to the level of *Asiyah*,

I.e., the *Sefirah* called *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, the *Shechinah* that vests itself in the lower Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* — also known as the “*Sukkah* of David,” for David, as the King of Israel, was a *merkavah* to *Malchut* of *Atzilut* — has fallen to the lowest level of *Asiyah*.

אין דרך לדבקה בה באמת

there is no way of truly cleaving unto it, i.e., to the *Shechinah*,

ולחפכא חשוכא לנהורא דילה

and transforming the darkness of the world into its light,[27](#)

כי אם בבחינת עשיה גם כן

except through a corresponding category of action, and not through intellect and speech alone, as in Torah study,

שהיא מעשה הצדקה

namely, the act of charity.

But why is charity unique among all the many commandments that involve action?

כידוע למשכילים, שבחינת עשיה באלקות היא בחינת השפעת והמשכת החיות למטה מטה, למאן דלית ליה מגרמיה כלום

As is known to the scholarly, “action” with reference to Divinity is the diffusion and downward flow of vitality to the lowest depths — to him who has nothing of his own.

Among the currents of Divine influence that descend into the various worlds, there are those that are called “thought” and “speech”. The flow of vitality to the very lowest level — to the World of *Asiyah*, where G-dliness is not at all manifest — is called “action”.

The act of giving *tzedakah* thus truly corresponds to the spiritual level of *Asiyah*, inasmuch as it too provides beneficence to one “who has nothing of his own.”

וכל הזובח את יצרו בזה

And whoever sacrifices his impulse in this respect, i.e., with respect to charity,

ופותח ידו ולבבו

and opens his hand and heart,

אתכפיא סטרא אחרא

[thereby] causes²⁸ “the other [i.e., evil] side” of the universe to be subjugated,

ומהפך חשוכא לאור ה' יתברך, השוכן עלינו בבחינת עשיה בעקבות משיחא

and²⁹ “converts the darkness into the light” of G-d, blessed be He, Who, in the time when the footsteps of *Mashiach* are close upon us, dwells over us in a state of action;

ויזכה לראות עין בעין, בשוב ה' ציון כו'

moreover, he will merit to³⁰ “behold Eye to eye, G-d returning to Zion....”

At that time the physical eye, though yet retaining its physicality, will behold G-dliness as it is beheld by the Supernal Eye. Thus, within the physicality of the World of *Asiyah*, there will be revealed the level of certainty in spiritual perception which is called vision — a level that far surpasses the furthest attainments of the intellect.

FOOTNOTES ¹. See *Igrot Kodesh* (Letters of the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe), Vol. VIII, p. 606, and references cited there. ². *Likkutei Amarim*, Part I, beginning of ch. 2. ³. Note of the Rebbe: “Cf. *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistles 16, 22 (Parts a & b), 24.” ⁴. Cf. *Kohelet* 1:2. ⁵. *Or HaTorah*, *Vayikra*, Vol. I, p. 191. ⁶. Cf. *Yeshayahu* 42:18. ⁷. This clause has been translated according to Rashi on *Yeshayahu* 38:16. ⁸. Note of the Rebbe: “See Part I, conclusion of ch. 31.” ⁹. Cf. *Yirmeyahu* 2:13. ¹⁰. Lit., “the Life of life.” ¹¹. Cf. *Yeshayahu* 10:18. ¹². The standard text of the Tanya has כעו״ג (“like heathens”), which has been emended here according to its *Luach HaTikkun* (“Table of Corrections”). ¹³. The remainder of this sentence is paraphrased from the *Ketubbah* (the marriage contract), though the emphasis here, of course, is on a possibly selfish motivation. ¹⁴. *I Divrei HaYamim* 17:21. ¹⁵. V.L.: לא יפרדו (“they will not become separated”). ¹⁶. *Devarim* 6:4. ¹⁷. Cf. *Beit Yosef*, *Orach Chayim*, sec. 61, citing the *Sefer Mitzvot Katan*. ¹⁸. Cf. *Mishlei* 23:5. ¹⁹. V.L.: בהיות (“when all our involvement...is [conducted]”). ²⁰. *Tehillim* 52:3. ²¹. Rashi on *Bereishit* 47:29. ²². See *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh Deah*, sec. 251, and references indicated there. ²³. The passage beginning “Except for the *tzadikim*...” and concluding “...for the discerning,” is added above to the standard printed text according to its *Luach HaTikkun* (“Table of Corrections”). ²⁴. Parentheses are in the original text. ²⁵.

Note of the Rebbe: “See *Rambam, Hilchot Matnot Aniyim*, beginning of ch. 10; quoted in *Tur, Yoreh Deah*, beginning of sec. 247. The above quotation does not refer to the similar teaching in the *Talmud* (*Shabbat* 139a; *Sanhedrin* 98a), for there the verb is נפדה [whereas our text reads נגאלין]. Very often, as is well known, the commentators { (the *Radbaz* and the *Kesef Mishneh* and the Glosses on the *Tur*) who give the teaching of Ulla in the *Talmud* (loc. cit.) as *Rambam’s* source } do not intend to quote the exact wording of a particular teaching, but rather to cite its content. See also the *halachah* that immediately follows this statement in the *Rambam*, and the above-named commentaries on it.”

As to *Mesoret HaShas* and the other authorities who argue that the *Rambam* had before him the text ‘Israel’ (in place of ‘Jerusalem’) in the *Talmud*, they speak only of the one word ‘Israel’, and such a variant reading is to be found elsewhere — in *Ein Yaakov*. A version that would include *nigalin*, however, I have yet to find in the *Talmud* or in *Yalkut Shimoni*.

Moreover, it is more improbable to postulate that the *Rambam* had a variant reading that is not at all extant, than to assume that the *Rambam* is more explicit than the *Talmud*, for which reason he very understandably writes *nigalin*.”

[26.](#) 1:1. [27.](#) V.L.: דיליה לנהורא (“to his light”). [28.](#) Cf. *Likkutei Amarim*, Part I, ch. 27. [29.](#) Cf. *Likkutei Amarim*, Part I, ch. 27. [30.](#) *Yeshayahu* 52:8.



Epistle 10

אחרי דרישת חיים ושלו

After greetings of life and peace,

פתח דברי יעיר און שומעת תוכחת חיים

[1](#) may my opening words rouse [2](#) “the ear that hears the life-giving admonition”

אשר הוכיח ה' חיים על ידי נביאו, ואמר

that the Living G-d admonished through His prophet, [3](#) saying: [4](#)

חסדי ה' כי לא תמנו וגו'

“The kindnesses of G-d have surely not ended....”

Surprisingly, the Hebrew verb used here is *tamnu* (in the *first* person plural), which would make the phrase mean, “*we* have not been brought to an end.” If the verse sought to say that (a) the *kindnesses* “have not ended,” rather than (b) “because of G-d’s kindnesses *we* have not been brought to an end,” it should surely have used the verb *tamu* (in the third person plural), as the Alter Rebbe goes on to point out.

והוה ליה למימר: כי לא תמו

Now, it should really have said *ki lo tamu*,

כמו שכתוב: כי לא תמו חסדיך וכי

as in the phrase,⁵ “For your kindnesses have not ended....”

The Alter Rebbe answers that our verse indeed implies two ideas: (a) the *kindnesses* have not ended; (b) we stand in need of ה' חסדי (G-d’s kindnesses), כי תמנו — *because we* are not “perfect” or “complete”. (In the second interpretation, *tamnu* means “we are not *tamim*,” as shall soon be explained.)

ויובן על פי מה שכתוב בזוהר הקדוש: אית חסד ואית חסד

This [anomaly] will be understood in the light of a statement in the sacred *Zohar*:⁶ “There are [two] different types of *Chesed*:

אית חסד עולם כו'

there is *Chesed olam*..., literally, “a worldlike *Chesed*,” a degree of kindness which is limited by temporal bounds,

ואית חסד עילאה, דהוא רב חסד כו'

and there is a superior form of kindness, i.e., *rav Chesed* (“boundless kindness”)....

Since it is man’s spiritual service that draws down Divine beneficence, the Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain what manner of service elicits a downflow of the “*Chesed* of the world,” and what manner of service draws down the boundless degree of *rav Chesed*.

כי הנה מודעת זאת, התורה נקראת עוז

Now, it is well known that the Torah is called *oz* (“strength”),

Thus on the verse,⁷ “G-d grants strength to His people,” the *Gemara* in Tractate *Zevachim*⁸ comments, “‘Strength’ alludes to the Torah.”

שהוא לשון גבורה

which is an expression of *Gevurah*.

Literally, *Gevurah* means “might”, but more specifically, as the name of one of the *Sefirot*, it signifies (in contradistinction to *Chesed*) the withholding of beneficence, as regulated by the Divine attribute of stern justice.

וכמו שאמרו חז"ל: תרי"ג מצות נאמרו למשה מסיני מפי הגבורה

As our Sages, of blessed memory, taught:⁹ “The 613 commandments were declared unto Moses at Sinai from the Mouth of the *Gevurah*.”

I.e., the 613 commandments were uttered by G-d as He manifested Himself in the attribute of *Gevurah*, for which reason He Himself is here referred to by the name of this attribute.

וכדכתיב: מימינו אש דת למו

It is likewise written:¹⁰ “From His right Hand a Torah of fire [was given] unto them”; i.e., it was written in fire, which is an expression of the attribute of *Gevurah*.

פירוש

This means:

The Alter Rebbe here introduces an explanation which anticipates the following question: Since the Torah of G-d was given “from His *right* Hand,” which always connotes kindness and benevolence (and indeed, the Torah has been called¹¹ *Torat Chesed* — “a Torah of kindness”), how then can the above-quoted verse proceed to say that the Torah is an expression of fire and *Gevurah*?

שהתורה מקורה ושרשה הוא רק חסדי ה', המכונים בשם ימין

The source and root of the Torah is solely “G-d’s kindnesses,” that are referred to¹² as “the right side.”

דהיינו: המשכת בחינת אלקותו יתברך והארה מאור אין סוף ברוך הוא

That is: The elicitation of His Divinity, and of a radiation from the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light,

אל העולמות עליונים ותחתונים

to the upper and lower worlds,

על ידי האדם הממשיך האור על עצמו

[is effected] by man who draws down the light upon himself

בקיום רמ"ח מצות עשה

by the fulfillment of the 248 positive commandments,

שהו רמ"ח אברים דמלכא

which are [13](#) “the 248 organs of the King”;

פירוש: רמ"ח כלים ולבושים לההארה מאור אין סוף ברוך הוא המלוכש בהן

i.e., they are the 248 vessels and garments for the radiation from the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light that is vested in them.

Each of the commandments serves as a receptor or vehicle for the particular Divine illumination that vests itself within it, just as each organ of the body is a vehicle or receptor for a particular faculty of the soul — the eye for the power of sight, the ear for the power of hearing, and so on.

ומאור זה יומשך לו דחילו ורחימו בכל מצוה, כנודע

([14](#)And, as is known, from this light awe and love are drawn down upon [a person as he performs] each command.)

The Torah and its commandments are thus a downflow of G-dliness, springing from His attribute of kindness.

רק שהמשכה זו נתלבשה תחלה במדת גבורתו של הקב"ה, המכונה בשם אש

However, this downflow was first vested in G-d's attribute of *Gevurah*, which is referred to as “fire”,

שהיא בחינת צמצום האור והחיות הנמשכות מאור אין סוף ברוך הוא

and which reflects a contraction (*tzimtzum*) of the light and life-force that issue from the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light,

כדי שתוכל להתלבש במעשה המצות

thus enabling it to become vested in the performance of the commandments,

שרובן ככולן הם בדברים חומריים

practically all of which involve material things,

כציצית ותפילין וקרבנות וצדקה

such as *tzitzit* (which are made of wool), *tefillin* (made of leather and parchment), sacrifices (offered from animals, plants and minerals) and charity (that involves money or other material objects).

ואף מצות שהן ברוחניות האדם, כמו יראה ואהבה

Even commandments that involve a man's spirit, such as awe and love [of G-d],

אף על פי כן הן בבחינת גבול ומדה, ולא בבחינת אין סוף כלל

are also of limited measure,¹⁵ and by no means of infinite extent.

כי אהבה רבה לה', בלי קץ וגבול ומדה, אין האדם יכול לסובלה בלבד ולהיות קיים בגופו אפילו רגע

For not even for a moment could man sustain in his heart so intense a love of G-d as is without end and limitation, and still remain in existence in his body.

Indeed, so intense a love would surely cause the soul to take flight.

וכמאמר רז"ל, שבשעת מתן תורה, שהיתה התגלות אלקותו יתברך ואור אין סוף ברוך הוא בבחינת דיבור והתגלות, פרחו נשמתן כו'

So it was taught by our Sages, of blessed memory,¹⁶ that at the time of the Giving of the Torah, when G-d's Divinity, and the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light, were manifested [to the Jews at Sinai] at the [direct] level of revealed speech, "their souls took flight" from their bodies.

At that time G-d restored their souls with the dew that He will use to revive the dead in the time to come. We see, however, that the illumination in itself was so intense that their souls could not remain within their bodies for even one moment.

Since the love presently experienced by a soul within a body does not cause it to flee, it follows that this love is inherently limited. This also applies to the awe and love which are experienced as a result of the Divinity that is revealed in the *mitzvot*, as mentioned earlier. This is the case because the flow of G-dliness which descends through the Torah and its finite commandments is restrained by the attribute of *Gevurah*.

We can now understand the two stages implied in the above-quoted verse: Initially, the Torah indeed proceeds "from His *right* Hand," from the boundless kindness of the attribute of *Chesed* — but it is then communicated to us "from the Mouth of the *Gevurah*" as "a Torah of fire," as a law which is delimited and restricted through the Divine attribute of *Gevurah*, so that it will be able to find expression in the finitude of the *mitzvot*.

והנה, לפי שהמצות ניתנו לנו על ידי התלבשות במדת גבורה וצמצום ההארה כו'

Now, because the commandments were given to us by being vested in the attribute of *Gevurah* and by the contraction of the [Divine] radiation...,

לכן רוב המצות יש להן שיעור מצומצם

most commandments have a delimited measure.[17](#)

כמו אורך הציצית: י"ב גודלין

For instance, the length of the *tzitzit* must be twelve times the width of the thumb;[18](#)

והתפילין: אצבעים על אצבעים, ומרובעות דוקא

the *tefillin* — two fingerbreadths by two fingerbreadths, according to the opinion of the *Geonim* quoted in the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*,[19](#) and necessarily square;[20](#)

והלולב: ד' טפחים, והסוכה: ז' טפחים

the *lulav* — four handbreadths;[21](#) the *sukkah* — seven handbreadths;[22](#)

והשופר: טפח, והמקוה: מ' סאה

the *shofar* — one handbreadth;[23](#) and the *mikveh* — forty *se'ahs*.[24](#)

וכן בקרבנות, יש להן שיעור מצומצם לזמן

The sacrifices, too, have a delimited measure as regards age,

כמו כבשים בני שנה, ואילים בני שנים, ופרים כו'

as, for instance, “sheep of one year old,”[25](#) and “rams of two years old,”[26](#) and “oxen....”[27](#)

וכן במעשה הצדקה וגמילות חסדים בממונו

The same applies to the act of charity and to the practice of kindness with one's money;

אף שהיא מהעמודים שהעולם עומד עליהם

even though that is one of the pillars upon which the world stands,[28](#)

וכדכתיב: עולם חסד יבנה

as it is written:[29](#) “The world is built by *Chesed*,”

אפילו הכי, יש לה שיעור קצוב: חומש למצוה מן המובחר

nevertheless, it has a set measure of preferably one fifth [of one's income],³⁰ if one desires to perform the commandment in the best possible manner,

ומעשר למדה בינונית כו'

and of one tenth for an average measure³¹....

וזה נקרא חסד עולם

This is what is called “the *Chesed* of the world.”

I.e., the Supernal degree of *Chesed* that is drawn down through this manner of measured charity is termed *Chesed olam*, “the *Chesed* of the world.”

פירוש: חסד אל כל היום, המתלבש בעולמות עליונים ותחתונים

This means³² “the *Chesed* of G-d that endures throughout the day,” which is vested in the higher and lower worlds

על ידי אתערותא דלתתא

through the arousal from below that is generated by man's service,

היא מצות הצדקה וחסד שעושים בני אדם זה עם זה

i.e., by the precepts of charity and kindness that people practice for each other.

Kindness between man and his fellow draws down Divine kindness into the higher and lower worlds.

ולפי שהעולם הוא בבחינת גבול ומדה

But because the world is finite and measured —

מהארץ עד לרקיע ת"ק שנה, וכן מרקיע לרקיע כו'

“From the earth to the heavens there is a distance of 500 years and likewise from one heaven to another [there is a distance of 500 years],”³³

ושית אלפי שני הוי עלמא כו'

and “Six thousand years shall the world exist...”³⁴ —

לכן ניתן שיעור ומדה גם כן למצות הצדקה והחסד שבתורה

the Torah's commandment of charity and kindness is also given a limit and measure,

כמו לשאר מצות התורה

as are the other commandments of the Torah.

אך היינו דוקא לשומר התורה, ולא סר ממנה ימין ושמאל, אפילו כמלא נימא

However, this [limitation on charity] applies only to one who observes the Torah and does not depart from it to the right or left, even as much as a hair's-breadth.

אבל מי שהעביר עליו הדרך, חס ושלום

But as to him who has strayed from the path, Heaven forbid,

מאחר שהעוה דרכו, לתת מגרעות בקדש העליון

inasmuch as he has distorted his course, thus diminishing the Supreme Holiness,

A Jew draws down sanctity from the Supreme Holiness through his performance of the commandments; as we say in the blessings recited before their performance, "...Who has sanctified us with His commandments." I.e., performing *mitzvot* elicits a downflow of Supreme Holiness, whereas non-performance depletes it.

שגרע ערכו בחינת המשכתו מה שהיה יכול להמשיך מבחינת אלקותו, והארת האור מאור אין סוף ברוך הוא, אילו היה שומר התורה ומקיימה כהלכתה

that is, he has diminished its value as regards the efflux he could have elicited from G-d's Divinity and the radiation [he could have elicited] from the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light, had he observed the Torah and fulfilled it as required, —

הרי מעוות זה לא יוכל לתקן כי אם בהמשכת האור העליון שלמעלה מהעולמות, ואינו מתלבש בהן

such distortion cannot be rectified except by an efflux of the Supreme light that transcends the worlds, without being vested in them.

הנקרא חסד עילאה ורב חסד

This is what is called *Chesed ilaah* ("superior kindness") and *rav Chesed* ("abundant kindness"),

לפי שמאיר ומתפשט בבחינת אין סוף, בלי גבול ומדה

because it radiates and diffuses infinitely, without limit and measure,

מאחר שאיננו מצומצם תוך העולמות, אלא בבחינת מקיף עליהן מלמעלה

since it is not contracted within the worlds but encompasses them from above [in equal measure],

מריש כל דרגין עד סוף וכו'

from the peak of all rungs to the end [of all rungs].

וכשהאדם ממשיכו למטה במעשיו ואתערותא דלתתא

Now, when man draws it downward by means of his deeds and by an arousal from below,

אזי אור עליון זה מאיר ומתפשט תוך העולמות, ומתקן כל מעוות וכל מגרעות שניתנו בקדש העליון

this Supreme light then radiates and extends within the worlds, rectifying all distortions and deficiencies caused in the *Kodesh HaElyon*,

ומחדש אורן וטובן ביתר שאת ויתר עז, בבחינת אור חדש ממש

and renewing their light and goodness with an intense elevation, on the level of a truly new light.

An act of penitence does not merely uncover a pre-existing light, but calls forth a new and infinite light which is loftier than all the worlds.

לכן אמרו: במקום שבעלי תשובה עומדין וכו'

This is why the Sages taught that³⁵ “In the place (i.e., at the level) where penitents stand, [even the perfectly righteous do not stand].”

The Rebbe notes that in various sources³⁶ this is paraphrased as follows: “In the place where penitents stand even the truly righteous cannot stand.” I.e., the level at which penitents stand steadfastly cannot even be attained by the truly righteous, for the Divine radiance drawn down through repentance is of an utterly superior quality.

והנה עיקר התשובה הוא בלב

Now the essence of penitence is in the heart,

כי על ידי החרטה מעומקא דלבא, מעורר עומק אור העליון הזה

for through regret from the depth of the heart one arouses the [corresponding] depth (i.e., the ultimate degree) of this Supreme light.

I.e., a man's earnest penitence calls forth the above-described superior spiritual light which rectifies whatever he had been lacking in his fulfillment of the Torah and its *mitzvot*.

אך כדי להמשיכו, להאיר בעולמות עליונים ותחתונים

But in order to call forth [this light] so that it will radiate in the higher and lower worlds,

צריך אתערותא דלתתא ממש, בבחינת מעשה

there must be an actual arousal from below in the form of action,

דהיינו, מעשה הצדקה וחסד בלי גבול ומדה

viz., the practice of charity and kindness without limit and measure.

דכמו שהאדם משפיע רב חסד

For just as a man dispenses *rav Chesed*, an infinite abundance of kindness —

פירוש: ח"ס דלי"ת

[the first two letters of חסד] meaning “he pities” [and the last letter when spelled out meaning, in Aramaic,] “him who has not,”

דהיינו לדל ואביון, דלית ליה מגרמיה כלום

implying [that he dispenses his kindness] to the utterly destitute individual who does not have (*deleit lei*) anything of his own,

ואינו נותן גבול ומדה לנתינתו והשפעתו

without setting a limit or measure to his giving and diffusion —

כך הקב"ה משפיע אורו וטובו בבחינת חסד עילאה, הנקרא רב חסד

so, too, the Holy One, blessed be He, diffuses His light and benign influence in the spirit of the superior *Chesed*, known as *rav Chesed*,

המאיר בבחינת אין סוף, בלי גבול ומדה, תוך העולמות עליונים ותחתונים

that radiates infinitely, without limit or measure, within the upper and lower worlds.

שכולם הם בבחינת דלי"ת אצלו יתברך

For in relation to Him, blessed be He, all are in a state of *deleit* (“having nothing”),

דלית להון מגרמיהון כלום

inasmuch as they have nothing at all of their own,

וכולא קמיה כלא חשיבי

and all before Him are considered as nothing.

Since all of creation is of no account in the eyes of G-d, anything received from His hand is not deserved, but a gratuitous gift; as, indeed, is the very fact that mortal endeavors are able to draw down Divine light.

At any rate, boundless *tzedakah* and kindness draw down the degree of Divine radiance that transcends all worlds.

ועל ידי זה נתקנו כל הפגמים שפגם האדם בעונותיו למעלה, בעולמות עליונים ותחתונים

All the blemishes that a man caused above, in the upper and the lower worlds, through his sins, are thereby rectified.

Thus, the measured performance of *tzedakah* and *Chesed* draws down *Chesed olam*, which is a worldlike (hence, a finite) degree of Divine benevolence, while the boundless performance of *tzedakah* and *Chesed* draws down *rav Chesed*, an infinite degree of Divine benevolence.

וזהו שכתוב: עשה צדקה ומשפט, נבחר לה' מזבח

And this is the meaning of the verse,³⁷ “G-d prefers *tzedakah* and justice³⁸ over offerings,”

לפי שהקרבנות הן בבחינת שיעור ומדה וגבול

because the sacrifices are defined in terms of quantity, dimension and limitation,

מה שאין כן בצדקה, שיוכל לפזר בלי גבול לתקן עונותיו

while charity can be dispensed without limit, for the purpose of rectifying one's sins.

Although (like the sacrifices) *tzedakah* also effects atonement, it may be offered (unlike the sacrifices) without limit. It is therefore able to draw down Divine illumination that is correspondingly infinite, and thereby secure a superior order of atonement.

ומה שכתוב: המבזבז אל יבזבז יותר מחומש

As for the ruling that³⁹ “He who is unstinting [in his charitable giving] should not expend more than one fifth [of his earnings],”

היינו דוקא במי שלא חטא

this applies only to one who has not sinned,

או שתקן חטאיו בסיגופים ותעניות

or who has rectified his sins by means of self-mortification and fasts,

כראוי לתקן כל הפגמים למעלה

as indeed all the blemishes Above should be rectified.

Since such an individual need not give *tzedakah* to rectify his sins, he should not give more than a fifth.

אבל מי שצריך לתקן נפשו עדיין

But as to him who still needs to remedy his soul,

פשיטא דלא גרעה רפואת הנפש מרפואת הגוף

the healing of the soul is obviously no less a priority than the healing of the body,

שאינ כסף נחשב

where money does not count.

וכל אשר לאיש יתן בעד נפשו, כתיב

As Scripture states,⁴⁰ “Whatever a man has he will give on behalf of his soul.”

The simple meaning of the verse is that a person will forego all his wealth in order to save his life. However, since the word “soul” is used rather than “life”, we may also understand this to mean that a person will give everything he has in order to save and rectify his soul.

* * *

The Alter Rebbe now returns to the verse quoted at the outset of this *Iggeret HaKodesh*:
וגו' תמנו לא כי ה' חסדי — “The kindnesses of G-d have surely not ended....”

There he had asked: If the verse refers only to G-d's kindness, why does it use the verb *tamnu* (in the *first* person plural), which would make the phrase mean, “we have not been brought to an end,” rather than *tamu* (in the *third* person plural), which would mean that “the *kindnesses* have not ended”?

He answers this by saying that ה' חסדי (“the kindnesses of G-d”) refers also to the giving of *tzedakah* without limitation. Accordingly, the verse may be understood, as he now goes on to explain:

והנה מדת חסד זו, בלי גבול ומדה, נקראת על שמו של הקב"ה

Now, since this is G-d's manner of practicing benevolence, this mode of unlimited kindness is known by the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He, [viz.,]

חסדי ה'

"The kindnesses of G-d,"

כדכתיב: וחסד ה' מעולם ועד עולם כו'

as it is written,⁴¹ "and G-d's *Chesed* is everlasting...."

כי הגם שכל ישראל הם רחמנים וגומלי חסדים

For though⁴² "All of Israel are compassionate and practice kindly deeds,"

ברם יש גבול ומדה לרחמי האדם

nevertheless there is a limit and measure to man's compassion.

אבל הקב"ה נקרא אין סוף ברוך הוא

But the Holy One, blessed be He, is called the *Ein Sof* — "the Infinite One,"

ולמדותיו אין סוף

and His attributes (like Himself) have no end,

כדכתיב: כי לא כלו רחמיו

as it is written,⁴³ "...for His mercies never cease."

When a Jew echoes G-d's boundless kindness and compassion, his actions are thus termed "G-d's acts of kindness."

וזהו שאמר הנביא אחר החורבן והגלות: חסדי ה', כי לא תמנו

And this is the meaning of the prophet's words,⁴⁴ after the Destruction and the exile: "The kindnesses of G-d have surely not ended (*ki lo tamnu*)."

פירוש: לפי שלא תמנו, שאין אנו תמימים ושלמים, בלי שום חטא ופגם בנפש ובעולמות עליונים

That is: "Because we are not perfect,⁴⁵ inasmuch as we are not perfect (*temimim*) and whole, without any sin or blemish in our soul nor in the higher worlds,

על כן צריכין אנו להתנהג בחסדי ה', שהם בלי גבול ותכלית

we therefore need to conduct ourselves in accordance with 'G-d's kindnesses,' that are without limit or end,

כדי לעורר עלינו רחמים וחסד עילאה, שהוא רב חסד ורחמים, בלי גבול ותכלית

in order to call down upon ourselves Supreme compassion, i.e., *rav Chesed*, and unlimited, infinite compassion,

כמו שכתוב: כי לא כלו רחמיו

as it is written, at the conclusion of this verse, 'for His mercies never cease....'

Since we are in need of drawing down this level of compassion, our own practice of kindness must echo "G-d's kindness."

Thus the Prophet is telling the generations that follow the Destruction that they should practice unbounded kindness because they are not in a state of *tamnu*. Being imperfect, we need to arouse G-d's infinite kindness and compassion in order to rectify any sins and blemishes.

(Moreover, since these latter generations are too weak to engage in fasting and self-mortification, the only means now available to secure full atonement is through *tzedakah*.[46](#))

וזהו שאמרו רז"ל: אין ישראל נגאלין אלא בצדקה

And this is what our Sages, of blessed memory, meant by saying that[47](#) "Israel will be redeemed only through charity."

שיעשו גם אם יהיו פטורים מדינא

[This refers to the charity] that they will perform even if they are legally not obligated,

כי אין בן דוד בא כו'

for[48](#) "[*Mashiach*] the son of David will not come [until the pocket will be empty of even the smallest coin]."

I.e., even if (Heaven forbid) there will not be a solitary coin left in one's pocket, *tzedakah* will still be given. And it is this boundless level of *tzedakah* that secures a complete atonement for the sins of our people, after which[49](#) "they will immediately be redeemed."

The Rebbe explains that the Alter Rebbe does not conclude the above-mentioned quotation about the precondition for the coming of *Mashiach* because it is quite possible that he did not want to write out the last words (viz., “until the pocket will be empty of even the smallest coin”); and this precondition of the Sages can be fulfilled on the spiritual level, by conducting oneself with the humility of the destitute.

This could also explain why the Alter Rebbe does not say... כשיהיו (“when they are legally not obligated”), but rather... יהיו אם (“if they are legally not obligated”).

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) Cf. *Tehillim* 119:130. [2.](#) Cf. *Mishlei* 15:31. [3.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “At the conclusion as well [of this Epistle] the Alter Rebbe stresses that ‘This is what the prophet says,’ in order to add certainty to the following statement.” [4.](#) *Eichah* 3:22. [5.](#) Liturgy, concluding blessings of *Shemoneh Esreh* (*Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 58). [6.](#) III, 133b. [7.](#) *Tehillim* 29:11. [8.](#) 116a. [9.](#) *Makkot* 23b. [10.](#) *Devarim* 33:2. [11.](#) *Mishlei* 31:26. [12.](#) *Tikkunei Zohar*, Introduction II (*Patach Eliyahu*). [13.](#) *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 30 (p. 74b). [14.](#) The parentheses are in the original text. [15.](#) This being a characteristic of the attribute of *Gevurah*. [16.](#) *Shabbat* 88b. [17.](#)

Note of the Rebbe: “It would appear that this phrase (‘most commandments have a delimited measure’) seeks to highlight their *maximal* limits, especially since the Alter Rebbe qualifies the noun ‘measure’ (*shiur*) with the adjective ‘delimited’ (*metzumtzam*). (The commandments that follow would then be instances of *Chesed olam*, being *no higher than* the finitude of a worldlike *Chesed*). Paradoxically, however, the examples that the Alter Rebbe then gives all indicate the *minimal* limits of each *mitzvah*! [...] Indeed, even when the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* is carried out at the [boundless] level of *Chasdei Havayah* it has a *minimal* limit — i.e., [the obligation obtains only when the donor owns at least] a *perutah* (whereas from the finite perspective of *Chesed olam* he would be exempt from it, as is discussed at the very end of the present Epistle).“

By way of resolving this anomaly, it could be suggested that the Alter Rebbe seeks to point out [...] that *tzitzit* which are thirteen thumbbreadths long *are in no way superior to* *tzitzit* of twelve; hence the measure of the *mitzvah* of *tzitzit* has a *maximal* delimitation. The same may be said of the other examples, such as the dimensions of *tefillin*, and so on.”

[18.](#) *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim* 11:4. [19.](#) *Ibid.* 32:33. [20.](#)

Shulchan Aruch, *Orach Chayim* 32:39.

Note of the Rebbe: “At first glance, this requirement would appear to be out of place in a list of dimensions; rather, it would appear to be merely a restriction (disqualifying round ones, for example), though no mention is made of the many comparable restrictions that pertain to *tzitzit* or to *tefillin*.“

It may be suggested by way of explanation that this phrase [does indeed relate to a dimension, inasmuch as it] seeks to exclude a shape of five (or six or more) sides that

encompasses (and is greater than) a square. This exclusion does not apply to tzitzit (cf. the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 10:1). This gives significance to the word 'necessarily', which might otherwise appear superfluous."

[21.](#) *Ibid.*, beginning of sec. 650. [22.](#) *Ibid.*, beginning of sec. 634. [23.](#) *Ibid.*, 586:9. [24.](#) *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah* 201. [25.](#) *Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Maaseh HaKorbanot* 1:14. [26.](#) *Ibid.* [27.](#) *Ibid.*; Tractate *Parah* 1:2. [28.](#) *Avot* 1:2. [29.](#) *Tehillim* 89:3. [30.](#) *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah* 249:1. [31.](#) *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah* 249:1. [32.](#) *Tehillim* 52:3. [33.](#) *Chagigah* 13a. [34.](#) *Rosh HaShanah* 31a. [35.](#) *Berachot* 34b. [36.](#) *Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah* 7:4, as distinct from the wording cited in *Berachot, loc. cit.*: '...do not stand.'" [37.](#) *Mishlei* 21:3. [38.](#)

Note of the Rebbe: "In light of this explanation, what is the relevance here of justice?"

Paradoxically, it could be explained that it is specifically this word that explains why *tzedakah* is preferred over offerings. For the kind of *tzedakah* that can be done equally by all — the regular, unqualified commandment of *tzedakah* which is one of the pillars upon which the world stands — would appear to belong to [the finite category known as] *Chesed olam*, as stated explicitly above. How, then, can it be found preferable to offerings? The verse therefore specifies that the subject at hand is the kind of *tzedakah* that is closely accompanied by justice, i.e., the *tzedakah* whose goal is the just rectification of one's sins.

"This concept is related to that in *Torah Or* (p. 63b), but it is not exactly the same. As to the difference in order between 'tzedakah and justice' and 'justice and tzedakah,' see *Avot deRabbi Natan*, beginning of ch. 33, and *Or HaTorah, Parshat Vayeira*, p. 99a."

[39.](#) *Ketubbot* 50a. [40.](#) *Iyov* 2:4. [41.](#) *Tehillim* 103:17. [42.](#) *Yevamot* 79a. [43.](#) *Eichah* 3:22. [44.](#) See above, footnote 3. [45.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "The proof being the Destruction and the exile." [46.](#) This is explained at length in *Iggeret HaTeshuvah*, ch. 3 (in Vol. III of the present series). [47.](#) See above, Epistle 9, footnote 16. [48.](#) *Sanhedrin* 97a. [49.](#) *Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah* 7:5.



Epistle 11

Like most of the components of *Iggeret HaKodesh*, this pastoral letter too was addressed to the chassidic community as a whole. Why, then, echoing the words first addressed to Daniel ("To enlighten you with understanding"),¹ does the Alter Rebbe open it in the singular?

In this letter the Alter Rebbe demands spiritual service of a caliber so seemingly formidable as to be attainable only by a chosen few. For in it he calls upon the reader not to desire physical things, even those things that are essential for his wellbeing and utilized in his service of G-d.

Even such essentials, states the Alter Rebbe, should not be desired for their physicality but for their spirituality, for the spark of G-dliness found within them. So much so, that even if a person finds that he is lacking (G-d forbid) life's essentials, he should not be pained by their absence; rather he should rejoice in his belief that this is indeed for his good, as shall soon be explained. Such a lofty response to deprivation would seem to be within the reach of only a very restricted elite.

The Alter Rebbe therefore begins this letter in the singular, indicating that every single individual can attain this level of divine service. For it requires only an absolute faith in G-d, and this lies hidden within every Jew; let him but unveil this faith, and he will be able to *live* by it.

להשכילך בינה

“To enlighten you with understanding”

כי לא זו הדרך ישכון אור ה'

that not by this path will the light of G-d dwell within [one],²

להיות חפץ בחיי בשרים, ובני ומזוני

i.e., by desiring the³ “life of flesh,” and children, and sustenance,

The Alter Rebbe is negating a desire that emanates from a craving for pleasure, rather than a desire that results from purposeful need.

כי על זה אמרו רז"ל: בטל רצונך כו'

for on this our Sages, of blessed memory, said,⁴ “Nullify your will [out of deference to His will].”

דהיינו, שיהיה רצונו בטל במציאות, ולא יהיה לו שום רצון כלל בעניני עולם הזה כולם

This means not that one should *set aside* his own will because it does not coincide with G-d's will, but that from the outset one's will should be [so] nullified that he has no desire whatever for any worldly matters

הנכללים בבני, חיי ומזוני

that are incorporated within the three general categories of [5](#) “children, life, and sustenance.”

Although these are essentials, and though they affect one’s divine service, they should be desired not for themselves, but only insofar as they further the accomplishment of one’s spiritual tasks.

The above directive to “nullify” thus implies *bittul bimetziut*, an utter nullification of the self. Confronted by a scholar of stature, a lesser scholar may experience self-effacement — but he still remains a self-assertive personality. Utter nullification, by contrast, means that this sensation of self ceases to exist. In similar vein, nullifying one’s own wishes before G-d connotes the absence of any wishes other than G-d’s.

וכמאמר רז"ל: שעל כרחק אתה חי

[One should thus live] in the spirit of the teaching of our Sages, of blessed memory, that [6](#) “Against your will do you live.” I.e., one should view the corporeal aspects of his life as being contrary to his will, and surely so with regard to the corporeal aspects of children and sustenance.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain how a Jew can achieve a total lack of yearning for the physicality of things, even things that are essential. According to the explanation that follows, it will be seen that one can go beyond this, and even not be pained by their absence. Indeed, this equanimity in the face of deprivation proves that he derives no pleasure from these things when he does have them.

For it is possible for a person not to derive (conscious) pleasure from something [7](#) and still delight in it subconsciously; the proof of this is that he grieves mightily at its loss, and pain is the exact counterpart of pleasure.

וביאור הענין

The clarification of this matter, how one can achieve a state of not desiring the physicality of even those things most crucial to his existence, [is as follows]:

הוא רק אמונה אמיתית ביוצר בראשית

This [can be achieved] only [when there is] an absolute belief in the *Yotzer Bereishit*.

Literally, as in the opening words of the *Aleinu* prayer, [8](#) this phrase refers to G-d as “the One Who formed the first beginnings of Creation.” In the Kabbalistic lexicon, however, *reishit* also connotes the *Sefirah* called *Chochmah* (lit., “wisdom”). The Alter Rebbe hence uses this phrase here to allude to G-d as “the One Who created [everything] by means of *reishit*,” i.e., by means of the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah*.

דהיינו שהבריאה יש מאין, הנקראת ראשית חכמה

This means that the creation of *yesh* (“that which exists”) out of the state of *ayin* (lit., “nothingness”) which is called *reishit Chochmah*,

Loosely, the phrase *yesh me'ayin* means “something from nothing,” i.e., creation *ex nihilo*. Here, however, the meaning of *ayin* is not “non-being” or “non-existence”, for we cannot say that the source of creation is “non-being” when⁹ “Everything is from You”: *all* of creation comes from G-dliness, the only entity that has true existence. Rather, *ayin* here means “incomprehensible”, for that which a created being understands he terms “existing” while that which totally transcends his understanding he denotes as “non-existing”, inasmuch as it does not exist within the world of his understanding.

Yesh me'ayin thus describes the creation of something that comes into existence from the *ayin* of *Chochmah*. *Chochmah* in turn is known as *reishit* (lit., “first”), as in the verse,¹⁰ “*Reishit chochmah...*” The level of emanation called *Chochmah* is deemed to be “first” because it is the first of the *Sefirot* and as such serves as a source of creation, unlike the levels of Divinity preceding it which are too high, so to speak, to emanate down to the level of creation.

והיא חכמתו שאינה מושגת לשום נברא

i.e., the Divine [*Sefirah* of] *Chochmah* which is not apprehensible to any created being, and which is the level of Divinity described above as *Yotzer Bereishit*, that refers to G-d as “the One Who created [everything] by means of *reishit*,” i.e., by means of the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah*, —

הבריאה הזאת היא בכל עת ורגע

this creation occurs at every time¹¹ and moment

שמתהווים כל הברואים יש מאין

at which all created beings come into being *ex nihilo* (*yesh me'ayin*)

מחכמתו יתברך המחיה את הכל

through G-d’s wisdom which animates everything.¹²

G-d not only vitalizes all beings but also creates them, and since creation takes place *ex nihilo* it must occur constantly.

For it is explained at length in the teachings of *Chassidut* that the relationship between Creator and created differs from the *ilah ve'alul* (“cause and effect”) relationship of, for example, intellect and emotions. Once emotions are brought about by the intellect, they can then continue to exist independently, because in truth the intellect merely serves to reveal pre-existing emotions; it does not actually create them.

Creation *ex nihilo* however, involves creating a being that previously did not exist at all. The *ayin* that creates must therefore continuously vest itself within the created being, so as to constantly effect the phenomenon of creation. (This is explained in *Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah*,¹³ *a priori* from the splitting of the Red Sea.)

This is also the meaning of the statement,¹⁴ “He Who in His goodness renews each day, continuously, the work of creation....” G-d constantly creates the universe anew from the *ayin* of *Chochmah*.

וכשיתבונן האדם בעומק הבנתו

Now when a man will contemplate in the depths of his understanding

ויצייר בדעתו הווייתו יש מאין בכל רגע ורגע ממש

and will [moreover] picture in his mind how he comes into being *ex nihilo* at every single moment, so that he is affected at every moment of his existence by G-d’s wisdom,

האיך יעלה על דעתו כי רע לו

how can he entertain the thought that he is suffering,

או שום יסורים מבני, חיי ומזוני

or has any afflictions related to “children, life, i.e., health, and sustenance,”

או שארי יסורין בעולם

or whatever other worldly sufferings?

הרי האין, שהיא חכמתו יתברך, הוא מקור החיים והטוב והעונג

For the *ayin* which is G-d’s *Chochmah* is the source of life, goodness and delight.

והוא העדן שלמעלה מעולם הבא

It is the Eden that transcends the World to Come,

The World to Come — the *Garden* of Eden — is the most sublime form of bliss experienced by the soul in apprehending G-dliness. This level, lofty as it may be, is however but a garden, a stage once removed from the spiritual delights which flow to it from the source which is called Eden. It is this level of Divinity that constantly creates and vitalizes all living beings.

רק מפני שאינו מושג, לכן נדמה לו רע או יסורים

except that, because it is not apprehensible, one imagines that he is suffering, or afflicted.

אבל באמת, אין רע יורד מלמעלה, והכל טוב

In truth, however,¹⁵ “No evil descends from above,” and everything is good,

רק שאינו מושג, לגודלו ורבו טובו

though it is not apprehended [as such] because of its immense and abundant goodness, at a level which is inconceivable to man.

The life-force of all things, even those that we perceive as evil, as found within its source is truly good. In fact, it is such a lofty manner of good that it remains faithful to its source, and as such is not apprehensible to man as good. In this it differs from the other form of good that is able to descend to so low a level that even mortals can perceive its goodness. This higher form of goodness, because it retains its status at the outset of its revelation, is clothed in this world in a garb of pain and evil, inasmuch as its goodness has yet to be revealed to man.

This may be more fully understood in light of the Alter Rebbe’s explanation¹⁶ of the verse,¹⁷ “Happy is the man whom You, G-d, chasten.” (In the original of this verse in the Holy Tongue, the Divine Name is spelled with *yud* and *hei*, which are also the first two letters of the Four-Letter Divine Name.) The Alter Rebbe explains there that suffering stems from the revelation of these first two letters “in the hidden world” (i.e., on a plane which is hidden from our understanding), *before* the revelation of the latter two letters (*vav* and *hei*) descends into the “revealed world.” Thus, suffering as found within its source is truly good.

In this spirit, the Alter Rebbe explains¹⁸ the conduct of Nachum Ish Gamzu, whose response to all occurrences was the remark,¹⁹ *Gam zu letovah* — “This, too, is for the good.” This remark not only meant that an event that seemed to be evil would eventually evolve into good, but that the event itself, by virtue of its source, was good in its present form as well; its inherent goodness would be revealed at some later date.

וזהו עיקר האמונה שבשבילה נברא האדם

And this is the essence²⁰ of the faith for which man was created:²¹

להאמין דלית אתר פנוי מיניה

to believe that²² “There is no place void of Him” — i.e., G-d is everywhere —

ובאור פני מלך, חיים

and²³ “In the light of the King’s countenance there is life.”

When one encounters the King face to face, he is granted life. If in this temporal world a man sentenced to death should encounter his king, his sentence may be commuted and he is granted life, for “In the light of the king’s countenance there is life.” The same is true Above: the omnipresence of G-d, the King of the world, provides everything with life.

ועל כן עוז וחדוה במקומו

Accordingly,²⁴ “Strength and gladness are in His place,”

The fact that G-d is found everywhere should encourage a man by strengthening his trust, and thereby fill him with joy, for whatever predicament he finds himself in, G-d is there too. And wherever G-d is present, there is “strength and gladness.”

הואיל והוא רק טוב כל היום

because He is but good all the time.

ועל כן, ראשית הכל, שישמח האדם ויגל בכל עת ושעה

Therefore, first of all,²⁵ man ought to be happy and joyous at every time²⁶ and hour,

ויחיה ממש באמונתו בה', המחיה ומטיב עמו בכל רגע

and truly live by his faith²⁷ in G-d, Who animates him and acts kindly towards him at every moment.²⁸

ומי שמתעצב ומתאונן

But he who is grieved and laments

מראה בעצמו שיש לו מעט רע ויסורין

demonstrates²⁹ that he is undergoing some hardship and suffering,

וחסר לו איזה טובה

and lacks some goodness;

והרי זה ככופר, חס ושלום

he is (heaven forfend) like a heretic, *who denies G-d's omnipresence*.

For if he would truly believe, he would realize (as above) that “In the light of the King’s countenance there is life,” and “Strength and joy are in His place,” so that he indeed lacks nothing.

ועל כן הרחיקו מדת העצבות במאד חכמי האמת

This is why the Sages of Truth, the Kabbalists, strongly rejected the trait of sadness, for it contradicts a Jew's true faith that "There is no place devoid of Him."

אבל המאמין לא יחוש משום יסורין בעולם

The truly faithful, however, is not perturbed³⁰ by any suffering whatever,

ובכל עניני העולם, הן ולאן שוין אצלו בהשוואה אמיתית

and with respect to all mundane matters, "yes" and "no" are all the same to him, in true equality.

ומי שאין שוין לו

But he to whom they are not the same,

מראה בעצמו שהוא מערב רב, דלגרמייהו עבדין

demonstrates³¹ that he is one of the *eirev rav*, who act but for themselves;³²

ואוהב את עצמו לצאת מתחת יד ה' ולחיות בחיי הגוים

he loves himself to the extent that³³ he removes himself from under the hand (i.e., the authority) of G-d, and lives the life of the gentiles, —

בשביל אהבת את עצמו

[all] because of his self-love.

ועל כן הוא חפץ בחיי בשרים ובני ומזוני

This is why he desires the "life of the flesh,"³⁴ and "children and sustenance,"

כי זה טוב לו

for that is his good.

ונוח לו שלא נברא

[Indeed,] it would have been better for him had he not been created.

כי עיקר בריאת האדם בעולם הזה

For the main purpose of man's creation in this world

הוא בשביל לנסותו בנסיונות אלו

is to test him by these trials and physical tribulations,

ולדעת את אשר בלבבו

to ascertain what is in his heart:[35](#)

אם יפנה לבבו אחרי אלהים אחרים

whether his heart will turn towards other gods,

שהם תאוות הגוף, המשתלשלים מסטרא אחרא, ובהם הוא חפץ

namely the passions of the body which evolve from the *sitra achra*, and desire these,

Since the *kelipot* and *sitra achra*, the forces of evil and unholiness, are termed “other gods,” the passions that they generate are likewise termed “other gods.”

או אם חפצו ורצונו לחיות חיים אמיתיים, המשתלשלים מאלקים חיים

or whether his desire and wish is to live the true life which evolves from the living
G-d.[36](#)

ויאמין שבאמת הוא חי בהם

One must believe that he really lives it, i.e., the true life,

וכל צרכיו וכל עניניו משתלשלים באמת בפרטי פרטיותיהם שלא מסטרא אחרא

and that all his needs, and everything related to himself, truly evolve in all their details
not from the *sitra achra*,

כי מה' מצעדי גבר כוננו

for[37](#) “By G-d are the steps of man made firm,”[38](#)

ואין מלה גו'

and[39](#) “While there is [yet] no word [on my tongue, You, G-d, know it all].”

Thus, G-d is aware of all man's thoughts, words and deeds, even before man thinks,
speaks or does them.

ואם כן, הכל טוב בתכלית, רק שאינו מושג

Accordingly, everything is absolutely good, except that it is not apprehended as such by man.

ובאמונה זו באמת, נעשה הכל טוב גם בגלוי

When one believes this truly, everything becomes good even on a revealed level.

שבאמונה זו, שמאמין שהרע הנדמה בגלוי

For by such a faith, in which one believes that what manifestly seems to be evil

כל חיותו הוא מטוב העליון

in fact receives its entire vitality from the Supreme Good,

שהיא חכמתו יתברך, שאינה מושגת

(i.e., from G-d's *Chochmah* which is not apprehensible,

שהיא העדן שלמעלה מעולם הבא

and which is the Eden that transcends the World to Come⁴⁰), —

הרי באמונה זו נכלל ומתעלה באמת הרע המדומה בטוב העליון הגנוז

by this faith the imagined evil is truly absorbed and sublimated in the concealed Supreme Good, so that the good becomes palpably revealed to the physical eye.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Daniel* 9:22. [2.](#) Cf. *Iyov* 38:19. [3.](#) Cf. *Mishlei* 14:30. [4.](#) *Avot* 2:4. [5.](#) Cf. *Moed Katan* 28a. [6.](#) *Avot* 4:22. [7.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “In the words of the adage, ‘A constant delight is no delight.’” [8.](#) *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 84. [9.](#) *I Divrei HaYamim* 29:14. [10.](#) *Tehillim* 111:10; *Mishlei* 4:7. [11.](#) See footnote 25, below. [12.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “As above in *Shaar HaYichud Veba Emunah*, ch. 2.” [13.](#) *Loc. cit.* [14.](#) Morning prayers; *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 44. [15.](#) Cf. *Bereishit Rabbah* 51:3. [16.](#) In ch. 26 of Part I, above. [17.](#) *Tehillim* 94:12. [18.](#) *Likkutei Torah*, *Bamidbar* 62a. [19.](#) *Taanit* 21a. [20.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Cf. *Raaya Mehemna*, *Zohar* II, 25a; the beginning of the [*Mishneh Torah* of the] *Rambam*; and above, p. 83b [i.e., *Shaar HaYichud VebaEmunah*, ch. 7].” [21.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “From this phrase one may understand that from here on the Alter Rebbe adds a vital emphasis regarding the conclusion drawn from the above contemplation: (a) it should affect one at every moment and hour, and (b) one should truly live with it.” [22.](#) *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 57. [23.](#) *Mishlei* 16:15. [24.](#) *I Divrei HaYamim* 16:27. [25.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “For, as explained above, we are speaking of the *Yotzer Bereishit* [‘the One Who formed the first beginnings of Creation’].” [26.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “This may be seen as a hint that [one should maintain this happy frame of mind at all times, despite the vagaries of life’s] 28 different and opposite ‘times’ (as listed in *Kohelet* 3:2 ff.). The same hint may also be perceived at the beginning of the present

Epistle ('at every time and moment').” [27](#). Note of the Rebbe: “Since it is for the sake of [his faith] that he was created — and he is alive at all times and hours.” [28](#). Note of the Rebbe: “This is another reason why [the above-described train of thinking] should be maintained at all times and hours.” [29](#). Note of the Rebbe: “[The second word in the Hebrew phrase בעצמו מראה (here translated “demonstrates”; lit., “shows *concerning himself*”) is seemingly superfluous and also unexpected. Perhaps it suggests that [such a response to hardship] runs contrary to the very essence (עצם) of one’s creation and existence (for [a faith in G-d’s ever-present goodness is] the purpose, as stated above, for which he was created).” [30](#). Note of the Rebbe: “This echoes *Yeshayahu* 28:16; see the *Targum* there [which translates לא ידעזעון לא as ‘...will not be agitated’]. In our text, too, the verb should perhaps be spelled thus [with a *yud* replacing the *vav*]. See also the *Targum* of *Kohelet* 2:25 [which translates ומי יחוש as דאית ליה חששא... — ‘...who is apprehensive’].” [31](#). Note of the Rebbe: “As above, footnote 29.” [32](#). Note of the Rebbe: “*Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 6, end of p. 22a; cf. *Iggeret HaKodesh*, beginning of sec. 22; see also Part I [of *Tanya*], conclusion of ch. 1 (with regard to gentiles).” [33](#). The explanatory phrase “to the extent that” was inserted by the Rebbe. [34](#). Note of the Rebbe: “This [reason] was not stressed above for it is self-understood, and is the simple meaning of the expression as often quoted by our Sages. This, however, is not the case here: after the Alter Rebbe has focussed on *life* in the light of the King’s countenance, it is obvious that this is what should have been desired.” [35](#). Cf. *Devarim* 8:2. [36](#). In the text here follow the words, וליכ שאינו אף — “though he is unable.” A gloss, inserted at this point by the original publishers of this Hebrew edition, notes the anomalous nature of this phrase and comments that it does not appear in some manuscripts. An alternative version reads, “...or whether his desire and wish — though he is unable [to actually do so] — is to live the true life.” According to this version the phrase is parenthetical. [37](#). *Tehillim* 37:23. [38](#).

Note of the Rebbe: “The choice of this particular verse here might appear problematic, when numerous verses about Divine Providence appear in Scripture before this one. [Its relevance to our context] becomes clear, however, in light of a comment of our Sages specifically on this verse (*Chullin*, end of p. 7b): [‘A man does not (even have something trivial happen to him, such as)] bruise [his finger, without its having been decreed from Above’].”

Here too, then, we observe the extreme precision of the Alter Rebbe’s writing, even with regard to words that might seem to be mere stylistic embellishments.”

[39](#). *Tehillim* 139:4. [40](#). Note of the Rebbe: “Cf. the teaching of our Sages in *Berachot* 34b.”



Epistle 12

והיה מעשה הצדקה שלום, ועבודת הצדקה השקט ובטח עד עולם

“And [the reward for] the act of *tzedakah* will be peace, and [the reward for] the service of *tzedakah* [will be] quietness and surety forever.”¹

Some commentaries explain that “act” (מעשה) and “service” (עבודה) are one and the same; the verse merely reiterates the same theme in different words. *Targum Yonatan*, however, writes that “act” and “service” indicate two different forms of charity: the reward for the “act” of *tzedakah* is peace; the reward for the “service” of *tzedakah* is eternal quietness and surety.

להבין ההפרש שבין מעשה לעבודה, ובין שלום להשקט ובטח

The difference between [the] “act” and “service” of *tzedakah*, and the difference between the rewards of “peace” and “quietness and surety,” will be understood

על פי מה שאמרו רז”ל על פסוק: עושה שלום במרומיו

by what our Sages, of blessed memory, said² on the verse,³ “He makes peace in His high places”:

כי מיכאל שר של מים וגבריאל שר של אש, ואין מכבין זה את זה

“Michael is the prince of water and Gabriel is the prince of fire, yet they do not extinguish one another.”

Though water seeks to quench fire and fire endeavors to vaporize water, and “Michael is the prince of water and Gabriel is the prince of fire,” nevertheless they do not extinguish one another.

כלומר

This means to say, not that Michael’s substance derives from the spiritual element of water and Gabriel’s substance derives from the spiritual element of fire, but that

שמיכאל שר של חסד

Michael is the prince of *Chesed* (“kindness”),

הנקרא בשם מים, היורדים ממקום גבוה למקום נמוך

which is called “water”, because it descends from a high place to a low place.

והוא בחינת ההשפעה והתפשטות החיות מעולמות עליונים לתחתונים

In spiritual terms this [descent] means: the bestowal and diffusion of the [Divine] life-force from the higher to the lower worlds.

ובחינת אש, שטבעה לעלות למעלה, היא בחינת הגבורה, והסתלקות השפעת החיות ממטה למעלה

Fire, whose nature is to soar aloft, represents spiritually the thrust of *Gevurah* (“severity”), and the upward withdrawal of the flow of life-force,

שלא להשפיע רק בצמצום עצום ורב

in order not to bestow [it] except by way of an intense and immense contraction.

והן מדות נגדיות זו לזו

Now these attributes are in conflict, *Chesed* representing unlimited effusion, and *Gevurah* representing limitation and contraction,

והיינו, כשהן בבחינת מדות לבדן

but only when they are in their pristine state as attributes.

Inasmuch as the attributes are inherently limited (and indeed the very word *middah* means “measure”), each of them is confined to its innate characteristics, *Chesed* to expansiveness, *Gevurah* to withdrawal.

אך הקב"ה עושה שלום ביניהם

But the Holy One, blessed be He, makes peace between them, so that they should not oppose one another,

על ידי גילוי, שמתגלה בהן הארה רבה והשפעה עצומה מאד מאור אין סוף ברוך הוא

through a revelation — so that an immense illumination and an intense effusion from the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light is revealed within them.

אשר כשמו כן הוא

For like His Name (viz., *Ein Sof* — “the Infinite One”), so is He.

שאינו בבחינת מדה, חס ושלום

He is not, Heaven forbid, on the [measured] plane of an attribute,

אלא למעלה מעלה, עד אין קץ

but transcends exceedingly, *ad infinitum*,

אפילו מבחינת חב"ד, מקור המדות

even the rank of [the intellectual faculties of] *ChaBaD*, which is the source of the attributes, and surely He transcends the attributes themselves.

ואזי המדות נגדיות של מיכאל וגבריאל נכללות במקורן ושרשן

And then, when G-d's infinite light is revealed within the attributes, the opposing attributes of Michael and Gabriel (*Chesed* and *Gevurah*) are absorbed in their source and root,

והיו לאחדים ממש

and they become truly unified,

ובטלים באורו יתברך, המאיר להם בבחינת גילוי

and are nullified in His light, which radiates to them in a manifest way.

Once their individuality is nullified, they no longer oppose each other.

By way of analogy: The intense enmity of two high officials dissolves, in the presence of their sovereign, into friendship. It is because of their joint nullification before the king that this unity comes about. So, too, the defined bounds of the various attributes dissipate in the face of the limitless revelation of the infinite light.

ואזי מתמזגות ומתמתקות הגבורות בחסדים

The *Gevurot* are thereby tempered and mellowed (lit., "sweetened") in the *Chassadim*, and are transformed into good and kindness,

על ידי בחינה ממוצעת, קו המכריע ומטה כלפי חסד

by a mediary, the determining factor between *Chesed* and *Gevurah*, which leans towards *Chesed*,

היא מדת הרחמים

i.e., the attribute of *Rachamim* ("mercy").

When *Chesed* does not insist (so to speak) on an unlimited revelation of kindness (but is satisfied to reveal the G-dly illumination in a finite manner), and *Gevurah* insists only on withholding the revelation from those who are unworthy of receiving it (but does not insist on blocking the revelation altogether, even from the worthy — then the mediating attribute of mercy, which leans toward kindness, declares that while a particular recipient

may not be strictly worthy of the kindness to be shown, he is at least worthy of being granted it out of compassion.

הנקראת בשם תפארת, בדברי חכמי האמת

This attribute of *Rachamim* is called *Tiferet* (“beauty”) in the terminology of the *Kabbalists* (lit., “the scholars of truth”),

לפי שהיא כלולה מב' גוונין, לובן ואודם

because it is made up of the two colors white and red,

המרמזים לחסד וגבורה

which allude to *Chesed* and *Gevurah*, respectively.

Rachamim is therefore called *Tiferet*, because there is beauty in the harmony of diverse colors.

ולכן סתם שם הוי' ברוך הוא שבכל התורה, מורה על מדת התפארת

The Divine Name *Havayah* (the Tetragrammaton), as it appears unqualified throughout the Torah, therefore indicates the attribute of *Tiferet*,

כמו שכתוב בזהר הקדוש

as is stated in the sacred *Zohar*.[4](#)

Each of the Divine Names indicates one of the Supernal Attributes: the Name *E-l*, for example, indicates *Chesed*; *Elokim* indicates *Gevurah*; and any unqualified appearance of the ultimate Divine Name — *Havayah*, which is known as *Shem HaEtzem* (“the Essential Name”) — alludes to the attribute of *Tiferet*. Why is this the case?

לפי שכאן הוא בחינת גילוי אור אין סוף ברוך הוא, הארה רבה

For here, in *Tiferet*, the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light becomes manifest in an immense illumination,

ביתר שאת משאר מדותיו הקדושות יתברך

surpassing that of the other Divine attributes.

This, then, is the meaning of the above quotation, that “He makes peace in His high places”: The revelation of G-d’s infinite light “makes peace” between Michael and Gabriel, who represent *Chesed* and *Gevurah*.

והנה אתערותא דלעילא, לעורר גילוי הארה רבה והשפעה עצומה הנ"ל מאור אין סוף ברוך הוא

Now, the arousal from above, that elicits a manifestation of this great illumination and immense diffusion from the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light

לעשות שלום הנ"ל

in order to bring about the above-mentioned peace,

היא באתערותא דלתתא

is effected by an arousal from below —

במעשה הצדקה

by the act of charity,

והשפעת חיים הן וחסד ורחמים

and by the benevolent bestowal by one man to another of “life, graciousness, kindness and compassion”⁵

למאן דלית ליה מגרמיה כלום

to him who has nothing of his own,

ולהחיות רוח שפלים כו'

thereby “to revive the spirit of the lowly, [and to revive the heart of the downcast].”⁶

When one gives *tzedakah* to a pauper⁷ “while raising his spirits” with a few warm and supportive words, so that he is given not only “life” but “graciousness, kindness and compassion” as well, then this arousal from below results in an arousal from above. This releases an intense illumination of the infinite *Ein Sof*-light into the Supernal Attributes, thereby making peace between them, and tempering and sweetening the *Gevurot* in the Chassadim.

The Alter Rebbe will now go on to explain the effect of the “act” of *tzedakah* upon the individual benefactor himself, in terms of his battle with the evil of his animal soul.

The animal soul may be refined, and the good within it separated and elevated from its evil, in one of two ways:

One possible direction of attack is “from below to above” (*milmatah lemaalah*), whereby each attribute of the divine soul does battle with its counterpart in the animal soul, seeking to refine and elevate it. For example: the divine soul’s love for G-d seeks to

purify the animal soul's attribute of *Chesed* with its fleshly desires; the divine soul's fear of G-d seeks to refine the animal soul's evil kinds of fear; and so on.

Then there is a manner of purification that proceeds "from above to below" (*milmaalah lematatah*), whereby one draws down a Divine light upon oneself so that the attributes of the animal soul spontaneously become purified and elevated within this light.

This approach anticipates the Time to Come, when the world as a whole will become purified of all evil through the G-dliness that will then be manifest, until ultimately,⁸ "I shall remove the spirit of impurity from the earth."

A similar manner of refining the animal soul exists today. It is accomplished through studying Torah *lishmah*, "for its own sake." By studying in this way — altruistically, without thought of even spiritual gain — the individual draws down a G-dly illumination that enables him not only to overwhelm the evil within him, but also to sift out the good within his animal soul from the evil in which it had been encumbered.

In the same way, when a Jew practices the "act" of *tzedakah* he draws down upon himself a G-dly enlightenment that becomes revealed within him during prayer, and this enables him to extract the good within his animal soul from the surrounding evil and to elevate it.

ומודעת זאת מה שאמרו רז"ל על העוסק בתורה לשמה

It is well-known that our Sages, of blessed memory, said⁹ of a person who engages in the study of Torah for its own sake,

משים שלום בפמליא של מעלה ובפמליא של מטה

that "he makes peace within the heavenly retinue and within the terrestrial retinue."

פמליא של מעלה, הם השרים והמדות הנ"ל

The "heavenly retinue" comprises the above-mentioned "princes" and attributes,

שהן ההיכלות עליונים בעולם הבריאה שבזהר הקדוש

for these are the supernal *heichalot* (lit., "chambers") in the World of Beriah, as stated in the sacred Zohar.

Peace there consists of the harmonious relationship that is established when *Gevurah* merges into *Chesed* and becomes sweetened and tempered by it.

ופמליא של מטה, הן ההיכלות התחתונים

The "terrestrial retinue" comprises the lower *heichalot*,

ובפרט עולם הזה השפל

and especially this lowly world

המעורב טוב ורע מחטא אדם הראשון

which, since the sin of Adam, is mingled of good and evil,

As a result of Adam's sin, there is no good in this world without evil and no evil without good.

והרע שולט על הטוב

and the evil rules over the good,

כמו שכתוב: אשר שלט האדם באדם גו'

as it is written,[10](#) “While man rules over man....” I.e., the “man of wickedness,” representing the forces of kelipah, rules over the “man of holiness” — and harms him, too, as the verse concludes.

ולאום מלאום יאמץ

[It is also written],[11](#) “And nation will overpower nation,” as the balance of power fluctuates between the forces of good and the forces of evil.

וכנראה בחוש באדם התחתון, הנקרא בשם עולם קטן

This is empirically evident with terrestrial man, who is called a microcosm,[12](#)

שלפעמים הטוב גובר, ולפעמים להיפך, חס ושלו

for sometimes the good [within him] prevails, and sometimes the reverse, heaven forfend.

ואין שלום בעולם עד עת קץ

Therefore there will be no peace in the world until the ultimate time (lit., “the time of the End”), when evil will cease to exist,

שיתברר הטוב מהרע

when the good shall be refined from the evil

לידבק בשרשו ומקורו, מקור החיים ברוך הוא

in order to cleave to its root and source, the Divine Source of Life.

ואזי יתפרדו כל פועלי און, ורוח הטומאה יעבור מן הארץ

At that time¹³ “all evildoers shall be scattered,” and¹⁴ the spirit of impurity shall pass from the earth,

כשיתברר מתוכו בחינת הטוב המחייהו

when the element of the good which sustains it will be extracted from its midst.

Evil will then cease to exist as a matter of course, for its entire existence is dependent on the good found within it.

ובירור זה יהיה גם כן על ידי גילוי אלקותו למטה

This refinement itself, of the good from the evil, will also take place through a manifestation of Divinity below,

For just as the refinement as a whole is accomplished through our actions and efforts throughout the time of exile,¹⁵ so, too, the actual refinement will result from the revelation of G-dliness in this world.

בהארה רבה והשפעה עצומה

with a great illumination and immense effulgence,

כמו שכתוב: כי מלאה הארץ דעה את ה'

as it is written,¹⁶ “For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of G-d,”

ונגלה כבוד ה' גוי'

and¹⁷ “The glory of G-d shall be revealed....”

וזהו בכללות העולם לעתיד

Now, this is as regards the future of the world, in general.

In the Time to Come the good will be refined and elevated from the evil through the revelation of G-dliness that will then be manifest.

אך באדם התחתון

But as regards terrestrial man,

בכל עת מצוא

at every “time of finding,” every propitious time for finding G-d,¹⁸

זו תפלה

meaning prayer,¹⁹

או שאר עתים מזומנים להתבודד עם קונו

or at other times designated for secluding oneself with one’s Maker,

כל אחד לפי מעשיו זוכה למעין בירור זה, על ידי עסק התורה לשמה

every individual, in proportion to his deeds, is granted a foretaste of this refinement by engaging in the study of Torah for its own sake.

The Divine revelation that permeates his soul enables him to refine and elevate the good from the evil.

וכן על ידי הצדקה

The same is accomplished by means of charity,

כמו שכתוב: ר' אליעזר יהיב פרוטה לעני, והדר מצלי

as it is related,²⁰ “R. Eliezer would give a coin to a poor man, and then pray,

דכתיב: אני בצדק אחזה פניך

for it is written,²¹ “Through *tzedek* will I behold Your Countenance.”

The Hebrew צדק literally means “righteousness”, but shares a common root with *tzedakah* (“charity”). By prefacing prayer with *tzedek*, one is granted during prayer a spiritual perception that penetrates to the innermost aspect of G-dliness — “Your Countenance” (for the Hebrew פנים connotes both “face” and “interior”).

היא בחינת גילוי הארה והשפעת הדעת והתבונה

This [revelation during prayer] is a manifest illumination and effusion of knowledge and understanding,

להתבונן בגדולת ה'

[enabling one] to meditate on the greatness of G-d,

ולהוליד מזה דחילו ורחימו שכליים

in order to beget thereby an intellectually-generated awe and love,

כנודע

as is known.

ועל ידי זה, נברר הטוב לה', ונפרד הרע

And through this the good is extracted for G-d and elevated to Him, and the evil is separated,

כמו שכתוב: מצרף לכסף וכור לזהב, ואיש לפי מהללו

as it is written,²² “The crucible is for [refining] silver and the melting-pot is for gold, and man [is refined] according to his praise.”

פירוש: לפי הילולו את ה' בעומק הדעת

This means, “according to his praise of G-d” during prayer with profound knowledge

להוליד דחילו ורחימו

in order to beget awe and love.²³

ככה נברר הטוב ונפרד הרע

In this way the good is extracted and the evil is separated,

כבירור ופירוד הסיגים מכסף וזהב במצרף וכור

just as dross is separated from silver and gold in a crucible or melting-pot.

והנה מודעת זאת שישראל בטבעם הם רחמנים וגומלי חסדים

Now, it is well known that Jews by their very nature act compassionately and perform deeds of lovingkindness.²⁴

מפני היות נפשותיהם נמשכות ממדותיו יתברך

[This is so] because their souls issue from G-d's attributes,

אשר החסד גובר בהן על מדת הדין והגבורה והצמצום

in which Chesed prevails over the attribute of *din*, *Gevurah*, and *tzimtzum*,

וכמו שכתוב: גבר חסדו על יראיו

as it is written,²⁵ “His *Chesed* prevails over those who fear Him,” alluding to the fact that the Divine attribute of *Chesed* prevails over the Divine attribute of *Gevurah*.

שלכן נקראת הנשמה בת כהן, כמו שכתוב בזהר הקדוש

The soul is therefore called “daughter of the priest,” since it derives from the attribute of *Chesed* which is called “*Kohen*”, as is written in the sacred *Zohar*.²⁶

Since the soul derives from the Divine attributes which are dominated by kindness and compassion, Jews by their very nature are kind and compassionate.

והנה הצדקה הנמשכת מבחינה זו נקראת בשם מעשה הצדקה

Now, the charity that issues from this source — from the soul’s inherently kind and compassionate nature — is referred to as “the act of charity,”

כי שם מעשה נופל על דבר שכבר נעשה, או שנעשה תמיד ממילא

for the term “act” (*maaseh*) applies to that which is already done, or which is constantly being done spontaneously;

והיא דבר ההווה ורגיל תמיד

thus, something existent, common and constant.

ואף כאן

Here, too, with regard to *tzedakah* that is motivated by the soul’s innate sense of kindness and compassion,

הרי מדת החסד והרחמנות הוטבעה בנפשות כל בית ישראל מכבר

the trait of kindness and compassion is implanted in the souls of the entire House of Israel from aforesaid,

מעת בריאותן והשתלשלותן ממדותיו יתברך

from the time that they were created and that they evolved from G-d’s attributes,

כמו שכתוב: ויפח באפיו גו'

as it is written²⁷ in regard to Adam’s soul entering his body, “And He blew into his nostrils [a soul of life],”

ואתה נפחת בי

[and we likewise say]²⁸ concerning the entry of each and every soul into its individual body, “You blew it into me,”

ומאן דנפח כו'

and²⁹ “He who blows, [blows from within him],” from his innermost being.

So, too, in the analogue: Since the soul emanates from the inward aspect of the Divine attributes, it is infused with them as well, so that the attribute of kindness dominates the soul even as it finds itself within the body.

וגם בכל יום ויום, בטובו מחדש מעשה בראשית

Furthermore,³⁰ in His goodness [G-d] renews the act (*maaseh*) of creation every single day, and this includes the supernal attributes.

וחדשים לבקרים גו'

Likewise, with regard to souls below, [it is written],³¹ “They are new every morning....”

“Act” (*maaseh*) thus refers to a constant process, such as the renewal of the soul with its characteristic traits of kindness and compassion. The “act of *tzedakah*” hence refers to the *tzedakah* which a Jew practices by virtue of these innate character traits.

אך לשון עבודה אינו נופל אלא על דבר שהאדם עושה ביגיעה עצומה, נגד טבע נפשו

The term “service” (*avodah*), however, applies only to what a man does with immense exertion, contrary to his soul’s inclination,

Indeed, it is his very disinclination for a particular task that works against him, and necessitates such exertion.

רק שמבטל טבעו ורצונו, מפני רצון העליון ברוך הוא

but he overrules his nature and will out of deference to the Supreme Will;

כגון לייגע עצמו בתורה ובתפלה, עד מיצוי הנפש כו'

exhausting himself, for example, in Torah and prayer, “to the extent of pressing out the soul....”³²

Since the soul is not naturally inclined to such a situation, a great deal of toil and effort is required.

ואף כאן, במצות הצדקה, ליתן הרבה יותר מטבע רחמנותו ורצונו

In our case, too, with regard to the commandment of giving charity, [to “serve” entails] giving far more than [would be prompted by] the nature of one’s compassion and will.

וכמו שאמרו רז”ל על פסוק: נתון נתון, אפילו מאה פעמים

As our Sages, of blessed memory, commented³³ on the verse,³⁴ “Give, you shall give”: “...even a hundred times.”

וזהו שכתוב: והיה מעשה הצדקה

This, then, is the meaning of the verse, “And the act of charity shall be [peace]” —

שגם הצדקה הנקראת בשם מעשה, ולא בשם עבודה

that even with the kind of charity which is called an “act” and not “service”,

אף על פי כן באתערותא דלתתא, אתערותא דלעילא

[this] arousal from below will nevertheless elicit an arousal from above.

מעורר גילוי אור אין סוף ברוך הוא בהארה רבה והשפעה עצומה

One arouses a manifestation of the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light with a great illumination and an intense diffusion,

ונעשה שלום במרומיו

and peace is brought about “in [G-d’s] high places,” between Michael and Gabriel, *Chesed* and *Gevurah*,

וגם בפמליא של מטה

and also within the terrestrial retinue — the lower worlds.

רק שבעולם הזה השפל לא יתגלה השלום, והבירור ופירוד הרע מהטוב

In this lowly world, however, there will be no manifestation of [this] peace, and of the refinement and separation of the evil from the good,

עד עת קץ

until the ultimate time, when evil will cease to exist,

ולא בזמן הגלות

but not during the time of the exile, *as explained above*,

רק בעולם קטן, הוא האדם

except in the microcosm, i.e., in man,

בכל עת מצוא, זו תפלה

at every “time of finding,” meaning prayer,

כמו שכתוב: בצדק אחזה פניך, כנ”ל

as it is written, “Through *tzedek* will I behold Your countenance,” as discussed above.

אך אחר התפלה, יוכל להיות הרע חוזר וניעור בקל, ולהתערב בטוב

Even so, after prayer it is possible that the evil will easily reawaken and become intermingled with the good

כאשר יתהלך בחשכת עולם הזה

as one walks about in the darkness of this world.

אך הצדקה בבחינת עבודה

However, as to the charity [which is practiced with self-imposed toil] at the level of *avodah* (“service”),

הנה כאשר יקרה וגדלה מעלתה במאד מאד

since it is exceedingly precious and lofty, far more so than the *tzedakah* one practices out of one’s natural inclination,

בהיותו מבטל טבעו ורצונו הגופני מפני רצון העליון ברוך הוא

because [in the former case] one overrules his nature and bodily will out of deference to the Supreme Will,

ואתכפיא סטרא אחרא

and “the *sitra achra* is subjugated,”

ואזי אסתלק יקרא דקודשא בריך הוא כו'

and then “the glory of the Holy One, blessed be He, rises [and becomes manifest in all the worlds],”^{[35](#)}

וכיתרון האור מן החשך דוקא, כנודע

“like the superiority of light over (lit., ‘out of’) darkness,”³⁶ as is known, —

The excellence of light is most appreciated when darkness itself is transformed into light.

אי לזאת, אין הרע יכול להיות עוד חוזר וניעור בקלות כל כך מאליו

in such a case, by virtue of the exertion involved in this superior form of *tzedakah*, the evil can no longer reawaken so easily of itself,

רק אם האדם יעוררנו וימשיכנו על עצמו, חס ושלום

unless, heaven forbid, one rouses it and draws it upon himself.

וזהו שכתוב: השקט ובטח עד עולם

This, then, is the meaning of “quietness and surety forever” — that the reward for the service of charity is eternal quietness and surety.

השקט הוא מלשון: שוקט על שמריו, דהיינו שהשמרים נפרדים לגמרי מן היין, ונופלין למטה לגמרי

Hashket (“quietness”) is related to [the root of the verb in] the phrase,³⁷ “he rests (*shoket*) on his dregs,” meaning that the dregs are completely separated from the wine and sink all the way down,

והיין למעלה זך וצלול בתכלית

while the wine above is wholly pure and clear.

ועל דרך זה הוא בעבודת הצדקה

Similarly with the service of charity:

השמרים הן בחינת תערובת רע שבנפשו

the dregs represent the admixture of evil in one’s soul,

נברר ונפרד מעט מעט

which is gradually extricated and separated

עד שנופל למטה למקורו ושרשו

until it falls netherwards to its root and source — below all the worlds,

וכמו שכתוב: ותשליך במצולות ים כל חטאתם

as it is written,³⁸ “And You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.”³⁹

FOOTNOTES ^{1.} *Yeshayahu* 32:17. ^{2.} See *Devarim Rabbah* 5:12; *Tanchuma*, *Vayigash* 6. ^{3.} *Iyov* 25:2. ^{4.} Note of the Rebbe: “*Vayikra* 11:1.” ^{5.} Note of the Rebbe: “Significantly, [these are the very blessings requested in the final benediction of *Shemoneh Esreh*,] the one beginning with the words, *Sim Shalom*” (*Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 60). ^{6.} *Yeshayahu* 57:15. ^{7.} *Bava Batra* 9b. ^{8.} Cf. *Zechariah* 13:2. ^{9.} Note of the Rebbe: “*Sanhedrin* 99b. See *Likkutei Torah*, *Mattot*, s.v. *Heichaltzu*.” ^{10.} *Kohelet* 8:9. See also Epistle 25 below, et al. ^{11.} *Bereishit* 25:23. ^{12.} *Tanchuma*, *Pekudei* 3; *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 69 (pp. 100b-101a). ^{13.} *Tehillim* 92:10. ^{14.} Cf. *Zechariah* 13:2. ^{15.} See above, *Tanya*, Part I, beginning of ch. 37. ^{16.} *Yeshayahu* 11:9. ^{17.} *Ibid.* 40:5. ^{18.} Note of the Rebbe: “Commentaries on *Tehillim* 32:6.” ^{19.} Note of the Rebbe: “*Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle 25, at length.” ^{20.} *Bava Batra* 10a. ^{21.} *Tehillim* 17:15. ^{22.} *Mishlei* 17:3. ^{23.} Note of the Rebbe: “For these are spiritual gold and silver (*Torah Or*, beginning of *Parshat Vayeishev*, et al.).” ^{24.} *Yevamot* 79a; see *Tanya*, Part I, end of ch. 1. ^{25.} *Tehillim* 103:11. ^{26.} Note of the Rebbe: “II, 95a.” ^{27.} *Bereishit* 2:7. ^{28.} Morning Blessings (*Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 6); cf. *Berachot* 60b. ^{29.} Cited above (Part I, ch. 2) in the name of the *Zohar*. ^{30.} The clause that follows paraphrases a statement in the morning prayers (*Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 44). ^{31.} *Eichah* 3:23. ^{32.} Note of the Rebbe: “*Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle 1.” ^{33.} Note of the Rebbe: “*Sifri*, *Devarim* 15:10; commentary of *Rashi* there.” ^{34.} *Devarim*, loc. cit. ^{35.} *Zohar* II, 128b. ^{36.} *Kohelet* 2:13. ^{37.} *Yirmeyahu* 48:11. ^{38.} *Michah* 7:19. ^{39.} Note of the Rebbe: “In *Or HaTorah* of the *Tzemach Tzedek* on this verse (*Michah* 7:19), the author refers the reader to the *Shelah* on *Parshat Vayishlach* (p. 295b). That reference is instructive here too.”

Epistle 13

מה רב טובך אשר צפנת ליראיך וגו'

“How abundant is Your goodness which You have hidden away for those who fear You, [which You have wrought for those who trust in You before man].”¹

Now the first part of the verse states that the reward is “hidden away,” while its conclusion implies that it is revealed to the sight of man.

The Alter Rebbe will now explain that corresponding to these two forms of reward, the Jew’s spiritual service (that leads to the reward) likewise assumes two forms: there is both a concealed and a revealed form of divine service.

הנה בכלל עובדי ה', יש ב' בחינות ומדרגות חלוקות

Among those who serve G-d by fulfilling the Torah and its *mitzvot*, there are two distinct kinds and levels,

מצד שורש נשמתם למעלה, מבחינת ימין ושמאל

depending on the root of their souls above, in the categories of the “right” (*Chesed*) and the “left” (*Gevurah*).

דהיינו, שבחינת שמאל היא מדת הצמצום וההסתר בעבודת ה'

In terms of the *effect* of the soul's root, this means that the “left” is characterized by contraction and concealment in one's divine service.

כמו שכתוב: והצנע לכת גו'

Thus, with regard to this manner of service, it is written,² “...and to walk covertly [with the L-rd your G-d]”;

במסתרים תבכה גו'

[and in another verse we find],³ “in secret places weeps [my soul]...”;

כל העוסק בתורה בסתר כו'

[and, in the words of our Sages],⁴ “Whoever engages in the study of the Torah in secret....”

The three above-mentioned quotations refer to the three general modes of divine service: With regard to *mitzvot* — “to walk covertly”; regarding prayer — “my soul weeps”; and with regard to Torah — “engages in the study of the Torah in secret.”

All the above approaches to divine service result from one of the traits that characterizes *Gevurah*, viz., concealment. The Alter Rebbe now goes on to speak of the other dominant trait that characterizes the attribute of *Gevurah*, viz., contraction.

והנה ממדה זו נמשכה גם כן בחינת הצמצום והגבול בעבודת ה'

From this attribute derives also the element of contraction and limitation in the service of G-d;

כמו בצדקה, להיות נידון בהשג יד

for example, having one's disbursements to charity adjudged according to one's means,⁵

והמבזבז, אל יבזבז יותר מחומש

and [setting one's limits in the spirit of the teaching],⁶ “He who gives lavishly, should not expend more than one fifth.”

וכהאי גונא בתלמוד תורה ושאר מצות, די לו שיוצא ידי חובתו מחיוב מפורש שהייבתו התורה בפירוש

Likewise, as regards the study of Torah and the other commandments, such a person is satisfied if he discharges his definite duty which the Torah explicitly obligates him to do,

לקבוע עתים כו'

such as to set aside certain times [for Torah study].

Thus, the soul's root in the Supernal “left”, in the attribute of *Gevurah*, will lead one to act in a manner consistent with its character trait of limitation: so that he will give only as much *tzedakah*, study only as much Torah, and perform the *mitzvot* only to the degree that he is obligated.

וממנה נמשך גם כן מה שאמרו רז"ל: זרוק מרה בתלמידים כו'

From it derives also the teaching of our Sages, of blessed memory,⁷ “Cast awe upon the pupils....”⁸

אך בחינת ימין היא מדת החסד וההתפשטות בעבודת ה'

By contrast, the characteristic of the “right” is the attribute of *Chesed* and expansiveness — serving G-d

בהתרחבות, בלי צמצום והסתר כלל

with amplitude, without any contraction or concealment whatever,

כמו שכתוב: ואתהלכה ברחבה כו'

as it is written,⁹ “And I will walk about expansively....,”

וגם בלי צמצום וגבול כלל

and without any contraction or limitation whatever. I.e., with such an individual, not only the approach to divine service but also its execution is characterized by a broad sweep.

ואין מעצור לרוח נדבתו, בין בצדקה ובין בתלמוד תורה ושאר מצות

There is no restraint to the spirit of his generosity, whether it be with respect to charity, the study of Torah, or other commandments.

ולא די לו לצאת ידי חובתו בלבד, אלא עד בלי די כו'

He is not satisfied with merely discharging his obligation, but [continues]¹⁰ “to the extent of never [saying] ‘Enough!’...”

These, then, are the two types of divine service that result from the soul’s being rooted either in the “right” or the “left”.

* * *

והנה כל איש ישראל צריך להיות כלול מב' בחינות אלו

Now, every Jew needs to comprise both these traits: a Jew whose soul derives from *Chesed* must also incorporate the thrust of *Gevurah*, and vice versa,

ואין לך דבר שאין לו מקום

for¹¹ “There is no thing that has not its place.”

Both *Chesed* and *Gevurah* are essential to one’s service; at times he must use one attribute, at times — the other.

ולכן מצינו כמה דברים מקולי בית שמאי ומחומרי בית הלל

Thus we find various matters that exemplify the leniencies of Beit Shammai and the stringencies of Beit Hillel.¹²

ללמדנו, שאף בית שמאי, ששרש נשמתם מבחינת שמאל העליון, ולכן היו דנין להחמיר תמיד בכל איסורי התורה

This comes to teach us that even Beit Shammai, whose soul was rooted in the Supernal “left”,¹³ (which is why they always decided stringently as regards all the prohibitions of the Torah,

For stringencies stem from *Gevurah*, inasmuch as they prevent an object from being used and thereby elevated.

ובית הלל, שהיו מבחינת ימין העליון, היו מלמדין זכות להקל ולהתיר איסורי בית שמאי

whereas Beit Hillel, who derived from the Supernal “right”, would find arguments for leniency in order to render permissible the things prohibited by Beit Shammai,

שיהיו מותרים מאיסורם, ויוכלו לעלות למעלה

so that these should become released from their prohibitive bonds and be able to ascend),

—

The word אסור means “bound” (i.e., to the *sitra achra*) and hence “prohibited”. Its opposite (מותר) means “released” and hence “permitted”. Declaring an object permissible thus unfetters it from the bonds of the *sitra achra*, thereby allowing it to ascend, as explained in *Tanya*, Part I, ch. 7.

אף על פי כן, בכמה דברים היו בית שמאי מקילין

nevertheless, in numerous matters, [even] Beit Shammai were lenient.

מפני התכללות שרש נשמתם, שהוא כלול גם מימין

[This is so] because of the inclusiveness of their soul’s root, which is compounded of the “right” (*Chesed*) as well.

וכן שורש נשמת בית הלל כלול גם משמאל

And, likewise, the root of Beit Hillel’s soul was also compounded of the “left” (*Gevurah*).

כידוע דרך ומדות קדש העליון

For, as is known of the mode and the attributes¹⁴ (i.e., the manner) of Supernal Holiness,

דלית תמן קיצוץ ופירוד, חס ושלום

“there is no cleavage or division there,”¹⁵ heaven forfend;

וכל המדות כלולות זו מזו

rather, all the traits that derive from Supernal Holiness incorporate each other — *Chesed incorporates an aspect of Gevurah; Gevurah of Chesed; and so on.*

ולכן הן מיוחדות זו בזו, כידוע ליודעי חן

They are therefore in union with each other, as is known to those who study the *Kabbalah* (lit., “the scholars of the Hidden Wisdom”).

Although *Chesed* and *Gevurah* are opposites, nonetheless, since they are also compounded of each other, they are able to work together.

וכדכתיב באברהם, שהוא מדת החסד והאהבה: עתה ידעתי כי ירא אלקים אתה

Thus it is written of Abraham,¹⁶ who personifies the attribute of *Chesed* and love, “Now I know that you stand in awe of G-d,”

על ידי שלבש מדת הגבורה, ויעקוד את יצחק בנו, ויקח את המאכלת גו'

— for he had garbed himself in the attribute of *Gevurah*, which was not of his essence,¹⁷ “And bound Isaac his son...and took the knife [to slaughter his son].”

We thus see that Abraham, who is the very embodiment of *Chesed*, was able to respond as the occasion demanded with even this expression of severity, the very epitome of the attribute of *Gevurah*.

ומה שאמר הכתוב: אברהם אוהבי, ופחד יצחק

As for Scripture characterizing him as¹⁸ “Abraham who loved Me,” and [in another verse characterizing Isaac as]¹⁹ “the Dread of Isaac,” thereby indicating that Abraham’s service was an expression of *Chesed* and Isaac’s service an expression of *Gevurah*, which would seem to contradict the earlier statement that Abraham also revealed the attribute of *Gevurah*,

הנה ההפרש וההבדל הזה הוא בבחינת גילוי והעלם

this difference and distinction exists [only] on the scale of manifestation and concealment.

שבמדת יצחק, הפחד הוא בבחינת גילוי, והאהבה מסותרת בבחינת העלם והסתר

In Isaac’s mode of divine service, the fear is manifest, while the love is hidden, in a state of concealment and hiding.

וההיפך במדת אברהם אבינו, עליו השלום

The opposite is the case with the trait of our father Abraham, peace be to him — *Chesed* was manifest and *Gevurah* was concealed.

וזהו שאמר דוד המלך, עליו השלום, מה רב טובך וגו’

And this is the meaning of what was said by King David, peace be to him, who was²⁰ of the attribute of *Gevurah*, “How abundant is Your goodness [which You have hidden away for those who fear You].”

כלומר, שמדת הטוב והחסד, אשר היא בבחינת העלם והסתר אצל כל מי ששורש נשמתו מבחינת שמאל

That is to say that the attribute of goodness and *Chesed*, which is in a state of concealment and hiding within those whose soul-root derives from the “left”, i.e., from *Gevurah*,

הנקראים בשם יראיך

and who are referred to as “those who fear You,”

כמדת בית שמאי

resembling the [above-mentioned] trait of Beit Shammai, —

הנה, אף שהוא טוב הגנוז וצפון

though this is a concealed and hidden goodness, beneath a dominant surface of *Gevurah*,

אף על פי כן הוא רב וגדול מאד, כמו מדת הגדולה והחסד ממש, שמבחינת ימין

it is nevertheless truly as abundant and immense as the attribute of *Gedulah*²¹ and *Chesed*, which is of the “right”.

Although the element of *Chesed* within those described as “those that fear You” is concealed, for their soul-root derives essentially from *Gevurah*, it is latent within them just as abundantly as it is found within those who are essentially of the “right”.

ושתייהן הן מבחינת גילוי בלי גבול ומדה ושיעור

Moreover, both [degrees of *Chesed*] — that which is dominant in the souls deriving from the “right” as well as that incorporated in the souls deriving from the “left” — are manifest without limit, measure or dimension.

וזהו שכתוב: מה רב טובך

And this is the meaning of the phrase, “How abundant is Your goodness”;

כלומר, בלי גבול ומדה

i.e., [it applies in both cases] without limit and measure;

בין הטוב אשר צפנת ליראיך, ובין אשר פעלת לחוסים כך

whether it be the goodness “which You have hidden away for those who fear You,” or that which “You have wrought for those who trust in You,”

שהם בעלי הבטחון שמבחינת ימין

referring to the trusting ones who derive from the “right”,

A person trusts his beloved friend to act in his best interests. In the same way, those whose souls stem from the “right” and who serve G-d with *Chesed* and love, place their trust in Him.

וחסדם וטובם הוא גם כן בבחינת גילוי והתפשטות נגד בני אדם

and whose kindness and goodness are also in a state of manifestation and expansiveness before [the sight of] man,

ולא בבחינת צמצום והסתר כלל

and by no means in a state of contraction and concealment.

We can now understand why the verse begins by saying “hidden away for those who fear You” and concludes with the manifest state of “before man”: The verse is alluding to two forms of *Chesed* — in its concealed state, as possessed by “those who fear You,” and in its revealed state, as possessed by “those who trust in You.”

ומה שכתוב: ליראיך, ולא ביראיך

(22)The reason the verse says “for those who fear You,” which would seem to imply that the *Chesed* from above is granted to them as a reward, rather than “in those who fear You,”

היינו משום שכל מה שהוא בבחינת העלם בכל נשמה

is that whatever is in a state of concealment within any soul

הנה בחינה זו אינה מלוכשת תוך הגוף, במוחו ולבו

is not vested within the body — in the individual’s mind and heart, for they are incapable of receiving it.

אלא היא בבחינת מקיף מלמעלה

Rather, it encompasses [the individual] from above, so to speak,

ומשם היא מאירה למוחו ולבו, לעתים הצריכים להתעוררות בחינה זו

and thence it radiates to his mind and heart at those times which require an arousal of the attribute in question,

שתתעורר ותאיר למוחו ולבו, כדי לבא לידי מעשה בפועל ממש

so that it will be aroused and will illumine his mind and heart in order to result in actual deeds.)

For example, a person whose charitable contributions are customarily limited will have revealed to him the concealed and infinite attribute of *Chesed*, which will prompt him to give *tzedakah* unstintingly.

ואמר על כן: אשר רב טוב לבית ישראל, הצפון והגלוי, הוא בבחינת בלי גבול ומדה לפי ערך נפשותם המלוכשת בגוף

[King David] therefore said that whereas the “abundance of goodness” of the House of Israel, [both] that which is hidden and that which is manifest, is (so to speak) without limit and measure (relative to the category of their soul vested in the body),

The kindness of a finite creature is by definition limited. However, it may be termed infinite in relation to the soul vested in the body.

לכן גם אתה ה' תתנהג עמהם במדת חסדך הגדול, בלי גבול ותכלית, הנקרא רב חסד

therefore “You, too, O G-d, relate to them with the attribute of Your unlimited and infinitely great *Chesed*, which is of the level known as *Gedulah*, and which is called *rav Chesed*” — the *Chesed* of *Arich Anpin* that utterly transcends the lesser *Chesed* of *Z'eir Anpin*, from which the worlds evolve by means of the *Seder Hishtalshelut*.

דאית חסד ואית חסד

“For there is *Chesed* and [then] there is [a far higher form of] *Chesed*”:[23](#)

אית חסד עולם

There is *Chesed olam* (lit., “*Chesed* of the world”) — i.e., a worldlike (and hence finite) *Chesed*,

שיש כנגדו ולעומתו מדת הדין, חס ושלום

that has an opposite counterpart — the attribute of *din*, of severe justice, heaven forfend,

למעט ולצמצם חסדו וטובו

which would diminish and contract [G-d's] goodness.

אבל חסד עליון, הנקרא רב חסד

The superior form of *Chesed*, however, which is called *rav Chesed*,

אין כנגדו מדת הדין, למעט ולצמצם רוב חסדו, מלהתפשט בלי גבול ותכלית

does not have the attribute of *din* opposed to it, to diminish and contract the abundance of [G-d's] benevolence from extending without limit or end.

כי הוא נמשך מבחינת טוב כל עלמין, וטמירא דכל טמירין

For it derives from the level of [Divinity called] *Sovev Kol Almin*, which transcends (lit., “encompasses”) all worlds and limitations, and from [the level of Divinity called] *Temira DeChol Temirin* (lit., “that which is hidden [even] from all the hidden [worlds]),”

which is called *Keter Elyon* (lit., “the Supernal Crown”), i.e., the utterly transcendent level of Divinity known as *Keter*.

וזהו שכתוב: תסתירם בסתר פניך וגו', תצפנם בסוכה וגו'

This, then, is the meaning of the verse which follows our opening quotation, and which continues to speak of “those who fear You” and “those who trust in You”: “Hide them in the concealment of Your innermost dimension...” (for, as explained above, פנים denotes both “countenance” and “inwardness”); “conceal them in a *sukkah*...” (i.e., in the sublime level of *Chesed* which, deriving from the above-mentioned level of *Keter*, transcends the *Seder Hishtalshelut*, and will encompass them like a *sukkah*).

Supplement by the Rebbe

The thrust of the above letter, which was delivered by an emissary who was to collect contributions for charity, is that even those who serve G-d by means of their soul-root in the “left”, — even if, like Beit Shammai, they are totally righteous individuals (who need not give *tzedakah* [for the sake of atonement]; cf. “for we are not complete,” as explained above in *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle 10), — nevertheless, they too possess “an abundant and immense” degree of *Chesed*. “At those times which require it,” moreover, “it results in actual deeds.”

This is explicit in the concluding passage of the letter which was *not* printed “by the rabbis, long may they live, sons of the illustrious author of blessed memory, whose soul is in Eden,” and which reads as follows:[24](#)

ואחר הדברים האלה, נפשי בשאלתי

And after the above words, from the depths of my soul I seek

לעורר רב טוב הגנוז והצפון בלב כל אנשי שלומנו

to arouse the [infinite] abundance of benevolence that is concealed in the heart of every individual in the chassidic brotherhood,[25](#)

מן ההעלם אל הגילוי, לבא לידי מעשה

[so that it be manifested] from concealment to revelation and be translated into action,

למלאות ידם לה', ביד מלאה ורחבה

and so that you will all “fill your hands unto G-d” by giving charity with a full and open hand

על ידי ציר נאמן, מוסר כתב זה כו', ודי למבין כמו שכתוב באגרת

through the trusted bearer of this message — and what is written [above] in the letter should suffice for the discerning.

ואין אני כותבו מחמת שלא נצרך, ודי למבין

I am not spelling it out, for this is not necessary; the above will suffice.

הכל דברי אוהב נפשם, דורש שלומם מלב ונפש חפצה

These are the words of one who loves you with all his soul, and who seeks your welfare with heartfelt and soulful longing.

At this point the Alter Rebbe signs:

שניאור זלמן בן לאדוני אבי מורנו ורבנו הרב ר' ברוך

Shneur Zalman, the son of my master, my father, our mentor and Rebbe, Rabbi Baruch

The Rebbe adds: “The above passage [which makes it clear that the foregoing teachings were intended to find practical expression in the giving of *tzedakah*] enables us to understand the relevance here of the first part of this letter, which otherwise should seemingly have begun with והנה איש כל והנה — ‘Now every Jew needs to comprise....’”

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Tehillim* 31:20. [2.](#) *Michah* 6:8. [3.](#) *Yirmeyahu* 13:17. [4.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “See *Moed Katan* 16b מבפנים כו' בסתר כו'.” [5.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “*Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch*, beginning of *Hilchot Tzedakah*.” [6.](#) *Ketubbot* 50a. [7.](#) *Ibid.* 103b. [8.](#) In the standard Hebrew text, this last sentence appears *after* the following one (i.e., after כו' ברחבה — “expansively”). A parenthetical comment there notes the consequent anomaly, and suggests that the sentence might in fact belong here, as in the present edition. [9.](#) *Tehillim* 119:45. [10.](#) *Malachi* 3:10. [11.](#) *Avot* 4:3. [12.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “*Eduyot*, chs. 4-5.” [13.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “See *Zohar* III, 245a.” [14.](#) Note of the Rebbe in *He'arot VeTikkunim*: “This expression requires some explanation.” [15.](#) *Zohar* III, 70a. [16.](#) *Bereishit* 22:12. [17.](#) *Ibid.*, verses 9, 10. [18.](#) *Yeshayahu* 41:8. [19.](#) *Bereishit* 31:42. [20.](#) *Zohar* III, 204a. [21.](#) This term denotes the Divine attribute of *Chesed*; see *Shaar HaYichud VahaEmunah*, ch. 4. [22.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [23.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “*Zohar* III, 133b.” [24.](#) See *Igrot Kodesh* (Letters) of the Alter Rebbe (Kehot, N.Y., 5740), p. 47ff. [25.](#) In the Hebrew original, this phrase is abbreviated as אנ"ש.

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Epistle 14

Many of the letters that together constitute *Iggeret HaKodesh* were written in order to rouse Jewry to contribute generously to *tzedakah* in general and in particular for the Holy Land. More specifically, the Alter Rebbe strongly encouraged the support of Rabbi Mendelev Horodoker and Rabbi Avraham Kalisker and their followers, who had settled there, through the Kollel Chabad Fund that he had founded.

In the present letter the Alter Rebbe places singular emphasis on the merit of *tzedakah* for the Holy Land. Every year, he declares, it should be given with more vitality and in greater volume, thus echoing the rhythm of the annually-renewed life-force that emanates from On High to the Holy Land, as he explains in this letter.

The Alter Rebbe begins here by stating that his purpose is “to arouse the old love and fondness for our Holy Land....” It would seem that “the old love” refers to the ardent enthusiasm which his chassidim had originally felt for the fund when it was freshly founded, and which had faded somewhat with the passage of years. It was this “old love” that the Alter Rebbe sought here to reawaken.

לעורר את האהבה הישנה וחבת ארץ הקודש

[This letter is written] to arouse the old love and fondness for the Holy Land,

להיות בוערת כרשפי אש מקרב איש ולב עמוק

so that it burn like fiery flames from the inwardness of man and from the depths of his heart,

כאלו היום ממש נתן ה' רוחו עלינו, רוח נדיבה

as if this very day G-d had set His spirit upon us, a spirit of generosity,

בהתנדב עם למלאות ידם לה', ביד מלאה ורחבה

so that people volunteer to consecrate themselves to G-d with a full and generous hand,

בריבוי אחר ריבוי, מדי שנה בשנה

with one increase after another, from year to year,

הולך ועולה למעלה ראש

continually rising and excelling themselves,

כמדת קדש העליון

in keeping with the measure of [the level of Divinity called] *Kodesh HaElyon* (“Supreme Holiness”), another name for the attribute of *Chochmah*,

המאיר לארץ הקודש, המתחדש ומתרבה תמיד

which radiates to the Holy Land and is constantly renewed (qualitatively) and increased (quantitatively),

כדכתיב: תמיד עיני ה' אלקיך בה, מרשית השנה ועד אחרית שנה

as it is written,¹ “Forever are the eyes of the L-rd your G-d upon it (i.e., upon the Land of Israel), from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.”

As the Alter Rebbe will soon say, the term “eyes” alludes to the Divine attribute of *Chochmah*, or *Kodesh HaElyon*, which irradiates the Land of Israel constantly, from the beginning of the year to its end.

In order to explain how we derive from this verse that the level of *Chochmah* that radiates to the Holy Land is constantly renewed and increased, the Alter Rebbe first raises the following query:

דהאי ועד אחרית גו' אינו מובן לכאורה

Now, this phrase “to the end...” appears to be problematic,

שהרי באחרית שנה זו, מתחלת שנה שניה

for at the end of one year begins another year.

ואם כן, הוה ליה למימר: לעולם ועד

Thus it should surely have said [that the eyes of G-d are upon the Land of Israel] “everlastingly”.

אך הענין יובן על פי מה שכתוב: ה' בחכמה יסד ארץ

However, this matter will be understood by considering the verse,² “G-d by *Chochmah* established the earth.”

שיסוד הארץ העליונה, היא בחינת ממלא כל עלמין

That is, the foundation of *Eretz HaElyonah* (lit., “the Higher Earth” or “the Higher Land”; i.e., the heavenly model of the terrestrial Holy Land), which is the mode of [creative Divine influence which is immanent and therefore called] *memaleh kol almin* (lit., “filling all worlds”),

This refers to the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* of the World of *Atzilut*, called “land” for it is the last and (so to speak) lowest of the Supernal *Sefirot*, and it vests itself in created worlds and beings so as to vitalize them.

והתחתונה, היא ארץ חפץ, המכוונת כנגדה ממש

and [likewise the foundation] of the nether [land], which is [the Land of Israel which is known as] *Eretz Chefetz* (“the land of [G-d’s] desire”), which truly corresponds to it[s heavenly counterpart], viz., *Eretz HaElyonah*,

ונקראת על שמה: ארץ החיים

and is called by its name, *Eretz HaChayim* (“the land of life”), —

הנה הוא נמשך מהמשכת והארת חכמה עילאה, מקור החיים העליונים

[the foundation, then, of the higher and the lower lands] issues from the downward flow and radiation from the Supreme *Chochmah* which is the source of Supernal life;

כדכתיב: החכמה תחיה בעליה וגו'

as it is written,³ “*Chochmah* animates those who possess it....”

“G-d by *Chochmah* established the earth” thus means, that the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah* diffuses its creative light upon *Eretz HaElyonah* (“the Higher Land,” i.e., *Malchut* of *Atzilut*), as well as upon its terrestrial counterpart, the Land of Israel.

והארה והמשכה זו, היא מתחדשת באור חדש ממש בכל שנה ושנה

This radiation and efflux from Supreme *Chochmah*, that irradiates the “land” at both these levels, is renewed annually by a truly new light.

כי הוא יתברך וחכמתו אחד בתכלית היחוד

For G-d (blessed be He) and His *Chochmah* are one, in an absolute unity

ונקרא בשם אור אין סוף ברוך הוא

which is called “the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light,”

שאין סוף ואין קץ למעלת וגדולת האור והחיות הנמשך ממנו יתברך ומחכמתו

because there is no limit nor end to the quality and greatness of the light and vitality that issues forth from Him and from His *Chochmah*,

בעילוי אחר עילוי, עד אין קץ ותכלית, לרום המעלות למעלה מעלה

in elevation upon elevation, to no end or limit, to the peak of the loftiest levels.

Since the life-giving light that issues from Supreme *Chochmah* is infinite, it follows that whatever the intensity of the light drawn down in the previous year, it is still possible that a greater degree of light be drawn down in the new year.

ובכל שנה ושנה יורד ומאיר מחכמה עילאה אור חדש ומחודש שלא היה מאיר עדיין מעולם, לארץ העליונה

And every year there descends and radiates a new and renewed light which has never yet shone, from the Supreme *Chochmah*⁴ to the *Eretz HaElyonah*.

The light that reaches down to this level is here described as “new and renewed,” for in the first instance a new light radiates into *Chochmah* from the *Ein Sof* that transcends it, and then a new light issues from *Chochmah* and irradiates the *Eretz HaElyonah*.

כי אור כל שנה ושנה מסתלק לשרשו בכל ערב ראש השנה

For the light of every year withdraws to its source in the Essence of the *Ein Sof* on the eve of every Rosh HaShanah,

כשהחדש מתכסה בו

“when the moon is covered.”

Rosh HaShanah is known as⁵ “the holiday when the new moon is covered,” and is not seen. In a spiritual context this means that the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* (represented in the Kabbalah by the moon), the light that animates the worlds and created beings, is concealed and withdraws to its source.

ואחר כך, על ידי תקיעת שופר והתפללות, נמשך אור חדש עליון

Afterwards, by means of the sounding of the *Shofar* and by means of the prayers, a new and superior light is elicited,

מבחינה עליונה יותר שבמדריגת חכמה עילאה

[a light] of a yet higher rank in the sphere of the Supreme *Chochmah*,

להאיר לארץ עליונה ולדרים עליה

to radiate to the *Eretz Elyonah* and those who dwell upon it,

הם כל העולמות, העליונים והתחתונים, המקבלים חיותם ממנה

i.e., to all the higher and lower worlds that receive their vitality from it

דהיינו, מן האור אין סוף ברוך הוא וחכמתו המלוכש בה

i.e., from the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light, and from [G-d's] *Chochmah* which is vested in it, i.e., in “the Higher Land”;

כדכתיב: כי עמך מקור חיים, באורך נראה אור

as it is written,⁶ “For with You is the source of life; in Your light shall we see light.”

Supreme *Chochmah*, which is the source of life, is “with You,” i.e., nullified and unified with the *Ein Sof*; “in Your light” (i.e., in the light that radiates from *Chochmah* to “the Higher Land”) “we shall see light” (i.e., the light that descends from “the Higher Land” and illumines all the created beings which receive their vitality from it).

דהיינו אור המאיר מחכמה עילאה, מקור החיים

This refers to the light that radiates from Supreme *Chochmah*, the source of life.

וכנודע ליודעי חן, שבכל ראש השנה היא הנסירה, ומקבלת מוחין חדשים, עליונים יותר כו'

(⁷And, as is known to the scholars of the Hidden Wisdom, i.e., the Kabbalists, every Rosh HaShanah the *nesirah* takes place, and [the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*] receives new, more sublime *Mochin*, and so on.)

This is a Kabbalistic theme regarding the “rebuilding” of the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* that takes place every Rosh HaShanah. The paradigm of this sequence is the slumber that G-d brought upon Adam⁸ on the day of his creation, which took place on the day of Rosh HaShanah, and the subsequent excision (*nesirah*) of the rib from which Eve was then formed.

The Kabbalah explains that Adam is a terrestrial echo of Supernal Man, i.e., the bracket of *Sefirot* known collectively as *Za* (ז"א, acronym for אנפין זעיר of the World of *Atzilut*. “Slumber” alludes to the withdrawal of the Supernal intellectual attributes, or *Mochin*, from *Za* (just as man’s intellect withdraws during sleep). The new and more sublime *Mochin* which are then drawn down into *Malchut* are far superior to the *Mochin* that *Malchut* had previously received from *Za*.

ובפרטי פרטיות, כן הוא בכל יום ויום

In a very specific way, this takes place every day.

נמשכים מוחין עליונים יותר בכל תפלת השחר

More sublime *Mochin* are elicited by every morning-prayer,

ואינן מוחין הראשונים שנסתלקו אחר התפלה, רק גבוהין יותר

which are not the original *Mochin* that withdrew after the prayer [of the previous day], but more sublime ones.

ודרך כלל, בכללות העולם בשית אלפי שנים, כן הוא בכל ראש השנה וראש השנה

In general terms, with respect to the world as a whole — and not only with regard to the daily elicitation of new *Mochin* during prayer as experienced by an individual man — during the six thousand years [of the world's existence],⁹ this occurs every Rosh HaShanah.

וזהו שכתוב: תמיד עיני ה' אלקיך בה

And this is the meaning of the above-quoted verse, “Forever are the eyes of the L-rd your G-d upon it,”

שהעינים הם כינויים להמשכת והארת אור החכמה

for “eyes” is an epithet for the efflux and radiation of the light of *Chochmah*,

שלכן נקראו חכמים: עיני העדה

for which reason sages are referred to as¹⁰ “the eyes of the congregation,” for they are illumined by the light of *Chochmah* which is known by the epithet “eyes”.

ואורא דארץ ישראל מחכים

And [this, too, is the meaning of the teaching],¹¹ “The atmosphere of the Land of Israel makes one wise” — for the Land of Israel, too, is illumined by *Chochmah*.

As was stated above, “Forever are the eyes of the L-rd your G-d upon it” refers to a constant illumination by *Chochmah*.

והארה והמשכה זו, אף שהיא תמידית

Now, this radiation and efflux, though it is continuous,

אף על פי כן אינה בבחינה ומדריגה אחת לבדה מימי עולם

nevertheless, it is not only on one and the same plane and level since the beginning of the world.

אלא שבכל שנה ושנה הוא אור חדש עליון

Rather, every year there is a new and superior light,

כי האור שנתחדש והאיר בראש השנה זה, מסתלק בערב ראש השנה הבאה, לשרשו

because the light which was generated and which shone on this Rosh HaShanah withdraws to its source on the eve of the next Rosh HaShanah.

וזהו שכתוב: מרשית השנה ועד אחרית שנה לבדה

This enables us to understand the verse that says that “the eyes of G-d” are upon the Land “from the beginning of the year to the end of the year” only.

The verse does not state that they are there “everlastingly”, for the efflux that descends on Rosh HaShanah lasts only to the end of the year, at which time it withdraws and makes way for the descent of a new and more sublime light.

ולכן כתיב: מרשית, חסר א'

And that is why *meireishit* (“from the beginning”) is written without an *alef*:

רומז על הסתלקות האור

it alludes to the withdrawal of the light, signified by the *alef*,^{[12](#)}

שמסתלק בליל ראש השנה

which withdraws on the night of Rosh HaShanah

At that time the innermost element of the world’s vitality is in a state of withdrawal due to the “ascent of *Malchut*”; i.e., the innermost core of *Malchut* is then in a state of elevation and withdrawal,

עד אחר התקיעות

until after the sounding of the *Shofar*,

שיורד אור חדש, עליון יותר, שלא היה מאיר עדיין מימי עולם

when there descends a new and more sublime light that has never yet shone since the beginning of the world.

והוא מתלבש ומסתתר בארץ החיים שלמעלה ושלמטה

It vests itself and conceals itself in the *Eretz HaChayim* which is above — i.e., in *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, the source of all worlds and created beings — and in the *Eretz HaChayim* which is below, in the Land of Israel,

For the light that animates this world first passes through the Holy Land, and from there it is diffused throughout the world at large.

להחיות את כל העולמות כל משך שנה זו

in order to animate all the worlds for the duration of that year.

אך גילויו מההסתר הזה

Its manifestation, however,

For the light became concealed in the *Eretz HaChayim* above and below, so that its further descent and the revelation of its creative life-force to the world and to all its created beings:

תלוי במעשה התחתונים, וזכותם ותשובתם בעשרת ימי תשובה

depends on the actions of those below, and on their merits and penitence during the Ten Days of Penitence.

ודי למבין

This will suffice for the initiated.

In summary: The Divine light issuing from the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah* in the World of *Atzilut* that radiates within the Land of Israel throughout the year, increases yearly both in quantity and in quality. Similarly, the *tzedakah* given for the Holy Land should be increased every year both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The conclusion of the above letter makes it clear that this mortal initiative makes an impact on the revelation of this light: the ever-increasing revelation of the light that descends in a concealed form is dependent on the ever-increasing contributions of *tzedakah* given for the Land of Israel.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Devarim* 11:12. [2.](#) *Mishlei* 3:19. [3.](#) *Kohelet* 7:12. [4.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Cf. *Likkutei Torah* (*Shir HaShirim* 50b): ‘Surely in Supreme *Chochmah* too this new light is drawn down from Above....’” [5.](#) *Rosh HaShanah* 8a. [6.](#) *Tehillim* 36:10. [7.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [8.](#) *Bereishit* 2:21. [9.](#) *Rosh HaShanah* 31a. [10.](#) See *Bamidbar* 15:24; *Taanit* 24a. [11.](#) *Bava Batra* 158b. [12.](#) Cf. *Zohar* II, 34a; *ibid.*, 123a.



Epistle 15

The subject of this letter, the Ten *Sefirot* of the World of *Atzilut* and of the other worlds, is a fundament of both *Kabbalah* and *Chassidut*.

All the worlds are both created and conducted by means of the *Sefirot*, the emanations by which the various attributes of Divinity become manifest. Thus we find in the discourse beginning *Patach Eliyahu*,¹ “You are He Who has brought forth ten ‘garments’, and we call them ten *Sefirot*, through which to direct hidden worlds which are not revealed, and revealed worlds.”

The Ten *Sefirot* demonstrate both G-d’s infinite power (*Ko’ach HaBli-Gvul*) and His finite power (*Ko’ach HaGvul*). For, as is pointed out by the author of *Avodat HaKodesh*,² “The *Or Ein Sof* (‘the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light’) is דכולא שלימותא (‘the completeness of everything,’ or: ‘the most complete entity of all’): hence, just as He has infinite power, so too does He have finite power. For if you were to say that He possesses infinite power but lacks finite power then you minimize His completeness — and He is the most complete entity of all.”

It is within the *Sefirot* that infinity and the finite first coalesce, as it were, in order for worlds to be created and directed. For the *Sefirot* are composed of both *orot* (“lights”) and *kelim* (“vessels”). The *orot* of the *Sefirot* are simple and formless. Since they are not limited by specific characteristics (such as *Chochmah* or *Chesed*), they reflect G-d’s infinite power as revealed within the *Sefirot*. The *kelim*, by contrast, do have specific characteristics, and thereby reveal G-d’s power of limitation and finitude. It is thus through the *Sefirot* that the *Ein Sof*-light, which is by definition infinite, creates and conducts the finite worlds.

Since both the *orot* and the *kelim* which together comprise the *Sefirot* are utterly united with the *Ein Sof*-light, for³ “He and His *orot* are One; He and His *kelim* are One,” it is possible for the worlds to be created and animated by the *Ein Sof* and still be finite — for, as explained above, the *Sefirot* are infused with a capability for finitude.

The garbing of the *Ein Sof*-light within the *Sefirot* is known as “man”, as in the verse,⁴ “And upon the likeness of the throne there was a likeness of man,” for “man” denotes a visage comprising ten *Sefirot*.

The Kabbalah deals mainly with the *Sefirot* as they exist in the Supernal worlds, as in the World of *Atzilut*. In addition to the above, *Chassidut* gives closer attention to the *Sefirot* insofar as they appear as the ten corresponding faculties of a Jew’s soul, which derive and evolve from them.⁵ Thus, on the one hand, the *middah* (the mortal attribute or spiritual emotion) of *Chesed*, for example, derives from the Supernal *Sefirah* of *Chesed*, and so on. But conversely, too, when a Jew utilizes the ten soul-powers within him in his divine service here below, he is able to affect their source, the *Sefirot* of the higher worlds.

The knowledge and understanding of the Ten *Sefirot* Above as well as the knowledge of the evolvment of the worlds, is in itself “a great and lofty *mitzvah*,” as the Alter Rebbe writes below in *Kuntres Acharon*.⁶ This understanding leads to a love and fear of G-d, which are the source and root that motivate the performance of all *mitzvot*, as explained in *Likkutei Torah*.⁷ Moreover, a comprehension of the *Sefirot* and their corresponding soul-powers inspires a Jew’s spiritual service with vitality, and elevates it.

להבין משל ומליצה, דברי חכמים וחידותם, בענין הספירות

“To understand the allegory and metaphor, the words of the wise and their riddles,”⁸ with respect to the *Sefirot*:

The commentaries note that “allegory and metaphor” refers to the Written Torah, which includes allegorical passages which are true at both the allusive and the literal levels. An example would be,⁹ “Seek life with the woman whom you love.” Although in this context “woman” is a metaphor for the wisdom of the Torah, the verse retains its simple meaning as well.

The commentaries note further that “the words of the wise and their riddles” refers to the Oral Torah: “the words of the wise” refers to those things that are revealed to all, while “their riddles” refers to those things which need to be revealed and solved.

By applying this phrase to the *Sefirot*, the Alter Rebbe is indicating that the *Sefirot* contain all four levels — allegory, metaphor, words of the wise, and riddles, for the *Sefirot* are found both Above in the spiritual worlds, as well as within a Jew’s soul.

מודעת זאת בארץ, מפי קדושי עליון, נשמותיהם עדן

It is known¹⁰ “throughout the land” from the mouth of heavenly saints, may their souls rest in Eden,

לקרב קצת אל השכל מאי דכתיב: ומבשרי אחזה אלוה

enabling us to somewhat comprehend the verse,¹¹ “And from my flesh shall I behold G-d,”

שהכוונה היא להבין קצת אלקותו יתברך, מנפש המלובשת בבשר האדם

that [this verse] speaks of a partial understanding of G-d’s blessed Divinity from [a consideration of] the soul which is vested in the flesh of man.

This refers only to the dimension of the soul that animates the body, for, as the Rebbe notes, the essence of the soul, like the spirituality that transcends this world at large, remains incomprehensible to man.

ועל פי מאמר רז”ל על פסוק: ברכי נפשי וגו’

This [correspondence between the soul and its Creator] accords with the teaching of our Sages,¹² of blessed memory, on the verse,¹³ “Give praise, my soul, [to G-d]”:

מה הקב”ה כו’, אף הנשמה כו’

“Just as the Holy One, blessed be He, [permeates the world,] so does the soul [permeate the body].”

Since the Sages go on to enumerate other similarities between the soul and G-d, it is clear that from the soul we are able to catch a glimpse of things as they exist Above.

But how, indeed, can we possibly compare the soul to G-d?

The Alter Rebbe therefore goes on to quote the *Zohar*: The soul derives from the innermost aspect of G-dliness, thus sharing characteristics with the Supernal *Sefirot* and with Divinity itself. We are therefore able to understand G-dliness through the analogy of the soul.

ועל פי מאמר הזהר על פסוק: ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים

[This correspondence likewise] accords with the teaching of the *Zohar* [14](#) on the verse, [15](#) “And He blew into his nostrils a soul of life”:

מאן דנפח, מתוכיה נפח

“He who blows, blows from within him,” i.e., from his inwardness and his innermost being.

Unlike speech, which utilizes only the external aspect of the speaker’s breath, blowing emits the innermost breath. Thus, when Scripture states that “He blew into his nostrils a soul of life,” it means to indicate that the soul derives from the innermost aspects of G-dliness, as explained in *Iggeret HaTeshuvah*, ch. 4.

ואפילו נפש דעשיה, היא באה מזיווג ז"א ונוקבא דעשיה

For even a *Nefesh* (i.e., a soul of the lowest grade) of *Asiyah* (i.e., the lowest world) derives from the union of *Za* (ז"א: the initials of אפיק זעיר, i.e., the bracket of six masculine *middot*, or emotive attributes) with *nukva* (i.e., the feminine attribute called *Malchut*) of *Asiyah*,

I.e., a *Nefesh* in the World of *Asiyah* is born of the union of the above masculine and feminine *middot* (this union being called the *yichud* (or *zivug*) of זו"נ, which is an acronym for ז"א ונוקבא),

והמוחין שלהם, שהם בחינת חיה ונשמה דזו"נ

and of [the union of] their *Mochin* (i.e., *ChaBaD*, an acronym for the intellectual soul-faculties of *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat*, together constituting the *Mochin* of *Za*-and-*nukva* in the World of *Asiyah*), which are the *Chayah* and *Neshamah* of *Za*-and-*nukva*.

Foreshadowing the above-mentioned union at the level of the lower (emotive) *Sefirot*, the union which first brings a *Nefesh* to the stage of potential creation is that which takes place at the level of the higher (intellective) *Sefirot*. The two partners to this union are the soul-level called *Chayah*, representing the level of *Chochmah*¹⁶ (the masculine element), and the soul-level called *Neshamah*, representing the level of *Binah*¹⁷ (the feminine element).

Thus, even a soul that is merely of the level called *Nefesh* comprises all the *Sefirot* of the World of *Asiyah* — *Chochmah*, *Binah*, *Za* (the six emotive attributes), and *nukva* (*Malchut*).

שהן הן אחוריים דכלים דזו"נ דאצילות

These, in turn, are the external aspect of the *kelim* of *Za-and-nukva* of *Atzilut*.

For the *kelim* of *Za-and-nukva* of *Atzilut* illuminate and are infused within the *Sefirot* of the World of *Asiyah*.¹⁸ The *Sefirot* of *Asiyah* are thus the external aspect of the *kelim* of *Za-and-nukva* of *Atzilut*.

שהם אלקות ממש

And they (the *kelim* of *Atzilut*) are truly Divine,

שבתוכם מאיר אור אין סוף ברוך הוא, המלוּבש וגנוז בחכמה דאצילות

for in them radiates the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light, which is vested and concealed in the *Chochmah* of *Atzilut*, for reasons explained in the Alter Rebbe's Note to ch. 35; indeed, the infinite light vested in *Chochmah* illuminates all the *kelim* of the *Sefirot* of *Atzilut*:¹⁹ "The Supernal Father 'nests' in *Atzilut*,"

דאיהו וגרמוהי חד באצילות

and "He (the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light) and His *kelim* are one in *Atzilut*."

Since the *Sefirot* of *Atzilut* are the internal aspect of the *Sefirot* of *Asiyah*, the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light is thus vested within the *Sefirot* of *Asiyah*.

ועל כן גם בנשמת האדם מאיר אור אין סוף ברוך הוא, מלוּבש וגנוז באור החכמה שבה, להחיות את האדם

Hence, since the soul derives from these *Sefirot*, it follows that the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light radiates in the soul of man as well, vested and concealed in the light of its *Chochmah*, in order to animate man.

וממנה יוכל האדם להבין קצת בספירות העליונות

And from it (the soul), man is enabled to understand something of the Supernal *Sefirot*,

שכולן מאירות בנשמתו, הכלולה מהן

for they all radiate in his soul, which comprises them.

Since the soul derives from the Ten *Sefirot* and hence comprises ten corresponding faculties, man can arrive at an understanding of the Supernal *Sefirot* through contemplating the dynamics within his own soul.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to make it perfectly clear that the *Sefirot* are, however, infinitely higher than the corresponding faculties within the soul. Indeed, even Abraham's attribute of *Chesed* could in no way compare to the *Chesed* of the *Sefirot*, notwithstanding the fact that Abraham was considered a "chariot" to G-d,²⁰ i.e., a self-effacing vehicle with no direction or desire other than that of his Rider.

אך צריך להקדים מה ששמעתי ממורי, עליו השלום, על פסוק: ואנכי עפר ואפר

But it is necessary to state first what I heard from my master, R. Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritch, peace be to him, on the verse,²¹ "And I am dust and ashes."

שאמר אברהם אבינו, עליו השלום, על הארת נשמתו המאירה בגופו מאור חסד עליון

Our father Abraham, peace be to him, said this of the illumination from his soul which radiated in his body from the light of the Supreme *Chesed*.

והיא מדתו, מדת אהבה רבה

And that is his attribute: the attribute of *ahavah rabbah* ("magnanimous love"), that derived from the parent *Sefirah* called *Chesed* of *Atzilut*,

נוסח אחר: שבה היה שהיה אוהב את הקב"ה אהבה גדולה ועליונה כל כך, עד שנעשה מרכבה להקב"ה

for he loved (an alternative reading: "with which he loved") the Holy One, blessed be He, with a love so great and sublime, that he became a chariot unto the Holy One, blessed be He.

Abraham's degree of nullification to G-d was that of a vehicle to its driver, having no independent will whatever. This is even greater than the subservience of a slave to his master, for the slave retains a will of his own.

וסלקא דעתך אמינא שבחינת חסד ואהבה שלמעלה בספירות העליונות, היא מעין וסוג מהות מדת אהבה רבה של אברהם אבינו, עליו השלום

Now one might possibly assume that the type of *Chesed* and love as it exists above in the Supernal *Sefirot* is of a similar nature to the attribute of abundant love [exemplified by] our father Abraham, peace be to him,

רק שהיא גדולה ונפלאה למעלה מעלה עד אין קץ ותכלית

though surpassing it infinitely.

כנודע ממדות העליונות, שאין להם קץ סוף ותכלית מצד עצמן

For it is known of the Supernal *middot* (“attributes”), that though their mode of emanation is finite, they themselves are essentially without end or limit,

כי אור אין סוף ברוך הוא מאיר ומלובש בתוכם ממש

because the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light actually radiates and is vested within them,

ואיהו וגרמוהי חד

and “He and his *middot* (i.e., the *kelim* of the *Sefirot*) are One”; i.e., just as He is infinite, so too are they.

מה שאין כן בנשמת האדם, המלובשת בחומר

As regards the soul of man, however, which is vested in corporeality, in man’s body,

שיש למדותיה קץ וגבול

its attributes are finite and limited.

Thus, to revert to the above example, it is abundantly clear that the Supernal *Sefirah* of *Chesed* is infinitely loftier and more wondrous than its worldly counterpart — the attribute of *Chesed* and love in Abraham’s soul, which was vested within his body.

אבל מכל מקום, סלקא דעתך אמינא שמדותיה הן מעין וסוג מדות העליונות

Nevertheless, one might possibly assume that its attributes are of the same type as the Supernal attributes.

Until now the Alter Rebbe has explained that the Supernal *Sefirah* of *Chesed* is infinitely *higher* than Abraham’s attribute of love in this world. Now, in order to negate a comparison from any perspective whatever, he goes on to state that Abraham’s attribute of love is infinitely *lower* than the Supernal *Sefirah* of *Chesed*.

ולזה אמר: ואנכי עפר ואפר

This is why he said, “I am dust and ashes,”

דכמו שהאפר הוא מהותו ועצמותו של העץ הנשרף

that is, like ashes, which are the essence and substance of the burned wood;

שהיה מורכב מד' יסודות: אש, רוח, מים, עפר

for [the wood] was previously composed of the four basic elements — Fire, Air, Water and Earth, of which all matter is compounded,²²

וג' יסודות: אש, מים, רוח, חלפו והלכו להם

and the three elements of Fire, Water and Air passed away

וכלו בעשן המתהווה מהרכבתן, כנודע

and were consumed in the smoke that came into being through their combination, as is known.

ויסוד הד' שהיה בעץ, שהוא העפר שבו, היורד למטה

As to the fourth element of the wood, namely its component of Earth, which goes downward, and does not ascend with the smoke,

ואין האש שולטת בו

and over which the fire has no dominion,

הוא הנשאר קיים, והוא האפר

it is this that remains in existence, and constitutes the ashes.

והנה כל מהות העץ, וממשו וחומר וצורתו באורך ורוחב ועובי, שהיה נראה לעין קודם שנשרף

Now the whole of the essence of the wood, with its tangible substantiality, which does not result from the Fire, Water and Air within it, its matter, and its form in terms of length, width and density, which were visible to the eye before it was burned,

עיקרו היה מיסוד העפר שבו

derived basically from the element of Earth within it,

רק שאש, מים, רוח, כלולים בו

except that the Fire, Water and Air were also compounded in it.

כי העפר הוא חומרי יותר מכולן, ויש לו אורך ורוחב ועובי

For Earth is the most material of them all, of all the elements, having [dimensions of] length, width and density,

מה שאין כן באש ורוח

which is not the case with Fire and Air.

וגם המים, הם מעט מזעיר בעץ

And even Water, that does contain these dimensions, appears only sparingly in wood.

וכל ארכו ורחבו ועוביו, הכל היה מן העפר, והכל שב אל העפר

Thus, as to all the dimensions [in wood] of length, width and density,²³ “All is of the earth, and all returns to earth,”

שהוא האפר הנשאר אחרי שנפרדו ממנו אש, מים, רוח

i.e., to the ashes that remain after the Fire, Water and Air have been separated from it.

Thus, the ash that remains is what was formerly the essence of the wood.

והנה, כמו שהאפר אין לו דמיון וערך אל מהות העץ הגדול באורך ורוחב ועובי קודם שנשרף, לא בכמותו ולא באיכותו

Now, just as there is neither a quantitative nor a qualitative resemblance or proportion between (on the one hand) the ashes and (on the other hand) the essence of the tree which, before being burned, had sizeable dimensions of length, width and density,

אף שהוא הוא מהותו ועצמותו, וממנו נתהוה

even though it (the wood) is its very essence and substance, and from it (the wood) did it (the ash) come into being,

כך, על דרך משל, אמר אברהם אבינו עליו השלום על מדתו, מדת החסד והאהבה, המאירה בו ומלובשת בגופו

precisely so, metaphorically speaking, did our father Abraham, peace be to him, speak of his distinctive attribute, the attribute of kindness and love, which radiated within him and was vested in his body.

דאף שהיא היא מדת האהבה וחסד העליון שבאצילות, המאיר בנשמתו שהיתה מרכבה עליונה

For though it was this very attribute of the love and Supreme *Chesed* of *Atzilut* that radiated in his soul, which was a chariot to [the will of] heaven,

אף על פי כן, ברדתה למטה להתלבש בגוף

nevertheless, as it descended downwards to vest itself in the body,

על ידי השתלשלות העולמות ממדרגה למדרגה, על ידי צמצומים רבים

by means of the evolution of the worlds from one level to another, by means of many contractions,

אין דמיון וערך מהות אור האהבה המאיר בו, אל מהות אור אהבה וחסד עליון שבאצילות

there was no semblance or proportion between the essence of the light of the love that radiated within him, and the essence of the light of the love and Supreme *Chesed* of *Atzilut*,

אלא כערך ודמיון מהות העפר שנעשה אפר, אל מהותו ואיכותו כשהיה עץ נחמד למראה וטוב למאכל, על דרך משל

except of the sort of proportion and semblance that exists (metaphorically speaking) between the essence of the element of Earth which became ashes, and its essence and quality in its original state as a tree,²⁴ “pleasant to the sight and good for food.”

ויותר מזה, להבדיל באלפים הבדלות

Indeed, [the incomparability of Abraham’s *Chesed* and the *Chesed* of *Atzilut*] exceeds [the incomparability of the ash and the tree] by thousands of degrees of separation.

רק שדברה תורה כלשון בני אדם, במשל ומליצה

Nevertheless, the Torah speaks in human phraseology, by way of allegory and metaphor; hence its use of the analogy of the tree, despite its inherent disproportion.

Surely, then, the attributes and soul-powers of an ordinary Jew in this world bear absolutely no comparable relation to the *Sefirot* from which they derive. Nonetheless, since his soul-powers do after all derive from the *Sefirot* and are illuminated by them, he can attain some degree of understanding of G-dliness from that dimension of the soul that animates his body. And this is the meaning of the verse, “From my flesh shall I behold G-d.”

* * *

והנה כללות היו"ד ספירות שבנשמת האדם

Now, as regards the totality of the Ten *Sefirot* [as they appear] in the soul of man,

נודע לכל שהמדות נחלקות בדרך כלל לז' מדות

It is known to all²⁵ that the emotive attributes divide into seven general categories,²⁶

וכל פרטי המדות שבאדם באות מאחת מז' מדות אלו

and each of the particular attributes in man derives from one of these seven attributes.

שהן שורש כל המדות וכללותן

For they are the root of all the attributes and their generality,

שהן: מדת החסד, להשפיע בלי גבול

namely: the attribute of *Chesed* (“lovingkindness”), [which is a thrust] to diffuse benevolence [to all] without limit;

ומדת הגבורה, לצמצם מלהשפיע כל כך, או שלא להשפיע כלל

the attribute of *Gevurah* (“stern limitation and contraction”), [which seeks] to restrain such a degree of diffusion, or to withhold diffusion altogether²⁷ [from certain individuals];

ומדת הרחמים, לרחם על מי ששייך לשון רחמנות עליו

and the attribute of *Rachamim* (“compassion”), [which seeks] to pity a person to whom compassion is appropriate²⁸ and to extend benevolence to him as well, although he may be unworthy of it.

והיא מדה ממוצעת בין גבורה לחסד

[*Rachamim*] is the mediating attribute between *Gevurah* and *Chesed*,

שהיא להשפיע לכל, גם למי שלא שייך לשון רחמנות עליו כלל

the latter of which would diffuse benevolence to all, even to a person to whom compassion is not at all appropriate,²⁹

מפני שאינו חסר כלום, ואינו שרוי בצער כלל

inasmuch as he lacks nothing and is in no state of trouble whatever.³⁰

Because the attribute of *Chesed* is unlimited it desires to benefit even someone who lacks nothing. The attribute of *Rachamim*, by contrast, being also compounded of *Gevurah*, will not seek to diffuse indiscriminately. At the same time, *Rachamim* pleads the cause of any individual who is in a pitiable state, however unworthy he may be.

ולפי שהיא מדה ממוצעת, נקראת תפארת

Because [the attribute of *Rachamim*] is the mediating attribute, it is called *Tiferet* (“beauty”),

כמו בגדי תפארת, על דרך משל

by analogy with beautiful garments

שהוא בגד צבוע בגוונים הרבה, מעורבים בדרך שהיא תפארת ונוי

which are³¹ dyed with many colors blended³² in a way that gives rise to beauty and decoration.

מה שאין כן בגד הצבוע בגוון אחד, לא שייך בו לשון תפארת

To a garment dyed in one color, however, one cannot apply the term *Tiferet*, which implies the beauty of harmony. And since the attribute of *Rachamim* is compounded of *Chesed* and *Gevurah*, the term *Tiferet* is appropriate.

ואחר כך, בבוא ההשפעה לידי מעשה

Afterwards, once the attribute of either *Chesed*, *Gevurah* or *Tiferet* is aroused to dispense benevolence, as the diffusion is realized,

דהיינו, בשעת ההשפעה ממש

that is, at the time of the actual diffusion,

צריך להתיעץ איך להשפיע בדרך שיוכל המקבל לקבל ההשפעה

it is necessary to deliberate how to diffuse in such a way that the recipient will be able to absorb the effusion.³³

כגון שרוצה להשפיע דבר חכמה ללמדה לבנו

For example, when one wishes — and this is a powerful desire — to convey and teach an intellectual subject to his son:

אם יאמרנה לו כולה, כמו שהיא בשכלו, לא יוכל הבן להבין ולקבל

If he will tell it to him in its totality, just as it appears in his own mind, the son will be unable to understand and to absorb it.

This could happen either (a) because the concept as understood by the father is too abstract and subtle for the son, and needs to be lent a more tangible garb, such as a parable; or (b) because the concept is too comprehensive and too diverse, and needs to be broken down into digestible segments, only some of which will be presented to the son.

רק שצריך לסדר לו בסדר וענין אחר

Rather, one needs to arrange [it] for him in a different order and context, such as by providing an example from an alternative context,

דבר דבור על אופניו

“every word fitly spoken,”³⁴ presenting first one side of the issue at hand and then the other,

מעט מעט

little by little, a little of the concept at a time.

The concept thus needs to be contracted with regard to its “length”, by lowering its stature until it is within the grasp of the recipient, and with regard to its “breadth”, by reducing its manifold details to match the capacity of the son or student.

ובחינת עצה זו נקראת נצה והוד

This deliberation, regarding how best to present the concept, is referred to [by the terms] *Netzach* and *Hod*.

שהן כליות יועצות

These [attributes] are³⁵ “the kidneys that advise,” in a manner similar to their physical counterpart,

וגם תרין ביעין המבשלים הזרע

and they are also (in spiritual terms) the two testicles that prepare the spermatozoa,³⁶

Like their physical counterpart, the attributes of *Netzach* and *Hod* adapt the effusion of the concept.

שהיא הטפה הנמשכת מהמוח

i.e., the drop that issues from the brain.³⁷

דהיינו, דבר חכמה ושכל הנמשך משכל האב, שלא יומשך כמו שהוא, שכל דק מאד במוחו ושכלו

That is, [they adapt] an intellectual subject deriving from the father’s mind in such a way that it will not issue unmodified, i.e., as a very subtle concept in his brain and intellect,

רק ישתנה קצת מדקות שכלו, ויתהווה שכל שאינו דק כל כך

but that it change somewhat from the subtlety of his intelligence and become a somewhat less subtle concept,

כדי שיוכל הבן לקבל במוחו והבנתו

so that the son will be able to absorb [it] in his mind and understanding.

והוא ממש על דרך משל כטפה היורדת מהמוח

This is truly analogous to the seminal drop which descends from the brain;

שהיא דקה מאד, ונעשית גסה וחומרית ממש בכליות ותריין ביעין

it is extremely tenuous, and, through the kidneys and the two testicles, it becomes truly concrete and corporeal.

This process parallels the progressive concretization of a concept, as it descends to match the capacity of the recipient.

The Alter Rebbe now speaks of yet another function of the attributes of *Netzach* and *Hod* — separating a concept into its various components.

וגם נצה והוד נקראים שחקים ורחיים, ששוחקים מן לצדיקים

Netzach and *Hod* are also referred to as “grinders” and “millstones”, because they “grind the mannah for the righteous,”³⁸ like the heaven which is named *Shechakim* (שחקים) for it “grinds (שוחקים) the *mannah* for the righteous.”

כמו הטוחן חטים ברחיים, על דרך משל, שמפרר החטים לחלקים דקים מאד

Just as, by way of example, a person who grinds [wheat]³⁹ with millstones crumbles it into very fine parts,

כך צריך האב להקטין השכל ודבר חכמה שרוצה להשפיע לבנו

so too does the father need to taper the insight or the intellectual subject he wishes to convey to his son,

ולחלקם לחלקים רבים, ולומר לו מעט מעט במועצות ודעת

and to divide them into many parts, relating [them] to him gradually, with devices and discernment.

Dividing a concept in this way so as to be able to determine what should be presented and what should be withheld is a contraction of the concept's depth. Thus, *Netzach* and *Hod* serve to contract its length, breadth and depth — the concept in all its dimensions.

וגם בכלל בחינת נצח הוא לנצח ולעמוד נגד כל מונע ההשפעה והלימוד מבנו, מבית ומבחוץ

The category of *Netzach* also comprises prevailing⁴⁰ and standing up against anything, from within or from without, that withholds from his son the transmission of beneficial influence or learning.

מבית, היינו: להתחזק נגד מדת הגבורה והצמצום שבאב עצמו

“From within” means firmly resisting the attribute of *Gevurah* and *tzimtzum* within the father himself,

שהיא מעוררת דינים ברצונו על בנו

for it arouses (within his will) contentions against his son,

לומר שאינו ראוי לכך עדיין

arguing that he is not yet fit for this [profound knowledge].

There now follows a parenthetical note in the text which states:

(בכתבי יד נרשם: חסר)

(A note in the manuscripts: Omission.)

I.e., according to some of the manuscripts which were compared to the previous printed editions of *Iggeret HaKodesh* when the current edition was being prepared for publication,⁴¹ there is an omission here in the text.

The Rebbe notes that prevailing over influences “from without” is even more important to explain than prevailing over influences “from within.” The fact that this explanation is lacking points to an omission in the text.

In addition: According to the translation offered above that “The category of *Netzach* also comprises...,” there is nothing amiss in the Alter Rebbe’s failure to explain a corresponding aspect within *Hod*, for *Hod* comprises no such corresponding aspect. However, the translation may also be rendered: “In general, the category of *Netzach* also entails....” If this is indeed the proper rendition, then the question arises, why was there no corresponding statement as to the general function of *Hod*? Its absence likewise demonstrates that there is an omission in the text.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain the attribute of *Yesod*.

ובחינת יסוד היא על דרך משל ההתקשרות, שמקשר האב שכלו בשכל בנו

The category of *Yesod* is, by way of example, the bond by which the father binds his intellect to the intellect of his son

בשעת למודו עמו באהבה ורצון, שרוצה שיבין בנו

while teaching him with love and willingness, for he wishes his son to understand.

ובלעדי זה, גם אם היה הבן שומע דבורים אלו עצמם מפי אביו שמדבר בעדו ולומד לעצמו

Without this [bond], even if the son would hear the very same words from the mouth of his father [42]as he speaks and studies to himself],

לא היה מבין כל כך כמו עכשיו

he would not understand [them] as well as now,

שאביו מקשר שכלו אליו, ומדבר עמו פנים אל פנים באהבה וחשק, שחושק מאד שיבין בנו

when his father binds his intellect to him and speaks with him face to face⁴³ with love and desire, because he desires very much that his son understand.

The father does not merely want to enlighten his son; his desire stemming from *Yesod* is powerful because it is driven by pleasure.

(בכתב יד קודש אדמו"ר בעל הצמח צדק, נשמתו עדן, בדרוש: כי ידעתיו, סעיף י"ג, שהועתק שם לשון זה
ליתא תיבות אלו)

[⁴⁴In the holy handwriting of the *Tzemach Tzedek*, of blessed memory, (in the discourse entitled *Ki Yedaativ*, sec. 13,⁴⁵ where this passage is quoted,) the above words ("as he speaks and studies to himself") are not to be found.]

The reason for this omission: Not only is there a difference between (a) what the son passively absorbs when he hears his father studying independently, and (b) what he absorbs when his father actively teaches him; but even when the father *is* actually teaching, the presence or absence of the quality of *Yesod* will determine whether or not his son's mind will be ignited by the fire of his own desire to communicate.

וכל מה שהחשק והתענוג גדול, כך ההשפעה והלימוד גדול

And the greater the desire and delight of the father, the greater is the influence and the learning,⁴⁶

שהבן יוכל לקבל יותר, והאב משפיע יותר

because then the son is able to absorb more and the father communicates more, proportionally.

כי על ידי החשק והתענוג, מתרבה ומתגדל שכלו בהרחבת הדעת, להשפיע וללמד לבנו

For through the desire and delight, and with a contented disposition, his own insight is heightened and amplified, so that he can bestow enlightenment upon his son and teach him.

וכמו, על דרך משל, בגשמיות ממש, רבוי הזרע הוא מרוב החשק והתענוג

([47](#)) This parallels, to draw a metaphor from [the attribute of *Yesod* in] the sphere of the truly physical, the profusion of spermatozoa that results from heightened desire and delight,

ועל ידי זה ממשיך הרבה מהמוח

through which much is elicited from the brain, which is its source.

ולכן המשילו חכמי האמת לזיווג גשמי, כמו שיתבאר

This is why the Kabbalists, seeking to illustrate the imparting of knowledge out of a sense of pleasure, used the analogy of a physical union, for there are a number of similarities between these two expressions of the attribute of *Yesod*, as will be explained.)[48](#)

והנה מדות אלו, הן בחינות חיצוניות שבנפש

Now, these emotive attributes — those involved in imparting enlightenment, and the like — are the external aspects of the soul.

ובתוכן מלובשות מדות פנימיות

Within them are vested the inner attributes, which bring about the external attributes involved in the actual imparting of knowledge,

שהן בחינות אהבה ויראה כו'

i.e., the faculties of love and awe, and so on.

דהיינו, על דרך משל, באב המשפיע לבנו מחמת אהבתו

This may be compared to the case of a father who bestows enlightenment upon his son because of his love for him,

The internal aspect of the attribute involved is love and its external aspect is kindness.

ומונע השפעתו מפחדו ויראתו שלא יבא לידי מכשול, חס ושלום

and withholds his influence because of his dread and fear lest [his son] come to some downfall, heaven forbid.

The father's fear and dread are thus the internal aspect of his *Gevurah*, the attribute that completely or partially withholds the flow of instruction.

The remaining emotive attributes are all offshoots of love and fear (as explained in Part I, ch. 3, above), and accordingly they too possess internal and external aspects.

* * *

Having dealt with the *middot*, the seven emotive attributes of the soul, the Alter Rebbe now proceeds to discuss the intellectual attributes which give birth to them.

ומקור ושרש מדות אלו, הפנימיות והחיצוניות

The source and root of these internal and external emotive attributes,

הוא מחב"ד שבנפשו

is the *ChaBaD* — an acronym for the intellectual faculties of *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat* — of one's soul,

כי לפי שכל האדם, כך הן מדותיו

for a person's emotive traits are in proportion to his intellect.

כנראה בחוש, שהקטן, שהחב"ד שלו הן בבחינת קטנות, כך כל מדותיו הן בדברים קטני הערך

This is empirically evident; with a child, for example, whose *ChaBaD* are in a state of pettiness, all his emotive traits, too, relate to insignificant things, and as he matures in age and understanding, his emotive traits correspondingly aspire to worthier goals.

וגם בגדולים, לפי שכלו יהולל איש

With adults, too, the emotive traits develop in proportion to the intellect, for⁴⁹ “According to his intelligence is a man praised.”

Since the term “man” (איש) is an appellation for the emotive traits (cf. the verse,⁵⁰ “As is a man, so is his *Gevurah*”), the previously-quoted verse is teaching us that a person's emotive traits are praiseworthy in proportion to the stature of his *ChaBaD*.

כי לפי רוב חכמתו, כך הוא רוב אהבתו וחסדו

For the extent of his love and kindness corresponds to the extent of his wisdom,

וכן שאר כל מדותיו פנימיות וחיצוניות, מקורן הוא מחב"ד שבו

and all his other internal and external traits likewise have their source in his *ChaBaD*.

והעיקר הוא הדעת שבו, הנמשך מבחינת החכמה ובינה שבו

Most important to the development of the spiritual emotions is one's *Daat*, which derives from one's *Chochmah* and *Binah*.

A thinker first grasps the essence of a concept through the seminal flash of illumination afforded by his faculty of *Chochmah*; he next understands it fully by means of the analysis and amplification which are the function of his faculty of *Binah*; ultimately, he must immerse himself in concentration on the concept, binding and unifying himself with it to the point that — beyond mere intellectual comprehension — he also senses and experiences it with his faculty of *Daat*.

It is this faculty that is critical to the development of his *middot*, such as the spiritual emotions of love and awe of G-d, for *Daat* provides them with their substance and vitality, as explained in Part I, ch. 3.

כנראה בחוש, כי לפי שינוי דעות בני אדם זה מזה, כך הוא שינוי מדותיהם

This is readily observable, for the differences between the emotive traits of various people corresponds to the differences in their respective degrees of *Daat*.

והנה כל זה הוא רק על דרך משל לבד

Now all this — the above-mentioned effect of the emotive traits upon the resultant teaching or influence — is only by way of allegory, and does not provide a completely true picture of the *Sefirot* as they exist within man's soul,

כי כל זה הוא בנפש השכלית, התחתונה שבאדם, הבאה מקליפת נוגה

for all this applies to the rational soul, which is the lower one in man, and derives from *kelipat nogah*.

This "lower soul" naturally inclines to "lower" (i.e., corporeal) matters, so that even its intellect goes only as far as understanding the composition and so on, of mundane things. For although the *kelipah* which is the source of this soul is *kelipat nogah*, a *kelipah* whose darkness is relieved by a ray of good, nevertheless it is wholly bound up with mundanity.

אך באמת לאמיתו, בנפש העליונה האלקית, שהיא חלק אלוה ממעל

But in true fact, with regard to [the *Sefirot* in] the higher, divine soul, which is a "part of G-d above,"^{[51](#)}

כל המדות פנימיות וחיצוניות הן לה' לבדו

all the internal and external attributes are [directed] to G-d alone: the divine soul is concerned with spiritual things alone, so that both its (internal) love and (external) *Chesed* are concentrated purely on G-dliness.

כי מחמת אהבת ה', ומרוב חפצו לדבקה בו

For because of one's love of G-d and because of one's great desire to cleave unto Him,

הוא חפץ חסד, כדי לידבק במדותיו

he desires with all his being [to practice] *Chesed*, in order to cleave to His attributes.

כמאמר רז"ל על פסוק, ולדבקה בו: הדבק במדותיו

This accords with the teaching of our Sages, of blessed memory, on the verse,⁵² “And to cleave unto Him”: “Cleave unto His attributes.”⁵³

Just as G-d is compassionate so should mortal man be compassionate; just as G-d has an innate desire to practice kindness, so should a person's inner desire to practice kindness be motivated by a desire to cleave to G-d.

As to the attribute of *Chesed*, then, both its internal aspect (love) and its external aspect (kindness) are directed purely to G-dly things.

וכן במדת הגבורה

It is likewise with the attribute of *Gevurah*, whose internal aspect is fear; it, too, is experienced only for G-dly causes:

להפרע מן הרשעים, ולענשם בעונשי התורה

for example, to punish and chastise the wicked with the punishments of the Torah;

וכן להתגבר על יצרו, ולקדש את עצמו במותר לו

and also, to prevail over one's [evil] inclination and to⁵⁴ “Sanctify himself in that which is permitted to him,”

ולעשות גדר וסייג לתורה

and to⁵⁵ put up a fence and a hedge around the Torah,

מפני פחד ה' ויראתו, פן יבוא לידי חטא, חס ושלום

because of the dread and fear of G-d, lest he might come to sin, heaven forbid.

In order to ensure that he will not come to sin, a person may thus choose to sanctify himself and refrain from [56](#) “one hundred portals of the permissible, so as not to transgress in one portal of the prohibited.”

To summarize the above conclusions regarding the first two of the seven *middot*, or spiritual emotions: Not only is a man's attribute of *Chesed* directed to G-dly matters, but so too is his attribute of *Gevurah* — both in its internal aspect, viz., the fear of G-d, and in its external manifestations in his rigorous observance of the Torah and its *mitzvot*.

וכן לפאר את ה' ותורתו בכל מיני פאר

Likewise, by exercising the attribute of *Tiferet* (lit., “beauty”), [a man seeks] to glorify G-d and His Torah in all ways possible, such as by possessing a beautiful *sefer* Torah, beautiful *tefillin* and the like,

ולדבקה בשבחיו בכל בחינות נפשו

and to cleave to His praises [by praising G-d] with all the faculties of his soul:

דהיינו, בהתבוננות שכלו ומחשבתו

that is, by intellectual and thoughtful meditation on the greatness of G-d, which blossoms into the singing of His praises;

גם בדיבור

and likewise when he speaks, his praises are not empty words, but grow out of his preparatory meditation.

“[Praising G-d] with all the faculties of his soul” thus means that the worshiper utilizes his intellect and emotions as well as all three “garments” of his soul (i.e., the soul's media of self-expression), viz., thought, speech and action (for speech constitutes [57](#) “mini-action”). Alternatively, “[praising G-d] with all the faculties of his soul” may mean: all those aspects of the soul that relate to praise, i.e., intellect, thought and speech.

וכן לעמוד בנצחון נגד כל מונע מעבודת ה' ומלדבקה בו

Likewise, by exercising the attribute of *Netzach*, [a man seeks] to prevail triumphantly against anything that would restrain [him] from the service of G-d and from cleaving unto Him,

ונגד כל מונע מלהיות כבוד ה' מלא את כל הארץ

and against anything that would restrain [the state of revelation in which][58](#) the entire earth is filled with the glory of G-d,

כמלחמות ה' אשר נלחם דוד המלך, עליו השלום

like the wars for G-d fought by King David, peace to him, which derived from his attribute of *Netzach*.

וכן להשתחוות ולהודות לה'

Likewise, by exercising the attribute of *Hod*,[59](#) which implies self-abnegation, and acknowledging the transcendence of that which defies his mortal understanding, [a man seeks] to prostrate himself and to [self-effacingly] praise G-d

אשר מחיה ומהוה את הכל, והכל בטל במציאות אצלו, וכולא קמיה כלא חשיב, וכאין ואפס ממש

Who animates and creates everything, and before Whom everything is essentially non-existent and esteemed as truly nothing and null.

ואף שאין אנו משיגים איך הוא הכל אפס ממש קמיה

Though we cannot apprehend just how everything is truly as null before Him,

אף על פי כן מודים אנהנו, בהודאה אמיתית, שכן הוא באמת לאמיתו

nevertheless, we acknowledge and genuinely concede that in absolute truth such is the case.

From the very depths of his soul the Jew acknowledges that G-d's "Supernal *Daat*" and knowledge that everything is essentially non-existent before Him is true, and that the mortal understanding of our "inferior *Daat*" — that creation does indeed exist, except that it is nullified to Him — results from the limited compass of our earthbound perspective.[60](#) This acknowledgement results from the self-abnegation expressed by the attribute of *Hod*.

ובכלל זה גם כן להודות לה' על כל הטובות אשר גמלנו

This [attribute] also includes the expression of gratitude[61](#) to G-d for all the favors that He has bestowed upon us,

ולא להיות כפוי טובה, חס ושלום

so that [we] should not be ungrateful, G-d forbid.

ובכלל זה להודות על כל שבחיו ומדותיו ופעולותיו באצילות ובריאיות עליונים ותחתונים

This [attribute of *Hod*] also includes the offering of thanks to G-d for all His praiseworthy [deeds], and His attributes and His workings in the emanation and creation of the upper and lower worlds,

שהם משובחים עד אין תכלית חקר

for they are praiseworthy to no end,⁶²

ונאים וראוים אליו, יתברך ויתעלה

and are becoming and befitting Him, blessed and exalted be He.

והוא מלשון הוד והדר

The term [*Hod* is here to be understood] as in the phrase,⁶³ *Hod vehadar* (“majesty and splendor”).

וכן במדת צדיק יסוד עולם

And likewise [engaged in one’s divine service is] the attribute of [*Yesod* (lit., “foundation”), as in the phrase],⁶⁴ “The tzaddik is the foundation of the world.”

In the above analogy, it was by means of the attribute of *Yesod* that the father communicated with his son and disciple through bonds of desire and pleasure. So, too, in the realm of divine service, the attribute of *Yesod* involves cleaving to G-d with intense desire and pleasure,

להיות נפשו קשורה בה', חיי החיים

so that one’s soul is bound up with G-d, the Fountain-head of Life,

ולדבקה בו בדביקה וחשיקה, בחשק ותענוג נפלא

cleaving to Him with an attachment and a desire, out of a wondrous love and delight, all of which are expressions of the attribute of *Yesod*.

ובמדת מלכות, לקבל עליו עול מלכותו ועבודתו

And as for the [divine soul’s] attribute of *Malchut*, [the worshiper seeks thereby] to accept upon himself the yoke of G-d’s sovereignty and of His service,

כעבודת כל עבד לאדונו, באימה וביראה

like the service of any servant to his master, i.e., out of awe and fear.

* * *

Up to this point the Alter Rebbe has explained how the seven *middot* exist within the Jew's G-dly soul. These emotive attributes are activated by the three intellectual faculties — the *Sefirot* of *ChaBaD* (*Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat*), which are now to be explained.

ומקור ושורש כל המדות הן מחב"ד

Now, the source and root of all the attributes are in the *ChaBaD*.

דהיינו: החכמה היא מקור השכל המשיג את ה' וחכמתו וגדולתו ומדותיו הקדושות, שמנהיג ומחיה בהן כל העולמות עליונים ותחתונים

That is: *Chochmah* is the source of the intellect which apprehends G-d and His wisdom, His greatness, and the holy attributes wherewith He conducts and animates all the higher and lower worlds;

ובינה היא ההתבוננות בהשגה זו

Binah is the contemplation of this apprehension of G-d's greatness and His holy attributes

באורך ורוחב ועומק בינתו

in the length, breadth, and depth of one's understanding,

The "length" of a particular concept — in this case, the greatness of the Creator — entails drawing it down from its lofty abstraction (by way of a parable, for example) to a level of intelligibility. The "breadth" of the concept refers to the multitudinous components and ramifications that await one's mastery. Its "depth" refers to the challenge of plumbing its seemingly limitless profundity.

להבין דבר מתוך דבר

in order⁶⁵ "to understand (or deduce) one matter out of another,"⁶⁶

ולהוליד מהשגה זו תולדותיה

and from this apprehension to beget its offspring,

שהן מדות אהבה ויראה

which are the attributes of love and awe,

The thinker's understanding of the greatness of G-d gives birth to emotions — a love and a fear of Him.

ושארי מדות הנולדות בנפש האלקית, המשכלת ומתבוננת בגדולת ה', כי לגדולתו אין חקר

and the other attributes born in the divine soul which contemplates and meditates upon G-d's greatness, as to how⁶⁷ "His greatness is unfathomable."

ויש בחינת גדולת ה', שעל ידי התבוננות הנפש האלקית בה, תפול עליה אימתה ופחד

One aspect of G-d's greatness is such that the divine soul, when contemplating it, is overwhelmed by a fear and dread.

שהיא יראה תתאה, שהיא בחינת מלכות

This is *yirah tataah* ("the lower level of fear"), which is an aspect of *Malchut*.

ויש בחינת גדולת ה', שממנה באה יראה עילאה, ירא בוש

There is another aspect of the greatness of G-d from [the contemplation of] which derives *yirah ilaah* ("the superior level of fear"), in which one is awed out of bashfulness.

ויש בחינה שממנה באה אהבה רבה

There is also an aspect [of G-d's greatness] from [the contemplation of] which derives *ahavah rabbah* ("the great love"),

ויש בחינה שממנה באה אהבה זוטא

and still another aspect [of G-d's greatness], from [the contemplation of] which derives *ahavah zutta* ("the lesser love").

All these levels of *ahavah* and *yirah* are internal emotive attributes that are fathered by *ChaBaD*.

וכן במדות החיצוניות, שהן חסד כו'

The same applies to the external attributes, i.e., *Chesed* and so on; they, too, emanate from *ChaBaD*.

ובכולן צריך להיות מלוכש בהן בחינת הדעת

Now, the faculty of *Daat* must be vested within all these [emotive attributes],

שהוא בחינת התקשרות הנפש, הקשורה ותקועה בהשגה זו

for it represents the bond with which the soul is bound and embedded in this apprehension

שמשגת איזה ענין מגדולת ה', שממנה נולדה בה איזה מדה מהמדות

as it apprehends some aspect of G-d's greatness, from which one of these attributes is born within it.

Once the soul has apprehended some aspect of G-d's greatness it must bind itself to this comprehension through the faculty of *Daat*.

כי בהיסח הדעת כרגע מהשגה זו

For by a momentary removal of *Daat* from this apprehension,

מסתלקת גם כן המדה הנולדה ממנה

the emotion born of it is also withdrawn

מהגילוי בנפש אל ההעלם

from its [prior] state of manifestation in the soul [back] into concealment [within the soul],

להיות בה בכח ולא בפועל

to exist there in potentia but not in actuality.

It is the faculty of *Daat* — a prolonged and constant involvement in the subject being contemplated — that reveals and actualizes the emotive experience of love or fear.

ולכן נקרא הזיווג בלשון דעת, מפני שהוא לשון התקשרות

That is why the term *Daat* is applied to coition,⁶⁸ for it signifies a bond that results in issue, just as out of *Daat* are born the emotions.

וזהו בחינת דעת תחתון נוסח אחר: הדעת התחתון, המתפשט במדות ומתלבש בהן, להחיותן ולקיימן

This is the faculty of *Daat Tachton*, the lower level of *Daat*, which extends into the attributes and vests itself in them to animate and sustain them.

ויש בחינת דעת העליון, שהוא בחינת התקשרות וחיבור מקור השכל המשיג עומק המושג

There is also a faculty of *Daat Elyon*, a superior level of *Daat*, through which the source of the intellect that apprehends the profundity of a concept is bound and connected [to it]

—

שהוא כנקודה וכברק המבריק על שכלו

like a point or a flash of lightning that flashes over one's mind —

so that [the concept] will extend downward.

ויבא עומק המושג לידי הבנה

The profundity of the apprehended concept will thereby come to be understood

בהרחבת הביאור, באורך ורוחב

with extensive clarification, in length and breadth,

שהיא בחינת בינה, הנקראת, רחובות הנהר, כמו שיתבאר במקומו

this stage being the function of the faculty of *Binah*, which is known as *rechoivot hanahar* (lit., “the expanses of the river”), as will be explained in its place.⁶⁹

The faculty of *Daat Elyon* unifies *Chochmah* with *Binah*. For *Chochmah* is the intuitive flash of illumination that would vanish as quickly as it appeared, if it were not anchored by *Daat* in the comprehension of *Binah*, whereby this seminal point assumes length and breadth. *Chochmah* is thus likened to a wellspring whose waters issue forth drop by drop, while *Binah* is likened to a broad and deep river. It is the function of *Daat Elyon* to draw the wellsprings of *Chochmah* into the river of *Binah*.

The function of *Daat Tachton*, by contrast, is that of binding the intellectual faculties of *ChaBaD* with their resultant emotions, so that one’s intellectual activity will illuminate them, and provide them with vitality and continuity.

* * *

In summary, this discourse demonstrates how all the ten faculties of the divine soul engage in an ongoing relationship with their G-dly source. Indeed, to recall the Alter Rebbe’s opening lines, an understanding of this dynamic within oneself enables one to experience the truth of the verse, “From my flesh shall I behold G-d,” and to gain some measure of understanding of the Supernal *Sefirot*.

FOOTNOTES ¹. Introduction II to *Tikkunei Zohar*, reproduced in *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, pp. 125-6. ². Part I, beginning of ch. 8. ³. Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar*, p. 3b; *Etz Chayim*, Shaar 47, ch. 2 *et al.*; and see Epistle 20, below. ⁴. *Yechezkel* 1:26. ⁵. See *Tanya*, Part I, ch. 3. ⁶. P. 156b. ⁷. Discourse entitled *Lo Tashbit*. ⁸. *Mishlei* 1:6. ⁹. *Kohelet* 9:9. ¹⁰. Cf. *Yeshayahu* 12:5. ¹¹. *Iyov* 19:26. ¹². *Berachot* 10a. ¹³. *Tehillim* 103:1. ¹⁴. Quoted above — in Part I, beginning of ch. 2, and in Part III (*Iggeret HaTeshuvah*), ch. 4 — in the name of the *Zohar*. ¹⁵. *Bereishit* 2:7. ¹⁶. This connection is hinted at in the phrase, תחיה החכמה (*Kohelet* 7:12). ¹⁷. For this connection, cf. the phrase, שדי נשמת (*Iyov* 32:8). ¹⁸. See *Etz Chayim*, Shaar 47, ch. 2. ¹⁹. *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 6. ²⁰. Note of the Rebbe: “*Bereishit Rabbah* 47:8, *et al.*; explained in *Tanya*, Part I, chs. 18, 23,

et al.” [21.](#) *Bereishit* 18:27. [22.](#) *Rambam, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah*, beginning of ch. 4. [23.](#) Cf. *Kohelet* 3:20. [24.](#) *Bereishit* 2:9. [25.](#) An alternative reading, which does not appear in the ms. versions: “It is known, in a general way,...” [26.](#) The Alter Rebbe first deals with the seven *middot*, or emotive attributes, and towards the end of this letter proceeds to explain the three intellectual attributes which give birth to them. (See the passage below that begins, “Having dealt with the *middot*...””) [27.](#) In place of כלל (“altogether”), an alternative reading has עיקר כל, which is a more emphatic phrase. [28.](#) The word לשון, which appears in the Hebrew text before רחמנות (“compassion”), is left untranslated for, as the Rebbe notes, it is evidently a superfluous interpolation. [29.](#) The word לשון, which appears in the Hebrew text before רחמנות (“compassion”), is left untranslated for, as the Rebbe notes, it is evidently a superfluous interpolation. [30.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “This is a departure from the usual explanation — that *Chesed* extends its benevolence even to an individual whom the attribute of compassion would disqualify (despite his need), or to an individual whom one should not pity.” [31.](#) The corresponding Hebrew phrase, whose singular form is apparently anomalous, is rendered in the plural in one of the early editions of this letter (Lemberg, 1860). [32.](#) An alternative reading, which does not appear in the ms. versions, interpolates the word בו after מעורבים; the meaning of the sentence is virtually unaffected. [33.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “This is [the function of the attributes of] *Malchut* and *Yesod*, as will soon be explained.” [34.](#) *Mishlei* 25:11. [35.](#) *Berachot* 61a. [36.](#) *Zohar* III, 296a. [37.](#) Cf. *Tanya*, Part I, ch. 2. [38.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “As above, conclusion of *Shaar HaYichud VehaEmunah*, quoting *Chagigah* 12b.” [39.](#) Brackets are in the original text. [40.](#) The Hebrew root of *Netzach* comprises three meanings — to prevail, to be enduring, to be victorious. [41.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “As noted in the Introduction of R. Avraham Shu”b, the [previously] printed letters of *Iggeret HaKodesh* were compared to copyists’ manuscripts (and not to the Alter Rebbe’s original letters).” [42.](#) Brackets are in the original text. [43.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Though it is possible to understand the acronym פא”פ as meaning פה אל פה (‘mouth to mouth,’ i.e., without an intermediary; cf. Ibn Ezra on *Parshat Behaalotcha* 12:8), the phrase פנים”אל פנים (‘face to face’) describes a higher level [of communication, and is therefore the preferred rendition], for here the Alter Rebbe is speaking of the highest qualities of *Yesod*, to the degree that the father ‘desires greatly.’ Moreover, it is specifically this phrase (‘face to face’) that is the antithesis of the contrasting situation described above, in which the father ‘speaks to himself.’” [44.](#) Brackets are in the original text. [45.](#) Printed in *Or HaTorah, Vayeira* 98b. [46.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Perhaps this should read גדל [with a *kamatz* and *tzeirei*, so that the sentence would mean, ‘And the more the desire and delight of the father grow, the more do the influence and the learning grow’], instead of גדול [with a *kamatz* and *cholam*, as translated above].” [47.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [48.](#) In his Hebrew annotations to the original Yiddish text of the present work, the Rebbe explains why the Alter Rebbe does not discuss the attribute of *Malchut*. The learned explanation, which hinges on the comparative dynamics of the various *Sefirot*, is not readily translatable. [49.](#) *Mishlei* 12:8. [50.](#) *Shoftim* 8:21. [51.](#) See *Tanya*, Part I, beginning of ch. 2. [52.](#) *Devarim* 11:22. [53.](#) *Sifri* (sec. 49) on the above verse; *Sotah* 14a. [54.](#) Cf. *Yevamot* 20a. [55.](#) Cf. *Avot* 1:1. [56.](#) *Reishit Chochmah, Shaar HaKedushah*, ch. 15, et al. [57.](#) *Sanhedrin* 65a. [58.](#) Cf. *Yeshayahu* 6:3. [59.](#) The Hebrew root of this word comprises three meanings — to praise, to thank and to acknowledge. [60.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “See *Likkutei Torah, Vaetchanan*, p. 4a ff.” [61.](#) The Hebrew root of this word comprises three meanings — to praise, to thank

and to acknowledge. [62](#). According to an alternative reading, "...beyond searching." [63](#). *Tehillim* 104:1. [64](#). *Mishlei* 10:25. [65](#). *Chagigah* 14a. [66](#). Note of the Rebbe: "Two explanations (*Or HaTorah, Bereishit*, p. 2048ff.)." [67](#). *Tehillim* 145:3. [68](#). Note of the Rebbe: "See [*Tanya*,] Part I, conclusion of ch. 3." [69](#). Note of the Rebbe: "The intent of 'in its place' is problematic. Possibly this refers to the relevant places in [*Tanya*,] Part I (see its indexes), and likewise in *Likkutei Torah*, etc."



Epistle 16

לאנשי קהילת

To the members of the community of . . .

It has already been noted that the Alter Rebbe devoted many of the letters that comprise *Iggeret HaKodesh* to the theme of *tzedakah*, particularly when dedicated to the support of those who engage in Torah study and divine service in *Eretz Yisrael*. As its opening salutation indicates, the present letter is one of those sent to a particular community. Its economic state was dismal,¹ and word had reached the Alter Rebbe that its charitable contributions for the Kollel Chabad Fund had fallen off accordingly.

The Alter Rebbe therefore writes that he is aware of their hardships, but it remains imperative that they maintain their regular level of generosity. The reasons he enumerates are based on the requirements of Torah law, as well as on considerations that surpass the letter of the law.

אהוביי אחיי ורעיי אשר כנפשי

My beloved, my brethren and friends, who are to me like my own soul.

Certain qualities are uniquely found in the closeness and love of brothers, and other qualities, in the warm devotion of friends.² In writing "my brethren and friends," the Alter Rebbe indicates that his letter wells from both kinds of brotherliness.

הנה לא נעלם ממני צוק העתים

The hardships of these times are not hidden from me,

אשר נתדלדלה הפרנסה

in that the means for earning a livelihood have declined,

ובפרט הידועים לי ממחניכם, אשר מטה ידם

especially among those known to me from your community, whose hands have faltered,

בלי שום משען ומשענה

so that they are without any providers at all,³ with no work available for either husband or wife,

וממש לוויים ואוכלים

and they literally borrow in order to eat.⁴

ה' ירחם עליהם, וירחיב להם בצר, בקרוב

May G-d show them compassion and speedily bring them respite from their straits.

ועם כל זה, לא טוב הם עושים לנפשם

Nonetheless, they are not acting rightly unto their souls,

לפי הנשמע, אשר קפצו ידם הפתוחה מעודם עד היום הזה

according to reports that they close their hand which all their life long, to this very day, has been open

ליתן ביד מלאה ועין יפה לכל הצטרכות ההכרחיות, לדי מחסורי האביונים נקיים

to give with a full hand and a generous eye⁵ for all vital necessities to satisfy the needs of the “clean” destitutes⁶

אשר עיניהם נשואות אלינו

whose eyes are lifted unto us.

This refers to the destitute of *Eretz Yisrael* who had absolutely no means of support other than the charitable fund of Kollel Chabad.

ואם אנו לא נרחם עליהם, חס ושלום, מי ירחם עליהם

If we will not pity them, heaven forbid, who will?

וחי אחיך עמך, כתיב

And it is written,⁷ “...so that your brother may live with you!”

I.e., one should share with his brethren even that which is most essential for one's own life.

ולא אמרו: חייך קודמין, אלא כשביד אחד קיתון של מים וכו'

As to the ruling of the Sages that⁸ “Your own life takes precedence,” this applies only in a case “when one has a pitcher of water in hand...”;

If a traveler in the desert has just enough water to sustain his own life until civilization is reached, and if he shares it with his friend they will both inevitably die, then his own life takes precedence.

שהוא דבר השווה לשניהם בשווה לשתות להשיב נפשם בצמא

that is, when it is equally essential that both drink in order to save their lives from thirst.

אבל אם העני צריך לחם לפי הטף, ועצים וכסות בקרה, וכהאי גוונא

But if a pauper needs bread for the mouths of babes, and firewood and clothes against the cold, and the like,

כל דברים אלו קודמין לכל מלבושי כבוד וזבח משפחה, בשר ודגים וכל מטעמים, של האדם וכל בני ביתו

then all these take precedence over any fine apparel and family feasts, with meat and fish and all kinds of delicacies, for oneself and all of one's household.⁹

ולא שייך בזה: חייך קודמין

The rule that “your own life takes precedence” does not apply in such a case,

מאחר שאינן חיי נפש ממש, כמו של העני, שווה בשווה ממש

because these are not really essential to life, as are [the needs] of the poor, in true equality,

כדאיתא בנדרים, דף פ'

as is discussed in *Nedarim*, page 80[b].

The *Gemara* speaks there about a stream that originates in one town and flows through another. If it does not provide enough drinking water for both towns, the water rights belong to the inhabitants of the first town. The same applies to the water that both towns need for their livestock or for washing their clothes. If, however, the second town needs drinking water for its citizens, while the first town only needs the water for washing clothes, then the needs of the second town prevail.

We thus see, that if the respective needs are not exactly equal, then one does not say “one’s own life take precedence,” even in a situation where one’s own needs are quite real and far from frivolous. When fathers and mothers are crying out for bread for their little ones, and for firewood and clothing to protect them from the cold, this surely takes precedence over the valid but non-essential needs of one’s own family.

והנה זהו על פי שורת הדין גמור

Now, the above follows the exact requirements of the law.

אבל באמת, גם אם הוא ענין דלא שייך כל כך האי טעמא

In fact, however, even in a case where such reasoning does not so fully apply,

I.e., even when (a) one is called upon to share not luxuries but one’s own slice of bread, or even when (b) the poor are not crying out for food and clothing, but for other essentials,

ראוי לכל אדם שלא לדקדק להעמיד על הדין

it is not proper that any man insist on the letter of the law;

רק לדחוק חייו, וליכנס לפני ולפנים משורת הדין

rather, he should impose austerity on his own life and go far beyond the [demands of the] letter of the law.

ולדאוג לעצמו ממאמר רז"ל, שכל המדקדק בכך, סוף בא לידי כך, חס ושלום

Moreover, one should be concerned,¹⁰ for his own sake, with the teaching of our Sages,¹¹ of blessed memory, that — even in a situation where “that which is yours takes precedence over that which belongs to others” — he who is exacting in this matter, and does not go beyond the letter of the law, “will eventually be brought to this matter”: he himself will ultimately need charity, heaven forbid.

וגם כי כולנו צריכים לרחמי שמים בכל עת

And after all, all of us need the mercies of heaven at all times,¹²

באתערותא דלתתא דוקא, בכל עת ובכל שעה

[which are elicited] only through an arousal from below, at all times and at every moment,

לעורר רחמינו על הצריכים לרחמים

by arousing our compassion for those who are in need of compassion.

וכל המאמץ לבבו וכובש רחמיו, יהיה מאיזה טעם שיהיה, גורם כך למעלה לכבוש וכו', חס ושלום

But whoever hardens his heart and suppresses his compassion, for whatever reason, causes the same above — the suppression of [Divine compassion], heaven forbid.

All this however, affects only the future. [The Rebbe, however, notes:] “And the present as well, causing one to give until the recipient is equal ‘*with you*.’” [Cf. footnote 7, above.] There is, however, an aspect of *tzedakah* that also affects the past, [and the Rebbe adds:] “causing one to give to an even greater degree than what he keeps for himself, since this is” to secure the rectification and atonement of his past sins.

ומה גם כי אדם אין צדיק בארץ, אשר יעשה טוב תמיד ולא יחטא

After all, furthermore,¹³ “There is not a righteous person upon earth who does good” — always — “and does not sin,”

וצדקה מכפרת, ומגינה מן הפורענות וכו'

and *tzedakah* atones,¹⁴ and protects against misfortune and the like.¹⁵

ולזאת היא רפואת הגוף ונפש ממש

[Charity] is thus an actual cure for body and soul,¹⁶

אשר עור בעד עור, וכל אשר לאיש יתן בעד נפשו

with respect to which [it is written],¹⁷ “Skin for skin — a limb for a limb, and all that a man has he will give for his soul,” i.e., to save his life.

Setting a limit to the amount one distributes for charity is thus just as unthinkable as limiting the sum one would spend in order to be cured and to stay alive.

בשגם אנו מאמינים בני מאמינים כי הצדקה אינה רק הלואה להקב"ה

How much more does this apply, when we are¹⁸ “believers, the descendants of believers,” in the fact that charity is nothing other than a loan to the Holy One, blessed be He,¹⁹

כדכתיב: מלוה ה' חונן דל, וגמולו ישלם לו בכפליים בעולם הזה

as it is written,²⁰ “He who is gracious unto the poor, lends unto G-d, and He will repay him his good deed” — twofold, in this world.

דשכר כל המצוות ליכא בעולם הזה, לבד מצדקה, לפי שהיא טוב לבריות, כדאיתא בקדושין, סוף פרק קמא

For the performance of none of the commandments is rewarded in this world — except for charity,²¹ because it is beneficial to creatures,²² as is written at the end of the first chapter of *Kiddushin*.²³

וגם יש לחוש לעונש, חס ושלום, כשחבריו נמנים לדבר מצוה, והוא לא נמנה עמהם

Also, one should be concerned about punishment,²⁴ heaven forfend, when one's companions associate for the sake of a *mitzvah* and he does not join them,²⁵

This would be the case if one were to absent oneself when the other members of one's community were joining forces for the sake of the charitable cause under discussion, viz., the Kollel Chabad Fund.

כנודע ממאמר רז"ל

as is known from the words of our Sages,²⁶ of blessed memory, who teach that standing aside in such circumstances is an instance of²⁷ “an absence for which one cannot [again] be counted.”

ולשומעים יונעם, ותבא עליהם ברכת טוב בכל מילי דמיטב

May life be pleasant for those who give heed, and may blessings of all kinds of goodness rest upon them.²⁸

הטיבה ה' לטובים וישרים

“Act benevolently, O G-d, toward the good and the upright,”²⁹

כנפשם ונפש הדורש שלומם מכל לב ונפש

as is their wish and as is the wish of [the writer], who seeks their welfare with all his heart and soul.

FOOTNOTES ¹. At this point the Yiddish original of the present commentary is interrupted by the colloquial interjection, *Nisht do gedacht* (lit., “May this not be spoken of here!”) — “May we never know of such misfortunes!” ². Note of the Rebbe: “Cf. the distinctions between ‘my sister’ and ‘my wife’ in *Likkutei Torah*, beginning of *Parshat Behar*, et al.” ³. Note of the Rebbe: “This refers to their present earning capacity.” ⁴. Note of the Rebbe: “I.e., they have neither savings nor the wherewithal to buy even rations for minimal survival.” ⁵. The Rebbe adds, “...which increases the extent of the gift (*Terumot* 4:3).” ⁶. Note of the Rebbe: “An uncommon adjective for a pauper, perhaps chosen because of the additional connotation of the Hebrew idiom, מנכסיו נקי — ‘cleaned out of his possessions.’” ⁷. *Vayikra* 25:36. ⁸. *Bava Metzia* 62a, in a discussion of the above verse. ⁹. This array of bourgeois non-essentials is borrowed from one of the well-known *zemirots*, a song sung between courses at certain *Shabbos* tables. ¹⁰. Note of the Rebbe: “Concerned: (a) for the future, (b) for his own livelihood.” [See footnote 12,

below.] [11.](#) The wording in the *Gemara* (*Bava Metzia* 33a) is that “He who acts (and *Rashi* paraphrases, ‘is exacting’) for himself in this matter will eventually be brought to this matter,” heaven forbid. See also *Dikdukei Sofrim*. [12.](#) The Rebbe adds, “...with regard to: (a) the present, (b) for his children and health as well.” [I.e., for the remaining two items in the trilogy of *חיי בני*, *נימוז בני*; cf. *Moed Katan* 28a.] [13.](#) *Kohelet* 7:20. [14.](#) See *Devarim Rabbah* 5:3. [15.](#) See *Vayikra Rabbah*, beginning of sec. 27. [16.](#) See *Tanchuma, Mishpatim*, sec. 15. [17.](#) *Iyov* 11:14. See also *Iggeret HaTeshuvah*, end of ch. 3. [18.](#) *Shabbat* 97a. [19.](#) See *Bava Batra* 10a, and commentaries there of *Rashi* and of the *Chiddushei Aggadot* of the *Maharal*. [20.](#) *Mishlei* 19:17. [21.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “The absence of reward in this world for other *mitzvot* would not seem to be relevant here, unlike the positive statement that follows it, regarding the reward for *tzedakah*. Its mention could be understood as alluding to yet another reason for giving *tzedakah*: nothing exists in this world by virtue of which one may be assured of sustenance, other than the giving of *tzedakah* (where, as the Alter Rebbe writes, one’s contribution is rewarded ‘twofold’).” [22.](#)

Note of the Rebbe: “Though there seems to be no evident reason for citing the reason here, perhaps the Alter Rebbe is thereby hinting that even if the needy individual is unworthy of being included in the category of ‘your brother,’ he is still worthy of your contribution inasmuch as he is nevertheless in the category of [G-d’s] ‘creatures’. (See *Tanya*, ch. 32.)”

This observation happily completes a series of lessons, in which the Alter Rebbe has been teaching us to overcome three possible restrictive interpretations of the above-quoted verse, עִמָּךְ חֵיָא וְחַי — ‘...so that your brother may live with you’ (*Vayikra* 25:36): (a) though the verse obliges us to give ‘so that your brother *may live*,’ one should not provide him only with the bare essentials; (b) ‘your brother’ should not be interpreted so narrowly as to exclude mere ‘creatures’; (a) ‘with you’ should bring the recipient to a state of more than mere equality with the donor.”

[23.](#) 40a. [24.](#) The Rebbe adds, “...and not only about not receiving the reward.” [25.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Thus, even if one has already given as much *tzedakah* as he ought to, so that all the above considerations have been attended to, he must nevertheless give again when his companions join to perform a charitable *mitzvah* together. This is an original teaching first appearing in the above letter.” [26.](#) *Chagigah* 9b; *Berachot* 26a. [27.](#) *Kohelet* 1:15. [28.](#) Cf. *Mishlei* 24:25. [29.](#) Cf. *Tehillim* 125:4.

Epistle 17

נודע דבאתערותא דלתתא, שהאדם מעורר בלבו מדת החסד ורחמנות על כל הצרכים לרחמים

It is well known¹ that in response to an arousal from below, when a man arouses in his heart the attribute of lovingkindness and compassion for all those in need of compassion,

אתערותא דלעילא, לעורר עליו רחמים רבים ממקור הרחמים

there comes an arousal from above, that arouses great compassion upon him from the Source of Compassion,

As taught in ch. 45 of Part I, this does not refer to *Av HaRachaman*, the limited level of compassion that derives from the measured evolvement of the worlds, but to the level of Divine compassion (*Av HaRachamim*) that transcends all limitations.

להשפיע לו הפירות בעולם הזה, והקרן לעולם הבא

that endows him with the fruits [of his deeds] in this world, while the principal [remains intact] for the World to Come.²

The Alter Rebbe goes on to explain that “fruits in this world” refers not only to physical blessings, but also to the insights and spiritual delights of *Gan Eden* (lit., “the Garden of Eden”), for even *Gan Eden* is termed “this world” in relation to the World to Come at the time of the Revival of the Dead.

It is true that in relation to our present physical world *Gan Eden* is called the World to Come, because it follows and rewards the good deeds performed in this world.³ Nevertheless, when compared to the actual World to Come, all worlds — including the spiritual worlds, of which *Gan Eden* is one — are termed “this world.” This is because all worlds can aspire (even now) to a revealed level of comprehension (“this” being a word denoting revelation); by contrast, as the Alter Rebbe will soon explain,⁴ the perceptions of Divinity in the World to Come at the time of the Revival of the Dead will transcend all revealed levels of comprehension.

פירוש: הפירות היא ההשפעה הנשפעת ממקור הרחמים וחיי החיים ברוך הוא

This means that “the fruits” refers to the flow of benevolence which is bestowed by the Source of Compassion and the Fountainhead of Life, blessed be He.

ונמשכת למטה מטה, בבחינת השתלשלות העולמות מלמעלה למטה כו'

It issues ever netherwards, following the pattern of the evolution of the worlds from above downwards, and so on,

עד שמתלבשת בעולם הזה הגשמי, בבני חיי ומזוני כו'

until it vests itself in this physical world, in [the form of the blessings of] children, life and livelihood, and the like.

All these gifts, both spiritual and material, are deemed to be mere “fruits”, for just as fruits are not of the essence of a tree, but fall and are replaced, so, too, does this flow of benevolence undergo a transformation from world to world.

והקרן הוא כמו שכתוב: רחבה מצותך מאד

The “principal” relates to the verse,⁵ “Your commandment (*mitzvah*) is very wide.”

והוא ליה למימר: מצותך, לשון רבים

Now it should have said “Your commandments” (*mitzvot*), in the plural.

This would be the case, if the verse simply meant to say that the commandments in general are without end.

(וגם לשון רחבה אינו מובן)

(⁶The term “wide” is also puzzling.)

A more commonly expected term might have been “great”, “immense”, “lofty”, or the like.

אלא מצותך דייקא היא מצות הצדקה, שהיא מצות ה' ממש

However, the choice of the singular form of “Your commandment” alludes to the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, which is truly G-d’s *mitzvah*, the *mitzvah* He performs Himself,

מה שהקב"ה בכבודו ובעצמו עושה תמיד, להחיות העולמות

which the Holy One Himself, blessed be He, in all His majesty, performs at all times by animating the worlds,

ויעשה לעתיד ביתר שאת ועז

and will do so in the future with exceeding magnitude and intensity.

וכמו שכתוב: ושמרו דרך ה', לעשות צדקה גו'

It is likewise written,⁷ “And they shall observe the path of G-d, to do *tzedakah*...”; i.e., *tzedakah* is here described as G-d’s path.

כמו דרך שהולכים בה מעיר לעיר, על דרך משל

Metaphorically speaking, like a road on which one travels from one town to another,

כך הצדקה היא בחינת גילוי והארת אור אין סוף ברוך הוא, סובב כל עלמין

so, too, charity is a manifestation and radiation of the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light which encompasses all worlds,

שיאיר ויתגלה עד עולם הזה באתערותא דלתתא, בתורת צדקה וחסד חנם, לעתיד, בתחיית המתים

that will radiate and become manifest in the future, at the time of the Resurrection of the Dead, even to this world — in response to the arousal [initiated by mortals] from below, as expressed in charity and gratuitous kindness —

ביתר שאת ויתר עז לאין קץ מבחינת גילוי הארה ההארה בגן עדן התחתון והעליון

with a magnitude and force infinitely exceeding the state in which the radiation⁸ is manifested in the Lower and Higher levels of *Gan Eden*.

שהרי כל נשמות הצדיקים והתנאים והנביאים

The proof for this is: For the souls of all the *tzaddikim*,⁹ and of the *tannaim*¹⁰ who preceded them, and of the prophets¹¹ who pre-date the *tannaim*,

שהם עתה בגן עדן העליון, ברום המעלות

that are now in the Higher *Gan Eden*, at the peak of all levels,

יתלבשו בגופותיהם לעתיד, ויקומו בזמן התחייה, ליהנות מזיו השכינה

will become vested in their bodies in the time to come, and will arise at the time of the Resurrection,¹² to derive pleasure from the splendor of the *Shechinah*, which will then radiate in this world to the souls as they are vested within their bodies.

It is thus clear that this revelation will transcend by far the degree of revelation that can be attained in the Higher *Gan Eden*, so that it is worthwhile for souls which are so loftily situated to descend and enclothe themselves in physical bodies, in order to be able to receive it.

This revelation is purely an act of *tzedakah* and gratuitous kindness on G-d's part, for man's arousal from below is in no way intense enough to draw down such an immense degree of revelation; his spiritual service serves only as a vessel which enables him to receive it.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain what exactly it is about the revelation attainable in the World to Come that makes the revelation attainable even in the Higher *Gan Eden* pale in comparison.

לפי שההארה והגילוי שבגן עדן היא בחינת ממלא כל עלמין

For the manifestation and the radiation in *Gan Eden* are of the level called *Memaleh Kol Almin*¹³ — the light which “permeates all worlds”; i.e., the muted Divine life-force that contracts, descends and diminishes according to the receptive capacity of the particular created being which it is to permeate.

שהוא בחינת השתלשלות ממדרגה למדרגה, על ידי צמצומים עצומים

This [diminishment of the Divine life-force] is an evolving progression from one rung to another by means of immense contractions.

וכמאמר רז"ל: ביו"ד נברא עולם הבא

As was taught by our Sages, of blessed memory,¹⁴ “The World to Come — which here means *Gan Eden* — was created by the letter *yud*,” a letter limited and contracted to a single point.

והיא בחינת חכמה עילאה

This [letter] signifies the level of Supernal *Chochmah* (the first of the ten *Sefirot* of the World of *Atzilut*),

הנקראת עדן העליון

which is referred to as the Higher Eden, that surpasses the level of *Gan Eden*, inasmuch as *gan* implies only a garden *derived* from *Eden*, and not *Eden* itself,

המשתלשלת ומתלבשת בכל העולמות

and which evolves and becomes vested in all the worlds,

I.e., *Chochmah* descends and vests itself in all the worlds in order to continuously create and animate them,

כמו שכתוב: כולם בחכמה עשית גו'

as it is written,¹⁵ “You have made them all with *Chochmah*...”; i.e., all created beings derive from the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah*.

והחכמה תחיה גו'

[It is likewise written],¹⁶ “And *Chochmah* animates...,” again indicating that the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah* animates all the worlds.

ובגן עדן היא בבחינת גילוי ההשגה, לכל חד לפום שיעורא דיליה

In *Gan Eden* it is manifestly comprehensible to each according to his measure.

While the life-force that emanates from *Chochmah* is concealed from all other worlds, it is manifest in *Gan Eden*, so that the souls there are able to apprehend the Essence of Divinity.

כנודע שעונג הנשמות בגן עדן, הוא מהשגת סודות התורה שעסק בעולם הזה בנגלה

For, as is known, the delight of the souls in *Gan Eden* derives from [their] apprehension of the secrets of the Torah in whose revealed dimensions [they were] engaged in this world, so that what was secret in this world is revealed in *Gan Eden*,

כדאיתא בזוהר הקדוש, פרשת שלח

as is discussed in the sacred *Zohar, Parshat Shlach*,^{[17](#)}

The *Zohar* speaks there about the various heavenly “academies” such as “Moses’ Academy” and the “Heavenly Academy,” and so too an academy in which Miriam teaches righteous women.

ובגמרא, בעובדא דרבה בר נחמני

and in the *Gemara*,^{[18](#)} with reference to the incident involving Rabbah bar Nachmeni.

The *Gemara* describes a legal debate between G-d and the Heavenly Academy regarding ritual purity in a situation where it is doubtful whether “the *baheret* preceded the appearance of a white hair, or whether the white hair preceded the *baheret*.” It was agreed that Rabbah bar Nachmeni would render the decisive opinion because of his singular knowledge in the field of *Nega'im* and *Ohalot*. In *Likkutei Torah, Parshat Tazria*,^{[19](#)} the Alter Rebbe explains this specific dispute, as well as the concept of the Heavenly Academy in general.

At any rate, the revelation attainable in *Gan Eden* is that of *Memaleh Kol Almin*, in which only a limited degree of light filters through.

אבל גילוי ההארה שבתחיית המתים יהיה מבחינת סובב כל עלמין

The radiation of light at the time of the Resurrection, however, will become manifest from the level of *Sovev Kol Almin*,

שאינה בבחינת צמצום ושיעור וגבול, אלא בלי גבול ותכלית

which is not in a state of contraction, measure and limit, but is limitless and endless.

כמו שכתוב בלקוטי אמרים, פרק מ"ח, ביאור ענין סובב כל עלמין

The concept of *Sovev Kol Almin*, as has been explained in *Likkutei Amarim*, ch. 48,

שאינו כמשמעו, כמו עיגול, חס ושלום

is not to be understood literally, as resembling a sphere, heaven forfend; i.e., this superior order of light does not “encompass all worlds” *spatially*, so that it surrounds creation and remains exterior to it.

אלא שאינו בבחינת התלבשות וכו'

Rather, [it means that] it is not invested (implying adaptation) [within it]; instead of contracting itself to match the receptive capacity of the particular created being that it animates, it affects it — even from within — while remaining on its own level.

ועיין שם היטב

Note there carefully.

וזהו שאמרו רז"ל: ועטרותיהם בראשיהם, ונהנין כו'

And this is the meaning of the teaching of our Sages, of blessed memory:²⁰ “[In the World to Come — here meaning *Gan Eden* — there is no eating and drinking..., but the righteous sit] with their crowns on their heads, and they take delight [in the radiance of the Divine Presence].”²¹

עטרה היא בחינת מקיף וסובב

A crown (*atarah*) is something that encompasses and encircles,

This refers to an illumination that neither contracts nor adapts itself so that it can be vested in varying degrees within created beings; rather, it descends to the worlds²² and encompasses them all equally.

ונקרא כתר, מלשון כותרת

and is called *keter*, as related to *koteret*, the capital which crowns a column,²³ as in the *Beit HaMikdash* built by King Solomon (*I Kings*, ch. 7).

Atarah is thus a crown worn on the head,²⁴ while *keter* means (as well) the crown atop a column.

Since the illumination of light from the *Sefirah* of *Keter* that will be revealed in the World to Come results from the performance of the *mitzvot* that are likened to 620 תר"ך columns of light (corresponding to the 613 Torah commandments and seven Rabbinic commandments, numerically equal to the word (כתר),²⁵ the Alter Rebbe also explains the term “crown” as it applies to a column.

והוא בחינת ממוצע המחבר הארת המאציל, אין סוף ברוך הוא, להנאצלים

[The *Sefirah* of *Keter*] is an intermediary which joins the radiation and revelation of the Emanator, the blessed *Ein Sof*, to the emanated beings in the World of *Atzilut*,

The Emanator is infinite, while the emanated beings — which are within a world, and even the loftiest of worlds is bound by limitation — are finite. There must therefore be an intermediary between the two. It is the *Sefirah* of *Keter* that serves as this intermediary, for its internal dimension is related to the Emanator and its external dimension is related to the emanated beings. It is thus through the *Sefirah* of *Keter* that the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light is drawn into the World of *Atzilut* and to the emanated beings which populate it.

ולעתיד יאיר ויתגלה בעולם הזה, לכל הצדיקים שיקומו בתחייה

and in the future it will radiate and become revealed in this world to all the righteous who will rise with the Resurrection,

ועמך כולם צדיקים כו'

([26](#)“And Your people are all righteous[27](#)...”[28](#)

This transcendent degree of Divine light will thus be revealed to the entire Jewish people.

Accordingly, the illumination that presently is received only by those beings that inhabit the World of *Atzilut* will radiate in the World to Come to this physical world as well. For unlike the indwelling illumination of *Gan Eden* that is dependent upon the level and comprehension of each recipient, this revelation is an encompassing light from the *Sefirah* of *Keter*, which does not undergo contraction, but radiates to all equally.

This results in a state of total revelation, whereby the very Essence of Divinity is visually perceived (*re'iyat hamahut*), as it is written,[29](#) “The glory of G-d shall be revealed, and together all flesh shall see...”

וזהו שאמרו רז"ל: עתידים צדיקים שיאמרו לפניהם קדוש

And this is the meaning of the teaching of our Sages, of blessed memory:[30](#) “In the future the righteous will be lauded as holy,” as G-d is praised now.

כי קדוש הוא בחינת מובדל

For “holy” signifies [lofty] separation;

שאינו בגדר השגה ודעת

it is not subject to apprehension and knowledge,

כי הוא למעלה מעלה מבחינת החכמה ודעת שבגן עדן

because it transcends by far the wisdom and knowledge which are attainable in *Gan Eden*.

כי החכמה מאין תמצא, כתיב

For Scripture states,³¹ “*Chochmah* shall be found from *ayin* (‘naught’).”

הוא בחינת כתר עליון, הנקרא אין בזהור הקדוש

This refers to the Supreme *Keter* which, in the sacred *Zohar*,³² is called *ayin*;

והשפעתו והארתו בבחינת גילוי, הוא דוקא כשהנשמה תתלבש בגוף זך וצח אחר התחיה

and the bestowal of its radiance is manifest, i.e., its essence is apprehended, only when, after the Resurrection, the soul is vested in a pure and clear body.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain why in *Gan Eden*, when the soul is not encumbered by a body, the light of *Keter* cannot be manifest, whereas — paradoxically — this revelation becomes possible only in the World to Come at the time of the Resurrection, when the soul is once again invested within a body.

(For, as is well known,³³ the determining opinion is that of the *Ramban*,³⁴ who states that the ultimate reward will be specifically at the time of the Resurrection, when the soul will again be found within a body.)

כי נעוץ תחלתן בסופן דוקא

For³⁵ “Their beginning (i.e., the loftiest initial level) is wedged in their end.”

This is explained in the teachings of *Chassidut*³⁶ as follows: “Beginning” refers to a level of Divinity that utterly transcends the evolvement of any created worlds. This level of Divinity is wedged in the last level preceding the creation of the evolving worlds, the *Sefirah* of *Keter*. *Keter* is revealed only in the “end” of all worlds — i.e., *within this physical world* — during the time of the Resurrection. *Gan Eden*, by contrast, is incapable of receiving this transcendent level of revelation in an internalized manner.

Thus, while the lesser radiance that is muted to match the respective limitations of the evolving worlds can be absorbed by the soul (in *Gan Eden*) in its disembodied state, the transcendent radiance issuing from *Keter* is revealed to the soul only when it is clothed within a body.

וסוף מעשה במחשבה תחלה כו', כנודע

Likewise, as is known,³⁷ “The final deed — i.e., the last stage of creation: this physical world — was first in thought....”

Thought and creation both have aspects that are “first” and “last”; the “last” (i.e., lowest) level of creation, which is this world, is rooted in the “beginning” (i.e., in the highest level) of the Divine thought.

This is why specifically the deeds performed in this “last” world of creation, while the soul is clothed in a physical body, are able to elicit and draw down the radiance of *Keter*. As explained here by the Alter Rebbe, this refers to the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, as well as to *mitzvot* in general, all of which are termed “*tzedakah*”.³⁸ For it is the performance of physical *mitzvot* in this material world that arose first in G-d’s thought and will, at the level of the Divine *Keter*, for the physical *mitzvot* are the ultimate purpose of creation.

Returning to the earlier discussion: It is now clear why in future time the righteous (and “Your people are *all* righteous”) will be lauded as holy: they will all have revealed to them that Divine radiance that is “holy” in the sense that it transcends apprehension. Moreover, they will become so unified with this revelation that the term “holy” will apply to them as well.

אך אי אפשר להגיע למדרגה זו, עד שיהא בגן עדן תחלה

But it is impossible to attain this level of being able to absorb the transcendent light of *Sovev Kol Almin*, until one has first been in *Gan Eden*,

להשיג בחינת חכמה עילאה כו' אפשר צריך להיות: כל חד כפום שיעורא דיליה

to apprehend a degree of the Supernal *Chochmah*,³⁹ each⁴⁰ according to his measure.

For, as explained earlier, the lesser Divine light that radiates in *Gan Eden* is received by each soul according to its own particular degree.

וטל תורה מחייהו

(The Rebbe adds here that the soul will then rise at the time of the Resurrection of the Dead through the “dew of the Torah,” for, as our Sages teach,⁴¹ “[Whoever engages in the study of the Torah,] the dew of Torah revives him [at the time of the Resurrection].”

The verse upon which our Sages base this teaching reads:⁴² “Your dead shall be resurrected...; those who lie in the dust shall awaken and sing joyful praises; for the Dew of Lights shall be your dew....” It is thus clear that the revival effected by “the dew of the Torah” refers to the Resurrection of the Dead.

והקיצות, היא תשיחך גו', ודי למבין

(The Rebbe adds: *Thereafter*,⁴³ “When you will awaken, it (i.e., the Torah) will cause you to speak...,” and this promise, as expounded in *Avot*,⁴⁴ refers to the time of the World to Come. This will suffice for the discerning.

In order to attain the level of *Sovev Kol Almin* at the time of the Resurrection, the soul must first be in *Gan Eden* and apprehend Supernal *Chochmah* according to its particular degree and level. For though in *Gan Eden* the soul apprehends no higher than the lesser, permeating Divine light called *Memaleh Kol Almin*, its perception is nevertheless augmented by the light of *Keter* which also illumines it. The soul indeed apprehends the latter enlightenment only to the extent of *yediat hametziut* (lit., “a knowledge of its existence”; i.e., by the “encompassing” perception known as *makkif*), rather than with the penetrating revelation of *hassagat hamahut* (lit., “an understanding of its essence”).⁴⁵ Nevertheless, this added illumination enables the soul at the time of the Resurrection to comprehend the essence of the revelation of *Sovev Kol Almin*.

Since, as stated above, the soul in *Gan Eden* apprehends indwelling lights, its experience of *Gan Eden* consists of the revelation of the Torah within the soul, so to speak, for the Torah is likened to “food” (as in the verse,⁴⁶ “for Your Torah is within my inward parts”) — i.e., something that affects one from within, as explained at length above, in Part I, ch. 5. However, *Gan Eden* is also illumined by a glimmering of the radiation that results from the performance of *mitzvot*, and these act as “garments” and “encompassing lights” for the soul in *Gan Eden*, as mentioned in the above letter.

At the time of the World to Come, at the time of the Resurrection, the superior light of *Sovev Kol Almin* will be revealed chiefly as a result of one’s present performance of *mitzvot*. This comes about through and together with the “dew of Torah” that “revives him” and “causes [him] to speak.”

The Alter Rebbe now returns to the above-quoted verse, “Your commandment is very wide.” Having earlier explained that “Your commandment” (in the singular) refers to G-d’s own commandment, viz., *tzedakah*, he now goes on to explain the words, “is very wide”: the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* is a vessel so capacious that it can contain the revelation of G-d’s infinite light at the time of the Resurrection.

וזהו: רחבה מצותך מאד

And this is the meaning of [the verse], “And your commandment is very wide.”

היא מצות הצדקה, שהיא כלי ושטח רחב מאד, להתלבש בה הארת אור אין סוף ברוך הוא

This refers to the precept of charity, which is a vessel of great volume, in which the radiation from the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light may be invested,

וכמו שכתוב: לבושו צדקה

(⁴⁷as it is written,⁴⁸ “His garment is *tzedakah*”).

אשר יאיר לעתיד בבחינת בלי גבול ותכלית

In the future this [light] will radiate without limit or end,

בחסד חנם באתערותא דלתתא זו, הנקראת דרך ה'

with a gratuitous [Divine] kindness elicited by this arousal from below — by the kindness and *tzedakah* initiated by man — which is called “the path of G-d.”

As mentioned above, even when this Divine revelation is granted in response to an arousal from below it is still considered “gratuitous kindness,” for it is granted out of all proportion to man’s actions; man’s *tzedakah* is no more than a vessel which enables him to receive the benevolence of this Divine revelation.

וזהו לשון מאד, שהוא בלי גבול ותכלית

And this is the meaning of the term “very [wide],” signifying limitlessness and endlessness: *tzedakah* acts as an infinitely wide vessel for receiving an infinite degree of G-d-liness.

אבל: לכל תכלה ראיתי קץ

However, at the beginning of the verse quoted above,⁴⁹ [it is written,] “To every *tichlah* (lit., “conclusion”) I have seen an end.”

תכלה היא מלשון כלות הנפש שבגן עדן

The word *tichlah* is related to the term *kalot hanefesh*, the intense yearning — to the point of expiry — of the soul in *Gan Eden*,

שהיא בבחינת קץ ותכלית וצמצום, כנ"ל

for it (i.e., the Divine light that is yearned for in *Gan Eden*) does have an end and a limit, and undergoes contraction, as mentioned above: this is the radiation of the finite light called *Memaleh Kol Almin*.

Likkutei Levi Yitzchak, authored by the father of the Rebbe, explains how “end”, “limit” and “contraction” respectively refer to three kinds of illumination that radiate within *Gan Eden*. It also explains why the verse chooses to use the word “end” rather than “limit” or “contraction.”

ולכל תכלה

As to the term “to every [kind of] *tichlah*,” when the verse is alluding only to the yearning of souls in *Gan Eden*,

הוא לפי שיש כמה וכמה מעלות ומדרגות גן עדן, זה למעלה מזה, עד רום המעלות

this is used because there are numerous levels and rungs of *Gan Eden*, one higher than the other, to the topmost of levels.

כמו שכתוב בלקוטי הש"ס מהאריז"ל, בפירוש מאמר רז"ל: תלמידי חכמים אין להם מנוחה כו'

As is written in *Likkutei HaShas* by R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, in explanation of the teaching of our Sages, of blessed memory,⁵⁰ “Torah scholars have no rest [in this world nor in the next],”

שעולים תמיד ממדרגה למדרגה בהשגת התורה, שאין לה סוף כו'

because they are constantly rising from level to level in [their] grasp of the Torah, which has no end... —

עד אחר התחיה, שיהיה להם מנוחה כו'

until after the Resurrection, when they will have rest..., for that time will be⁵¹ “a day which is entirely *Shabbat*, and rest.”

At that time there will be revealed a radiance from G-d's Essence that utterly transcends levels; elevation from level to level will thus be not only impossible but also unnecessary. At that time mortal souls will finally find repose, as they delight in the radiance of G-d's Essence.

FOOTNOTES ¹. *Zohar* I, 88a. ². Note of the Rebbe: “*Mishnah* at the beginning of *Peah*; *Peirush HaMishnayot* there; see also the *maamar* entitled *Kol HaMeracheim* 5709 (*Sefer HaMaamarim* 5709, on p. 7 of the second pagination).” ³. *Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah* 8:8. ⁴. Note of the Rebbe: “See also ch. 48 [of Part I].” ⁵. *Tehillim* 119:96. ⁶. Parentheses are in the original text. ⁷. *Bereishit* 18:19. ⁸. Parentheses and brackets are in the original text. ⁹. Note of the Rebbe: “*Mitzvot*.” ¹⁰. Note of the Rebbe: “Torah.” ¹¹. Note of the Rebbe: “Revelation of G-dliness.” ¹². Note of the Rebbe: “It will be noted that the Alter Rebbe distinguishes between two periods (which implies that they are of distinct content): the time to come, and the Resurrection. This requires further examination.” ¹³. Note of the Rebbe: “See ch. 48 [of Part I].” ¹⁴. *Menachot* 29b. ¹⁵. *Tehillim* 104:24. ¹⁶. *Kohelet* 7:12. ¹⁷. P. 163a. ¹⁸. *Bava Metzia* 86a. ¹⁹. See the *maamar* that begins, *Ka Mifligei biMetivta deRakia*. ²⁰. *Berachot* 17a. ²¹. Note of the Rebbe: “The former phrase (‘with their crowns on their heads’) alludes to *makkif*, the encompassing light; adding to this, the latter phrase (‘and they take delight [in the Divine Presence]’) alludes to *pnimi*, the indwelling light.” ²². At this point the Rebbe noted that although this illumination is present even in the lower worlds, it cannot be said that it illumines them with the same degree of luminosity as in its own inherent state. For while it is true that the light of “*Sovev Kol Almin* illumines all worlds equally, there yet remains an entirely separate question — whether it is revealed [to the worlds to quite the same degree] as it exists in itself [which indeed it does not do]. [By way of analogy:] Though a king's august majesty transcends all of his subjects equally, their perception of it does not at all resemble its own intrinsic state. (Indeed, this is true not only with regard to the king's objective essence, but even insofar as he is revealed to — and is aware of — himself.)” ²³. Note of the Rebbe: “I.e., *this* is the etymology that is relevant here, rather than that of *katar li* [*Iyov* 36:2; lit., ‘wait for me’], which implies silence and abnegation. (See *Likkutei Torah*,

Bamidbar 69a; beginning of *Hemshech* 5672.)” [24.](#) Cf. *Tehillim* 21:4. [25.](#) Cf. the prayer of R. Nechuniah ben Hakanah, cited and expounded in Epistle 29, below. [26.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [27.](#) *Yeshayahu* 60:21. [28.](#)

Note of the Rebbe: “This verse is cited here, for this is one of the differences between the time of the Resurrection and *Gan Eden*. As to the former, ‘Your people are *all* righteous,’ whereas *Gan Eden* is not merited by all (see *Torah Or*, *Parshat Yitro* 73b; *Likkutei Torah*; and elsewhere).”

Although the Alter Rebbe says below that “it is impossible to attain this level until one has first been in *Gan Eden*,” which would seem to presuppose that all Jews will merit *Gan Eden* as well, the Rebbe notes that when the Alter Rebbe writes above that “Your people are all righteous” he means only that “they will all *rise* at the Resurrection, which will embrace everyone from Moshe Rabbeinu and the Patriarchs and so on, to the water-drawers. And it is self-evident that there will be enormous distinctions between their respective revelations at that time, each according to his measure (in *Gan Eden*), and so on.”

[29.](#) *Yeshayahu* 40:5. [30.](#) *Bava Batra* 75b. [31.](#) *Iyov* 28:12. Note of the Rebbe: “In the place where *Chochmah* is to be found (*Gan Eden*), [the level of] *Keter* is in a state of concealment — *ayin*.” [32.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “See *Mishpatim* 121a: ‘And *Chochmah*...,’ and elsewhere.” [33.](#) See *Sefer HaMitzvot* of the *Tzemach Tzedek* (*Derech Mitzvo-techa*), *Mitzvat Tzitzit*. See also *Likkutei Torah*, *Parshat Tzav*, p. 15c. [34.](#) *Shaar HaGemul*. [35.](#) *Sefer Yetzirah* 1:7. [36.](#) *Hemshech* 5666, p. 346. [37.](#) From the Friday night hymn entitled *Lechah Dodi* (*Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 132). [38.](#) See *Tanya*, Part I, ch. 37; see also below, Epistle 32. [39.](#) The parentheses and brackets are in the original Hebrew text. [40.](#) The parenthetical text means “etc.”, and the bracketed text that follows it suggests instead “each one.” The Rebbe notes that the anomalous “etc.” grew out of a copyist’s error in which its Hebrew abbreviation כ”ה was substituted for כ”ה, an abbreviation for כל (each one). [41.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Cf. *Ketubbot* 111b, and see above, conclusion of ch. 36.” See also *Likkutei Sichot*, Vol. XI, p. 193 (footnote). [42.](#) *Yeshayahu* 26:19. [43.](#) *Mishlei* 6:22. [44.](#) 6:9. [45.](#) *Likkutei Torah*, *Parshat Tazria*, in the maamar that begins, *Ka Mifligei biMetivta deRakia*. [46.](#) *Tehillim* 40:9. [47.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [48.](#) From a *piyyut* (*Machzor* for *Rosh HaShanah*, p. 98; *Machzor* for *Yom Kippur*, p. 118). [49.](#) *Tehillim* 119:96. [50.](#) Conclusion of Tractate *Berachot*. [51.](#) Conclusion of Tractate *Tamid*.

Epistle 18

As noted earlier, the overwhelming majority of the letters that the Alter Rebbe’s sons included here as part of the *Tanya*, were intended to encourage active divine service,¹ particularly through the giving of *tzedakah* for the Kollel Chabad Fund. (This Fund

supported fellow chassidim who had settled in the Holy Land, there to serve G-d through Torah and prayer.)

Accordingly, these themes should be sought even in a letter such as the one that follows, which does not refer to them directly. If at all possible, one should also seek to connect this letter to the one which precedes it, and thus understand why the author's sons placed it where they did.²

In the present letter the Alter Rebbe elaborates upon two general categories in the love of G-d. The first category of love is granted man only as a gift from Above: he cannot attain it by dint of his own service. This pleasurable experience of Divinity is termed³ *ahavah betaanugim* ("a love which experiences delights"), and is a foretaste of the World to Come, wherein the soul basks in the rays of the *Shechinah*. The second category of love for G-d — longing and thirsting for Him — can be attained through man's service and meditation.

The connection between this letter and the previous one, and its lesson in man's divine service (particularly with respect to charity), may then be the following:

The previous letter extolled the merit of serving G-d through *tzedakah*, whereby one simultaneously secures the revelations of *Gan Eden* and of the World to Come, the time of the Resurrection.

The difference in revelation between *Gan Eden* and the World to Come is that *Gan Eden* reveals but a "glimmer of a glimmer" of that which is accomplished through the performance of a *mitzvah* — its "fruits", while the World to Come reveals the reward of the very essence of the *mitzvah*. Both *Gan Eden* and the World to Come — to a greater or lesser degree — reveal and enable the soul to apprehend the essential Divinity that underlies the *mitzvah*.

But all the merits of both the above levels relate only to a consequence of the *mitzvah*, viz., its revelations. The nucleus of the *mitzvah* is the fact that through performing it the individual cleaves to G-d, for מצוה is related to צוותא, signifying attachment. And this nucleus surfaces at the actual time of performance. It is for this reason that our Sages teach that⁴ "Better one hour in repentance and good deeds in this world than all of the World to Come"; the actual practice of repentance and good deeds (for by prefacing the deeds with repentance they become "good" and "luminous"⁵) in this world is superior to all the lofty spiritual levels of *Gan Eden* and the World to Come.

However, lofty as actual performance may be, its effects are totally concealed; man is neither aware of them nor does his soul perceive them at all. In this letter, therefore, the Alter Rebbe explains the two categories of love, for the love of G-d is a feeling that is manifest in the soul.

The first, *ahavah betaanugim* ("a love that experiences delights"), is related to the revelation in the World to Come, at the time of the Resurrection. For just as at that time⁶

“the righteous will sit with their crowns on their heads, and take delight in the radiance of the Divine Presence,” so too is this love a pleasurable love; in the words of the Alter Rebbe, “It is truly a foretaste of the World to Come.”

The second manner of love — a thirstful longing for G-d and a desire to cleave to Him — is a revelation similar to that of *Gan Eden*, for there too there is a limited degree of longing for G-d, as explained in the previous letter at length.

Thus, when a Jew performs a *mitzvah* he not only cleaves to G-d unawares: some aspect of this contact may also become revealed within his soul — both the revelation which foreshadows that of *Gan Eden* and even the revelation which anticipates the World to Come at the time of the Resurrection.

And even though *ahavah betaanugim* is a gift bestowed upon lofty souls from Above, some echo of it may resonate within any Jew when his wholehearted performance of the *mitzvot* is vitalized by his love of G-d.⁷

כתיב: מה יפית ומה נעמת, אהבה בתענוגים

It is written,⁸ “How beautiful and how pleasant are you, *ahavah betaanugim*!”

I.e., “How beautiful and pleasant it is to cleave to You with *ahavah betaanugim*” — with a love that experiences delight in the state of cleaving to the beloved, as opposed to a love in which the lover seeks to cleave to the beloved.

הנה ב' מיני אהבות הן

There are two kinds of love, each of which subdivides further.

האחת: אהבה בתענוגים

The first is *ahavah betaanugim*,

דהיינו, שמתענג על ה' עונג נפלא

meaning that one delights wondrously in G-d,

בשמחה רבה ועצומה, שמחת הנפש וכלותה, בטעמה כי טוב ה'

with a great and immense joy, the joy of the soul and its yearning as it tastes that G-d is good⁹

ונעים נעימות עריבות עד להפליא

and as delightful as wondrously sweet delights.

This sweetness is not sensed as a result of one's comprehension; rather, this is a sensation of wonderment at that which transcends one's comprehension.

מעין עולם הבא ממש, שנהנין כו'

It is truly a foretaste of the World to Come, where¹⁰ “[the righteous will sit with their crowns on their heads], and take delight [in the radiance of the Divine Presence].”

ועל זה כתיב: שמחו צדיקים בה'

Concerning this pleasurable experience of G-dliness it is written,¹¹ “Rejoice, you righteous, in G-d,”

ולא כל אדם זוכה לזה

and not everyone merits this.

וזו היא בחינת כהנא ברעותא דלבא, שבזוהר הקדוש

This is the level [of love] which the sacred *Zohar* refers to in the phrase,¹² *kahana bire'uta delibba*.

Lit., “The *Kohen* [serves G-d] with the [innermost] desire of the heart”. As opposed to the Levites, whose longing for G-d surged forth (*ratzo*) and found outward expression in song, the service of the *Kohanim* was silent.

ועל זה נאמר: עבודת מתנה וגו'

Moreover, of this [level of love] it is said,¹³ “[I shall grant you your priestly] service as a gift,”

The priestly level of love, *ahavah betaanugim*, is a gift from Above.

והזר הקרב וגו'

“and the stranger who comes nigh — i.e., to this manner of service — [is liable to death],”¹⁴

כי אין דרך להשיגה על ידי יגיעת בשר, כמו היראה

for there is no way to attain it by human efforts, as there is with the awe of G-d,

ששואלין עליה: יגעת ביראה

concerning which [the departed soul] is asked [in the next world],¹⁵ “Did you labor with awe?”

I.e., “Did you toil to acquire an awe of G-d?”

ואוי לבשר שלא נתייגע ביראה

Likewise, “Woe to the mortal who did not labor with awe,”

כמו שכתוב בראשית חכמה

as is written in *Reishit Chochmah*.

וכתיב ביראה: אם תבקשנה ככסף וגו'

Of awe it is also written,¹⁶“If you will seek it like silver, [and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will attain a fear of G-d...].”

מלמד שצריכה יגיעה רבה ועצומה, כמחפש אחר אוצרות

This shows that it requires great and intense exertion, as when one searches for treasure.

It has already been explained (in Part I, ch. 42) that when one digs for a treasure that he knows beyond the shadow of a doubt lies buried in the depths of the earth, he will seek it tirelessly. Knowing with certainty that the fear of heaven lies buried in the understanding of the heart of every Jew, will lead to similar untiring efforts in revealing this spiritual treasure.

However, this only applies to the fear and awe of G-d; even the loftiest degree of awe, *yirah ilaah*, is attainable through man's efforts.

אבל אהבה רבה זו אהבה בתענוגים נופלת לאדם מאליה מלמעלה, בלי שיכין ויכוון לה

By contrast, this great love (¹⁷*ahavah betaanugim*) comes upon a man by itself, from Above, without his preparing and intending himself for it,

אך ורק אחר שנתייגע ביראת הרוממות

but only after he has exerted himself in *yirat haromemut*, to attain the higher level of fear wherein he stands in awe of G-d's Majesty,

והגיע לתכלית מה שיוכל להשיג ממנה, לפי בחינת נשמתו

and after he has attained the maximum he is able to attain of that [awe], according to the level of his soul;

אזי ממילא באה האהבה בתענוגים מלמעלה לשכון ולתייחד עם היראה

then, of itself, the *ahavah betaanugim* comes from Above to dwell, and to become united, with the awe.

כי דרכו של איש לחזור כו', כמו שכתוב בלקוטי אמרים

For [18](#) “It is the way of the man to search [for the woman],” as explained in *Likkutei Amarim*.

In Part I, ch. 43, the Alter Rebbe explains that love is termed “man” or “male”, while fear is termed “woman” (as in the verse, [19](#) “A woman who fears G-d...”). In spiritual terms, “It is the way of the man to search for the woman” means that the love of G-d searches for the fear of G-d and dwells with it.

Having spoken until now of the higher category in the love of G-d called *ahavah betaanugim*, the Alter Rebbe now proceeds to consider the lesser love, *ahavah zuta*.

והשנית היא אהבה ותאוה, שהנפש מתאוה ואוהבת וחפצה לדבקה בה'

The second [category] is a love and desire in which the soul desires, loves and wishes to cleave to G-d,

לצרור בצרור החיים

“to be bound up in the bond of life.” [20](#)

וקרבת אלקים טוב לה מאד, ובו תחפוץ

The proximity to G-d is very dear to her, and that is what she desires.

ורע לה מאד להתרחק ממנו יתברך, חס ושלום

It is most grievous unto her to become, heaven forbid, distanced from Him, blessed be He,

להיות מחיצה של ברזל מהחיצונים מפסקת, חס ושלום

by having an iron partition of the *chitzonim*, the forces of *kelipah* and unholiness, separate her [from Him], heaven forbid.

Thus, inherent in the soul’s love for G-d is its anxious fear of being alienated from Him by a partition resulting from those things that are opposite His will.

Likkutei Levi Yitzchak, authored by the father of the Rebbe, explains that the four terms used above — “desires”, “loves”, “wishes” and “cleaves” — refer respectively to the soul-levels within the Four Worlds: “desires” relates to the World of *Asiyah*, “loves” relates to the World of *Yetzirah*, and so on.

ואהבה זו היא מוסתרת בלב כלל ישראל, אפילו ברשעים

This love is latent in the heart of all Jews, even in the wicked, as explained at length in Part I, chs. 18 and 19,

וממנה באה להם החרטה

and from this [latent love] derives their remorse, as in the phrase,²¹ “The wicked are full of remorse.”

The Alter Rebbe now answers the following implied question: If they indeed possess this love, why then are they wicked?

אך מפני שהיא מוסתרת ונעלמה בבחינת גלות בגוף, הרי הקליפה יכולה לשלוט עליה

However, because it is latent and concealed, in a state of exile in the body, it is possible for the *kelipah* to dominate it;

וזהו רוח שטות המחטיא לאדם

and this is the “spirit of folly” which causes a man to sin.²²

The “spirit of folly” cloaks this hidden love (*ahavah mesuteret*), so that one loses the sensitivity to realize that through sinning he is jeopardizing his attachment to G-d.

ועל כן עבודת האדם לקונו היא להתחזק ולהתגבר על הקליפה, בכל מכל כל

Therefore a man’s service to his Maker consists of strengthening himself and prevailing over the *kelipah* in all its manifestations.

דהיינו: מתחלה, לגרשה מהגוף לגמרי

That is, first to expel it completely from the body, so that it has absolutely no dominion over him —

ממחשבה דבור ומעשה, שבמוח ולשון ורמ”ח אברים

[expelling it] from the [faculties of] thought, speech and action that are in the brain, the tongue, and the 248 organs.

Expelling the *kelipah* means ensuring that one’s brain will harbor no thoughts that are contrary to G-d’s will; that one’s tongue will speak no evil words; that one’s 248 organs will commit no evil acts.

ואחר כך יוכל גם כן להוציא ממסגר אסיר, בחוזק יד

After that he will also be able to²³ “bring out the captive from prison” with a strong hand.

Once one has vanquished the *kelipah* by steadfastly²⁴ “turning away from evil” — not thinking, speaking or doing those things that are contrary to G-d’s will — he is then able to uncover the love that is latent within him, so that it will permeate his positive thoughts, words and deeds. His mind will thus ponder upon G-d’s greatness, and his heart will then actively feel a love for G-d. In turn, this love will result in his enhanced fulfillment of the Torah and its *mitzvot*.

דהיינו: להיות חזק ואמיץ לבו בגבורים

That is, he will be strong,²⁵ “and his heart courageous among the valiant,”

להיות האהבה המסותרת נגלית בגילוי רב, בכל כחות חלקי הנפש שבגוף

so that the hidden love will become abundantly revealed in all the powers of the soul’s components in his body;

דהיינו: העיקר, בשכל ובמחשבה שבמוח

i.e., mainly in the mind and in the [faculty of] thought in the brain,

The mind serves to reveal this love, which then manifests throughout the rest of the person’s organs.

שהשכל יחשב ויתבונן תמיד, כפי שכלו והשכלתו, בבורא יתברך

so that corresponding to its intellect and understanding the mind will constantly think and contemplate on the blessed Creator —

איך שהוא חיי החיים בכלל, וחיי נשמתו בפרט

how He is the Fountainhead of life in general, and of the life of his own soul in particular.

ועל כן יכסוף ויתאוה להיות דבוק בו וקרוב אליו כוסף טבעי

Consequently, he will yearn and desire to be attached to Him, and near to Him, with an innate yearning,

כבן הכוסף להיות תמיד אצל אביו, וכמו אש העולה למעלה תמיד בטבעה, למקורה

like that of a child who yearns to be constantly near his father, and like fire which by its very nature always rises upwards to its source, as explained in Part I, ch. 19.

וכל מה שיתמיד לחשוב בשכלו כוסף זה, ככה יתגבר ויתפשט כוסף זה גם בפיו ובכל אבריו

And the more he continues to set his mind on this yearning, the more will this yearning become correspondingly stronger, and will also extend to his mouth and to all his organs,

לעסוק בתורה ומצות, לדבקה בהם בה' ממש

so that he will occupy himself with the Torah and the commandments in order to really cleave thereby to G-d,

דאורייתא וקודשא בריך הוא כולא חד

for²⁶ “The Torah and the Holy One, blessed be He, are entirely One.”

This love will thus affect his brain, mouth and other bodily organs, motivating them to study Torah and perform the commandments with a greater degree of love.

ועל כוסף זה, שבגילוי רב, כתיב: צמאה נפשי וגו'

Of this greatly manifest yearning, i.e., of this love, it is written,²⁷ “My soul thirsts [for G-d],”

כאדם הצמא למים, ואין לו תענוג עדיין כלל

like a person who thirsts for water and does not yet have any pleasure [from it].

This level of love for G-d is likened to a state of thirst. At this stage the individual seeking to cleave to G-d does not experience any delight, for he has yet to cleave to Him: all he feels is the pangs of thirst. In the previously-described level of love, *ahavah betaanugim*, the individual has already quenched his thirst, so to speak: his love for G-d has been realized and he is now actively cleaving to Him.

וגם על כוסף זה ואהבה זו המוסתרת בנו, אנו מעתירים לה' להיות בעזרנו, להוציאה ממסגר

Also²⁸ concerning this yearning and this love concealed within us we pray to G-d, to help us bring it out from imprisonment,

It is indeed true that this lesser degree of love is attainable by man and need not be granted as a gift from Above; it is already possessed by every Jew and he need but reveal it through his spiritual service. Nevertheless we beseech G-d that He help us reveal this love and liberate it from its concealment.

ושיהיה הלב מלא ממנה לבדה

so that the heart be filled with it alone,

ולא תכנס צרתה בביתה, שהיא תאות עולם הזה

so that its “rival-wife,” i.e., mundane desires, will not enter its house, i.e., our hearts.

רק שתהיה היא עקרת הבית, למשול בצרתה ולגרשה החוצה, ממחשבה דיבור ומעשה, על כל פנים

Rather, this [yearning and love] should be the sole mistress of the house, to rule over her “rival-wife” and to expel her at least from one’s thought, speech and action.

הגם שלא יוכל לשלחה לגמרי מלבו

Though one cannot expel her altogether from one’s heart, so that it should harbor no foreign desires at all,

For we are speaking here of the love possessed by the *Beinoni*, an individual who is unable to banish foreign desires from his heart; he is only able to ensure that they find no expression in his thought, his speech or his actions, as explained in *Tanya*, Part I, ch. 12.

על כל פנים תהיה היא מוסתרת, בבחינת גלות ועבדות לעקרת הבית, גברתה

she should at least be hidden, in a state of exile and servitude to the mistress of the house, i.e., to the love for G-d,

להשתמש בה לדברים הכרחים לה, לבד, כאכילה ושתייה

who will make use of her for her own essentials only, such as eating and drinking,

If the G-dly soul is to remain within the body and thereby be able to fulfill the requirements of the Torah and its *mitzvot*, the individual must eat and drink. He should therefore use the animal soul’s natural desire for physical things expressly for the spiritual purposes of the G-dly soul. Thus, for example, his food and drink are intended to provide him with strength so that he will be able to study the Torah, engage in divine service, and the like.

כדכתיב: בכל דרכיך דעהו

as it is written,²⁹ “Know Him in all your ways.”

“Your ways” clearly speaks of man’s corporeal activities. Yet even in these we are commanded to “know Him” — to bind oneself to G-d through these physical actions, by utilizing them for the purposes designated by Him, in order thereby to “know Him.”³⁰

FOOTNOTES ^{1.} Note of the Rebbe: “In the words of the ‘Approbation of the rabbis, long may they live, sons of the illustrious author of blessed memory, whose soul is in Eden,’ [these letters were mostly written] ‘in order to teach the people of G-d the way by which they should walk and the deed which they should do.’” ^{2.} Note of the Rebbe: “For they were arranged not by date but by topic (*Sefer HaSichot* 5705, p. 110).” ^{3.} *Shir HaShirim* 7:7. ^{4.} *Avot* 4:17. ^{5.} *Likkutei Torah, Matot* 82a et al. ^{6.} *Berachot* 17a. ^{7.} See

Likkutei Torah, Masei 90b-c. [8.](#) *Shir HaShirim* 7:7. [9.](#) Cf. *Tehillim* 34:9. [10.](#) *Berachot* 17a. [11.](#) *Ibid.* 97:12. [12.](#) See *Zohar* III, 177b. [13.](#) *Bamidbar* 18:7. [14.](#) *Ibid.* [15.](#) Cf. *Shabbat* 31a. [16.](#) *Mishlei* 2:4-5. [17.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [18.](#) *Kiddushin* 2b. [19.](#) *Mishlei* 31:30, as interpreted in *Zohar* III, 27a. [20.](#) *I Shmuel* 25:29. [21.](#) *Shevet Mussar*, sec. 25. [22.](#) *Sotah* 3a. [23.](#) *Yeshayahu* 42:7. [24.](#) Cf. *Tehillim* 34:15. [25.](#) *Amos* 2:16. [26.](#) See *Zohar* I, 24a; II, 60a. [27.](#) *Tehillim* 42:3. [28.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “This [passage on the need for prayer in arousing the second level of love] had to be added here, [to the above passage on the role of meditation], in view of the statement in Epistle 4 that this [level of love] is revealed not by meditation but [only] by prayer and *tzedakah*. [The fact that both prayer and meditation are mentioned here makes it clear that the two epistles are not divergent but complementary.] In addition, it is thus apparent that *tzedakah* also plays a role in this manner of service.” [29.](#) *Mishlei* 3:6. Note of the Rebbe: “Cf. the ruling in *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim*, sec. 231, at length.” [30.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “It still remains to be understood what, exactly, is the connection [of the foregoing] with the opening verse, ‘How beautiful and how pleasant....’ This could be clarified in the light of the discussion in *Torat Chayim*, which explains why there is wonderment at [this kind of] beauty and pleasantness. (This wonderment is expressed in the exclamation, ‘How beautiful and how pleasant...!’) Accordingly it is understood that *ahavah betaanugim* is as defined in the above letter. (The same is true of the latent love, for which reason its beauty and pleasantness do not arouse wonderment.)”



Epistle 19

Part (i)

In order to “enable” the *Ein Sof*-light, by definition infinite, to create worlds, which are finite, an intermediary is needed — to bridge the chasm between infinity and finitude. This intermediary, Torah,[1](#) is alluded to in our opening verse,[2](#) “He enwraps [Himself with] light as [with] a garment....”

Now any intermediary must itself partake of each of the levels it bridges.[3](#) Torah thus comprises both “light” and “garment”. The “light” of Torah is its infinite inwardness, “[whose] measure is longer than the earth....”;[4](#) the “garment” of Torah refers to its finite and revealed exterior, which relates to the finite worlds. In the letter before us, the Alter Rebbe explains how the revealed “garment” (the *nigleh*) of Torah has concealed within it the inward “light” (the *pnimiyut*) of Torah. He also clarifies the difference between the comprehension of Torah and prophetic comprehension.

עוטה אור כשלמה וגו'

”He wraps [Himself with] light as [with] a garment...”

This verse speaks of “light” hidden within a “garment”. The Alter Rebbe will explain here how the “light” of Torah that transcends revelation is vested in a concealing “garment”.

הנה בלקוטי תורה של האריז"ל, פרשת כי תשא ופרשת ויקרא, כתב כי השגת משה רבנו עליו השלום לא היתה בבחינת פנימיות דחכמה עילאה

In *Likkutei Torah*, by R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, *Parshat Ki Tissa* and *Parshat Vayikra*, it is stated⁵ that Moshe Rabbeinu, peace to him, did not apprehend the *pnimiyut* (i.e., the most inward and profound level) of Supernal *Chochmah*,

הנקרא אבא דאצילות

which is called “*Abba of Atzilut*,”

The degree of Divinity called Supernal *Chochmah* is not limited to the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah* in the World of *Atzilut*: it also possesses a number of levels that transcend it, such as *Chochmah* of *Keter*, *Chochmah* of *Adam Kadmon*, and so on. The Alter Rebbe is now explaining that not only were these loftier levels of Supernal *Chochmah* beyond Moses’ apprehension, but so too was even the *pnimiyut* of the *Chochmah* of *Atzilut* (i.e., *Abba of Atzilut*).

וכל שכן בספירת הכתר שלמעלה ממנה, הנקרא אריך אנפין

and *a fortiori*, not the *Sefirah* of *Keter*, called *Arich Anpin*, that transcends [*Chochmah*].

For the very name *Arich Anpin*⁶ (lit., “the Long Countenance”) implies a level of Divinity of infinite extent, and hence beyond the reach of any soul clothed in a body.

כי אם בבחינת אחריים דחכמה, המתלבשים בבינה

Rather, [Moshe Rabbeinu apprehended as far as] the *achorayim* (the exterior levels) of *Chochmah*, which are vested in *Binah*,

Unlike the internal and essential aspect of *Chochmah*, the exterior aspect of *Chochmah* is capable of descending into lower levels of Divinity, such as the *Sefirah* of *Binah*.

המתלבשת בז' ספירות תחתונות, שנקראות זעיר אנפין

which in turn is vested in the seven lower *Sefirot*, [collectively] called *Z’eir Anpin*⁷ (lit., the “Small Countenance”) —

This name implies a level of Divinity which is contracted to within finite dimensions. In this spirit, the seven emotive attributes are termed *middot*, whose singular form מדה translates literally as “measure”, for it refers to the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light when it is at the

stage of having garbed itself in finitude, in order thereby to become the source for created worlds.

סוד התורה

the mystic principle of the Torah.

The manner in which Supernal *Chochmah* descends through *Binah* and finds diverse expression within the seven emotive attributes, underlies the divergence of *halachic* rulings within the Torah. For the laws of the Torah — determining what is *kasher* (valid) versus *pasul* (invalid), innocent versus guilty, pure versus impure, and so on — derive from these emotive attributes. Rulings of what is *kasher*, innocent and pure, derive from *Chesed* (the attribute of kindness); rulings of what is *pasul*, guilty and impure, derive from *Gevurah* (the attribute of severity); and so on.

ומתפשטת עד סוף ד' ספירות התחתונות, שהן נצח, הוד, יסוד, מלכות

Moreover, [Supernal *Chochmah*] extends to the end of the four lowest *Sefirot*: *Netzach*, *Hod*, *Yesod* and *Malchut* (in the Hebrew text abbreviated נהי"מ).

These latter four emotive attributes are merely the extrinsic offshoots of the first three basic emotive attributes — *Chesed*, *Gevurah* and *Tiferet*, which they activate and cause to descend.

ושם היתה השגת נבואתו בבחינת פנימיות, דהיינו מבחינת פנימיות דנהי"מ

There [Moshe Rabbeinu's] prophecy apprehended the *pnimiyut*, i.e., the inner dimension of *Netzach*, *Hod*, *Yesod* and *Malchut*, whose function is to bring about the descent of the loftier *Sefirot* within the worlds that are below *Atzilut*.

אבל למעלה מנהי"מ לא היתה לו שום השגה בפנימיות, כי אם בבחינת אחוריים דחכמה המלוכשים בבינה, המלוכשת ומתפשטת תוך פנימיות דנהי"מ

However, his apprehension did not extend to the *pnimiyut* of the levels [of Divinity] transcending *Netzach-Hod-Yesod-Malchut*, but only to the *achorayim* (the external aspect) of *Chochmah* which is vested in *Binah*, which in turn is vested and extended within the *pnimiyut* of *Netzach-Hod-Yesod-Malchut*.

In his Glosses and Emendations to this work the Rebbe asks: What does the Alter Rebbe accomplish by repeating that the external aspect of *Chochmah* vests itself in *Binah* and in turn in *Netzach-Hod-Yesod-Malchut*? It will be noted that here the Alter Rebbe does not mention its being clothed in the other attributes as he had done earlier, but only its vestiture in *Binah* and in *Netzach-Hod-Yesod-Malchut*.

בסוד נובלות חכמה שלמעלה: תורה

This is the mystic principle underlying the teaching of the *Midrash*,⁸ that “The *novlot* (withered vestige) of Supernal *Chochmah* is Torah,”

I.e., the Torah is not the undistilled essence of Supernal *Chochmah*; only a paler dilution of this can find actual expression in the revealed aspect of the Torah.

שהיא בבחינת זעיר אנפין

on the level of *Z’eir Anpin*; i.e., diminished and finite, as explained above.

וכדכתיב: וראית את אחורי, לפני לא יראו

Thus it is written that G-d said to Moshe Rabbeinu,⁹ “You shall see My back (the Heb. *achorai* suggesting the hinder or external aspect of Divinity), but My face (the Heb. *panai* suggesting *pnimiyut*, the frontal or inward aspect of Divinity) shall not be seen.”

Even Moses could behold no more than the *achorayim* of Supernal *Chochmah*, and not its *pnimiyut*, or essence.

עיין שם, ובשער הנבואה פרק א'

See there (in *Likkutei Torah* of the *AriZal*), and in *Shaar HaNevuah*, ch. 1.

ולכאורה יש להפליא הרי נאמר: ולא קם עוד נביא בישראל כמשה

Now this seems surprising. After all, it is said,¹⁰ “There rose no other prophet in Israel like Moshe.”

ואיך השיג האריז"ל יותר ממנו, ודרש כמה דרושים בבחינת פנימיות, אפילו בספירות ומדרגות רבות שלמעלה מהחכמה וכתר דאצילות

How then did R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, apprehend more than he, and expound many themes dealing with the *pnimiyut*, even of many *Sefirot* and levels that transcend *Chochmah* and *Keter* of *Atzilut*?

Yet the *AriZal* writes that Moshe Rabbeinu’s prophecy did not enable him to grasp the *pnimiyut* of *Chochmah* of *Atzilut*!

Likkutei Haggahot (a compilation of glosses to the *Tanya*)¹¹ quotes here *Chiddushei HaRitva*:¹² “The Supernal Chariot [not as it appears in the World of *Beriah* nor in the World of *Atzilut*, but at a higher level] was never beheld by the prophets, yet its secrets were known to the mystics of the Kabbalah [lit., ‘to the Masters of Truth’].”

אך הענין הוא פשוט ומובן לכל

But it is plain and clear to all,

שיש הפרש גדול בין השגת חכמי האמת, כרשב"י והאריז"ל, שהיא השגת חכמה ודעת

that there is a great difference between the apprehension of the Kabbalists, such as R. Shimon bar Yochai and R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, which is an apprehension through wisdom and knowledge,

ובין השגת משה רבנו עליו השלום ושאר הנביאים, בנבואה

and the prophetic apprehension¹³ of Moshe Rabbeinu, peace to him, and the other prophets,

המכונה בכתוב בשם ראייה ממש

to which Scripture refers as actual vision.

Seeing something grasps its essence; comprehension merely grasps its externality.

וראית את אחורי

In these terms Scripture describes Moshe Rabbeinu's prophetic apprehension:¹⁴ "You shall see My back."

ואראה את ה'

Likewise even with Isaiah, a lesser prophet than Moshe Rabbeinu, who was the greatest of prophets:¹⁵ "And I saw G-d."

וירא אליו ה'

Furthermore, even before G-d gave the Torah we find Abraham's prophecy referred to in these terms:¹⁶ "And G-d appeared to him."

ואף שזהו דרך משל, ואינה ראיית עין בשר גשמי ממש

Now, though the term ["seeing" with regard to prophecy] is used in a metaphorical sense and does not denote actual sight by the physical, fleshly eye,

מכל מקום, הנמשל צריך להיות דומה למשל

nevertheless, the analogue needs to resemble the analogy.

Just as the analogy of physical sight means that the viewer beholds the essence of a thing, so too the analogue — prophetic vision — must refer to a spiritual kind of seeing that grasps the essence of the spiritual level that is beheld through prophecy.

וכתרגום, וירא אליו ה': ואתגלי ליה וכו', שהוא בחינת התגלות

Thus too the *Targum* translates the above-quoted “*vayeira eilav HaShem*”: “And G-d became revealed¹⁷ to him...,” indicating revelation,

שנגלה אליו הוי' הנעלם ברוך הוא, בבחינת התגלות

meaning that G-d,¹⁸ blessed be He, being hidden, became manifest to [Abraham].

In this direct mode of revelation, the recipient of the Divine manifestation is able to absorb and internalize it, just as with visual sense-perception. The above-described manner of spiritually “seeing” a revelation is thus quite different from “hearing”, an inferior level of perception which leaves the recipient with a less tangible impression.

מה שאין כן בהשגת חכמי האמת, שלא נגלה אליהם הוי' הנעלם ברוך הוא בבחינת התגלות

It is different, though, with the apprehension of the Kabbalists. G-d, blessed be He, Who is hidden, did not become revealed to them in a manifest mode;

רק שהם משיגים תעלומות חכמה, הנעלם (נוסח אחר: בנעלם) ומופלא מהם

rather, they apprehend the secrets of wisdom in a manner¹⁹ which is hidden and removed from them.

They merely “hear” about these matters rather than truly “see” them.

ולכן אמרו: חכם עדיף מנביא, שיכול להשיג בחכמתו למעלה מעלה ממדרגות שיוכלו לירד למטה בבחינת התגלות לנביאים, במראה נבואתם

[Our Sages] therefore taught that²⁰ “A wise man is superior to a prophet,” because through his wisdom he can apprehend levels [of Divinity] far higher than those that can descend by means of revelation to prophets in their prophetic vision.²¹

Since the revelation of prophecy is “visual”, the most sublime levels such as Supernal *Chochmah* cannot possibly be revealed and “seen” below.

כי לא יוכלו לירד ולהתגלות אליהם רק מדרגות התחתונות, שהן נהי"מ

For only the lowest levels can descend and become revealed to [the prophets], namely, the levels of *Netzach-Hod-Yesod-Malchut*,

שהן הן היורדות תמיד, ומתגלות מהמשפיע להמקבל, בבחינת מוחין וחיות

for it is they that always descend and become revealed from the Emanator to the recipient, in the form of intellectual perception and [creative] life-force.

כידוע ליודעי חכמה נסתרת, שהנהי"מ של העליון מתלבשים בתחתון להחיותו

Thus it is known to the students of Kabbalah²² that the *Netzach-Hod-Yesod-Malchut* (i.e., the lowest levels) of the higher [realm] vest themselves in the lower [realm], in order to animate it.

שהן הן כלי ההשפעה והורדת החיות מהעליון לתחתון, בכל העולמות והמדרגות

For they are the conduits of the beneficent flow that bring down the life-force from the higher level to the lower, with respect to all the worlds and levels.

ולכן גם כן הן הן המתגלות לנביאים, בבחינת התגלות ממש

Hence they also become revealed to the prophets as an actual revelation, i.e., as prophecy.

ובתוכן מלובש אור הבינה, שהיא בחינת הבנת האלקות מאור נוסח אחר: ואור אין סוף ברוך הוא

Within these [four *Sefirot*] is vested the light of *Binah*, the attribute which relates to understanding the G-dliness [that emanates] from²³ the light of the blessed *Ein Sof*.

ובתוכה מלובשים אחוריים דחכמה, שהיא מדרגה שלמעלה מהשכל וההבנה באלקות ברוך הוא

And within [*Binah*] are vested the external aspects of *Chochmah*, which are a level that transcends the conception and comprehension of Divinity,

כי שם חכמה מורה על מקור השכל וההבנה

for the term *Chochmah* denotes the source of conception and comprehension.

As explained in *Tanya*, Part I, ch. 18, the word *Chochmah* comprises two words: מה כח — “the faculty of the unknown,”²⁴ for it is a faculty that cannot be grasped intellectually.

ולכן אמרו בזהר, דאורייתא מחכמה נפקת

This is why it is stated in the *Zohar*²⁵ that “The Torah derives from *Chochmah*.”

כי טעמי מצות לא נתגלו, והם למעלה מהשכל וההבנה

For the reasons for the commandments have not been revealed²⁶ in rational terms; they transcend conception and comprehension, i.e., *Chochmah*.

וגם באיזהו מקומן שנתגלה ונתפרש איזה טעם המובן לנו לכאורה

And even in the occasional places where some apparently intelligible reason has been revealed and explained,

אין זה הטעם, המובן לנו, לבדו תכלית הטעם וגבולו

this reason alone, which is understandable to us, is not the ultimate and full reason; we have not yet plummeted its depths;

אלא בתוכו מלובש פנימיות ותעלומות חכמה, שלמעלה מהשכל וההבנה

rather, within [this reason] is vested the innermost core (the *pnimiyut*) and mystic principle of *Chochmah* that transcends comprehension and understanding.

In a public address²⁷ the Rebbe once explained why the Alter Rebbe makes the point that even when we have some intelligible reason for a *mitzvah*, this is not הטעם תכלית. This phrase, rendered above as “the ultimate reason,” would more literally mean “the end of the reason”; i.e., the explanation given for a commandment is *not the last word in the reason* for performing it. Not only does the *mitzvah* remain in some measure unexplained: even the *reason* remains in some measure unexplained. For in essence, a *mitzvah* is a superrational expression of the Divine Will, which is fulfilled through its performance.

At the very beginning of *Derech Mitzvotecha* (subtitled *Sefer Taamei HaMitzvot* — “A Book on the Reasons for the *Mitzvot*”), the *Tzemach Tzedek* writes similarly²⁸ that what one should chiefly keep in mind during the performance of a commandment is the intent of doing it *because G-d has so commanded us*. The fact that we may not understand just why G-d desired this particular action done, is immaterial.

The *Tzemach Tzedek* goes on to say that whatever modest insight we may have about the purpose of the *mitzvot* — according to the Kabbalah and *Chassidut*, or according to Jewish philosophy (*chakirah*) and homiletics (*derush*) — is not even a glimmer of their true intent. It is a finite drop in an infinite ocean. For no human being, clothed as he is within a corporeal body, can possibly comprehend the infinite domain of spirituality. Even Moshe Rabbeinu, who has experienced more than three thousand years of constant elevation in *Gan Eden*, advances constantly in his understanding of the rationale underlying the *mitzvot*.

Concerning these successive levels of comprehension the verse states,²⁹ “To every yearning, even to the point of expiry, I have seen an end; Your *mitzvah* is very wide.” I.e., the comprehension and yearning experienced in *Gan Eden* are finite, whereas a *mitzvah* defies limitation: the extent of its inner content is endless.³⁰

One outstanding question: Why, though, does the Alter Rebbe write that intelligible reasons have been given only for “occasional” *mitzvot*, whereas in fact this would appear to apply to a multitude of commandments (of the categories of *mishpatim* and *eduyot*), if not to a majority?

Likkutei Biurim on *Tanya* (by R. Yehoshua Korf) quotes the Rebbe as answering this question in the following manner:

In most cases only a general reason is provided, while the details remain unexplained. For example, while the general reason for the *mitzvah* of *tefillin* is stated — that it be³¹ “a

sign upon your hand...,” no revealed explanation is provided for the myriad details relating to this commandment, such as: why the *tefillin* must be square; why the four scrolls in the *tefillin* of the head must be housed in four separate compartments while the Biblical passages in the *tefillin* of the hand must be incised together on one scroll; why the straps of the *tefillin* must be black; and so on and on.

וכן בכל דיבור ודיבור שיצא מפי הקב"ה לנביאים, הכתובים בתנ"ך

The same is true with respect to every word uttered by the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, to the prophets, as recorded in the *Tanach* —

Every word of prophecy found in the *Tanach* is applicable not only to the generation that first heard them, but to all future generations as well.^{[32](#)}

הן דברי תוכחה, והן סיפורי מעשיות

whether they be words of admonition, as transmitted by the prophets, or narratives of incidents.

An incident is recorded in the *Tanach* not only as history but also as an eternal message for all generations.

מלובש בתוכם בחינת חכמת אלקות, שלמעלה מהשכל וההבנה

Vested in them — in these words of rebuke or narrative — is an aspect of the Divine *Chochmah* that transcends conception and comprehension.

כנראה בחוש, מענין הקרי והכתיב

This is empirically evident from the principle of *kri*, the Scriptural text as read, and *ktiv*, the Scriptural text as written, the two not always being identical.

כי הקרי הוא לפי ההבנה הנגלית לנו, והכתיב הוא למעלה מהשכל וההבנה

The *kri* reflects the comprehension [of the text] as revealed to us. The *ktiv* transcends conception and comprehension.

שתיבה זו ככתיבתה, אין לה לבוש בבחינת ההבנה, ובקריאתה בפה יש לה לבוש

That is, a particular word in its written form has no comprehensible “garment”, though as read aloud it does have such a “garment”, i.e., it is readily comprehensible.

An example of this would be the verse,^{[33](#)} “Know that the L-rd is G-d; He has made us, *velo anachnu*, His people and the sheep of His pasture.” The *ktiv* form of the word *velo* ends with an *alef* לאו, while the *kri* form of the word ends with a *vav* ולו. According to the latter form the verse is readily comprehensible: “Know that the L-rd is G-d; He has made

us, *velo anachnu* — and we are His....” In the *ktiv* form, however, the verse reads, “He has made us and not us....” While this has meaning on a more sublime level,³⁴ in the simple sense the *ktiv* of this verse seems exceedingly difficult to comprehend.³⁵

וכן הענין באותיות גדולות שבתנ"ך, שהן מעלמא עילאה, ומאירות משם בגילוי, בלי שום לבוש כשאר האותיות

The same applies to the large letters that are occasionally found in the *Tanach*; they derive from a sublime world — from the *Sefirah* of *Binah* — and radiate from there openly, and not through a garment like the other letters.

והנה בחינת חכמת אלקות ברוך הוא, המלוכשת בתרי"ג מצות התורה, נקראת בשם בחינת אחוריים דחכמה

Now, the aspect of the blessed Divine *Chochmah* that is vested in the 613 commandments of the Torah, is referred to as the hindmost aspect of *Chochmah*.

The Alter Rebbe had previously said that (a) Moses' prophetic comprehension of the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah* consisted merely of the *achorayim* (the hindmost aspect) of *Chochmah*. He then went on to say that (b) the source of the Torah in *Chochmah* is the same, for it too transcends reason. The Alter Rebbe is now saying that (c) even the *Chochmah* vested in the 613 commandments is referred to as no more than the *achorayim* of *Chochmah*.

כי כל אחוריים שבספירות, הן מדרגות החיצונות והתחתונות במעלה שבספירה זו, מה שיוכלו לירד ולהתפשט למטה, להתלבש בברואים להחיותם

For the *achorayim* of any one of the *Sefirot* are the external and lower levels within that *Sefirah*, which are capable of descending and extending downwards, to become vested in created beings in order to animate them.

ובחינת הפנים היא הספירה עצמה, המיוחדת במאצילה, אין סוף ברוך הוא, בתכלית היחוד

The aspect of the *panim* (the “face” or inner dimension) of the *Sefirah* is the *Sefirah* itself as it is united with its Emanator, the blessed *Ein Sof*, in an absolute union.

כגון, דרך משל, ספירת חכמה, שהיא מיוחדת במאצילה, אין סוף ברוך הוא, בתכלית היחוד, כי הקב"ה וחכמתו אחד כמו שכתוב לעיל

As, for example, the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah*, the *Sefirah* now under discussion: It is united with its Emanator, the blessed *Ein Sof*, in absolute unity, for the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Wisdom, are One (³⁶as explained above) — evidently in reference to Part I, chs. 2 and 52.

ומה שמאיר ומתפשט מחכמתו יתברך למטה בתחתונים, שהם בעלי גבול ותכלית

But that which radiates and extends from His blessed *Chochmah* to the limited and finite nether beings below,

ומתלבש בהם

and becomes vested in them,

Light that merely “radiates” and “extends” does not necessarily contract according to the limitations of the recipient of the light; it may “radiate” and “extend” in an encompassing manner (*makkif*) and thus not be subject to them. However, when the illumination is “vested” *within* a receptor, this implies adjustment to its limitations.

Hence, a light that becomes vested within finite created beings cannot possibly be infinite, as would be the case if the actual *Sefirah* as united with its Emanator — and thus as infinite as its Emanator — would descend into created beings. Therefore, the life-giving force which is vested within creation —

נקרא אחוריים

is called *achorayim*: it is the external aspect of the *Sefirah* and not the *Sefirah* itself,

ונקרא גם כן בחינת עשיה שבאצילות

and it is also called the aspect of *Asiyah* within *Atzilut*.

The external aspect of *Chochmah* — *Chochmah* here being an allusion to the World of *Atzilut* — is termed the level of *Asiyah* within *Atzilut*,³⁷ i.e., that level of *Atzilut* that is capable of descending below.

פירוש, על דרך משל, כמו שבאדם התחתון, שיש בנשמתו ה' מדרגות, זו למטה מזו

The meaning of this will be understood by way of analogy with terrestrial man, whose soul spans five ranks, one lower than the other.

שהן בחינת השכל והמדות ומחשבה ודבור ומעשה, והמעשה היא התחתונה שבכולם

These are the faculties of the intellect, the emotive attributes, thought, speech, and action, with action the lowest of them all.

I.e., the soul manifests itself in action to a much lesser degree than it does in the other four levels.

שהחיות המתפשט מהנשמה ומלובש בכח המעשה, הוא כאין לגבי החיות המתפשט ממנה ומלובש בכח הדבור

For the life-force that extends from the soul and is vested in the faculty of action, is as nothing compared to the life-force that extends from it and is vested in the faculty of speech.

שהוא כאין לגבי החיות המתפשט ממנה, ומלובש במחשבה ומדות ושכל

The latter in turn is as nothing compared to the life-force that extends from [the soul] and is vested in thought, in the emotive attributes, and in the intellect.

The latter three faculties are always united with the soul. Even the faculty of thought, which is merely a “garment” of the soul (i.e., one of its means of expression), is always united with it, and therefore, like the soul itself, always in a manifest state. Speech and action, however, are “garments” that are separate from the soul. Thus, insofar as speech is concerned, there is³⁸ “A time to speak and a time to refrain from speech,” while action is even more distant from the soul than speech.

כן על דרך זה ממש, היא בחינת חכמתו יתברך, מה שיוכל להתפשט ממנה להתלבש בתחתונים כולם

In a precisely like manner with respect to the Divine *Chochmah*, to the extent that can be diffused from it³⁹ to become vested in all the nether beings:

Since⁴⁰ “You have made them all through *Chochmah*,” it follows that this *Sefirah* must be vested in all nether beings. However, this is merely the external level of *Chochmah*.

הוא כאין לגבי בחינת פנים, המיוחד במאציל ברוך הוא

it⁴¹ is as nothing compared to the *panim* (the inward or frontal aspect) of *Chochmah*, which is at one with the blessed Emanator.

דכולא קמיה כלא חשיב

For⁴² “All that is before Him (i.e., close and united with Him) is esteemed as naught.”

וההשפעה לכל הנבראים כולם, שהם בעלי גבול ותכלית, נחשבת ירידה וצמצום כביכול, לגבי המאציל, אין סוף ברוך הוא

The life-giving flow to all created beings, which are limited and finite, is regarded as a descent and a contraction, so to speak, with respect to the Emanator, the blessed *Ein Sof*,

על דרך משל, כמו שנחשבת ירידה וצמצום לשכל האדם המשכיל, המצומצם באיזו עשיה גשמית וחומרית ממש

just as, metaphorically speaking, it would be regarded as a descent and contraction for the intellect of an intelligent person to be contracted to some purely physical and material activity.⁴³

ולכן משה רבינו עליו השלום, שהשיג עד אחוריים דחכמה, זכה שתנתן על ידו התורה

Moshe Rabbeinu, peace to him, who apprehended as high as the level [of Divinity] called the hindmost aspect of *Chochmah*, therefore merited that the Torah was given through him —

שהיא נובלות חכמה שלמעלה

the Torah being the *novlot*, the withered vestige, of Supernal *Chochmah*,

פירוש: מה שנובל ממנה ויורד למטה, ומתלבש בתורה גשמית שלנו

i.e., that which is sloughed off from it and descends below, and becomes vested in our physical Torah.[44](#)

שיקרה ותכליתה הוא קיום המצות לא תעשה ועשה, בפועל ומעשה ממש

For [the Torah's] core and ultimate object is the observance of the positive and prohibitory commandments, in actual deed and performance,

כמאמר: היום לעשותם

in the spirit of the verse,[45](#) “To do them this day,” and, more specifically, in the spirit of the comment of our Sages on this phrase:[46](#) “They are to be done today and not tomorrow” — in this world, and not in the World to Come.

וגדול תלמוד, שמביא לידי מעשה

Our Sages likewise taught,[47](#) “The study of Torah is greater [than the observance of the commandments] because it leads to [their] performance.”

והלומד שלא לעשות, נוח לו שנהפכה שלייתו וכו'

Similarly,[48](#) “As to him who learns with the intent of not doing, it would have been better for him if his afterbirth had turned over....”

I.e., better had he never been born.

וכל אדם מוכרח להתגלגל עד שיקיים כל התרי"ג מצות בפועל ממש, כנודע מהאריז"ל

Indeed, every individual needs to become reincarnated until he has actually observed all the 613 commandments, as is known from R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory.[49](#)

The *Tzemach Tzedek* makes the following comment[50](#) on the above Epistle:

Although the Alter Rebbe opens this letter with the verse, “He wraps [Himself with] light as [with] a garment...,” he does not explain it here. However, it can be understood from his introduction that the *achorayim* of *Chochmah*, also known as the *novlot* of the Supernal *Chochmah*, which is Torah, is the “garment” (i.e., the revealed aspect) of Torah, while the *pnimiyut* of *Abba*, the inward aspect of *Chochmah*, is the esoteric depths of Torah.

(The latter aspect of Torah will be revealed mainly by *Mashiach*, as *Rashi* notes in his comment on the verse,⁵¹ “He kisses me with the kisses of His mouth.” Even now, however, a foretaste of the innermost dimensions of the Torah may be savored in the teachings of *Chassidut*. The present revelation of its insights serves as a preparation for the coming of *Mashiach*, in the spirit of the Friday afternoon custom⁵² of sampling the delicacies prepared for *Shabbat*, since the time of *Mashiach* is known as⁵³ “a day that is entirely *Shabbat*.”)

The *Tzemach Tzedek* concludes: This is the “light” that is vested within the “garment”: it was created on the First Day and later hidden in the Torah — ultimately to be revealed to the righteous.⁵⁴

Part (ii)

The Epistle that follows, beginning “The Letters that are Revealed,” is one of the Epistles that was appended to the edition of *Tanya* published in Vilna in the year 5660 (1900), these additions being noted by R. Asher of Nikolayev in his introductory declaration there.⁵⁵

This relevance of this Epistle to the previous one may be found in the following parallel: The previous Epistle explains how only the *Netzach-Hod-Yesod-Malchut* (i.e., the lower *Sefirot*) of the Emanator extend to the recipient. The conclusion of the present Epistle likewise explains⁵⁶ that only the hindmost aspect and externality of the *Netzach-Hod-Yesod* of the higher realm enter the lower one.

האותיות הנגלות לנו, הן במעשה, דיבור ומחשבה

The letters⁵⁷ that are revealed to us exist in action, speech, and thought.

דמעשה, הן תמונות האותיות שבכתב אשורי שבספר תורה

Pertaining to the plane of action are the visual forms⁵⁸ of the letters in the Assyrian script of the Torah scroll.⁵⁹

The very validity of the scroll depends on the scrupulous observance of the numerous detailed laws governing the writing of these twenty-two letters. As is explained in the Note to ch. 12 of *Shaar HaYichud VahaEmunah*, each letter reflects the flow of a unique life-force and spiritual energy: its distinct shape suggests the form taken by the flow of light and energy revealed in that letter.

ואותיות הדבור נחקקות בהבל וקול, המתחלק לכ"ב חלקים, שונים זה מזה בצורתן

The letters pertaining to speech are engraved in the breath and voice, which is divided into twenty-two parts, one differing from the other with respect to their form,

שהיא הברת ומבטא הכ"ב אותיות בכל לשון

i.e., the enunciation and utterance of the twenty-two letters in any language.⁶⁰

כי אין הפרש בין לשון הקודש ובין שאר לשונות במהות הברת האותיות, כי אם בצירופן

For there is no difference between the Holy Tongue and the other languages with respect to the nature of the letters' enunciation, only with respect to their combinations.⁶¹

ואותיות המחשבה הן, גם כן בכל לשון שאדם מחשב, תיבות ואותיות הלשון

The letters of thought are — again, in any language that a person may think in — the words and letters of that language and its letters,

שהן כ"ב לבד

which number twenty-two only.

רק שבמחשבה, יש בה ג' מיני בחינות אותיות

Now in thought there are three kinds of letters.

שהרי כשרואה בספר תורה תמונות האותיות, הן מצטיירות במחשבתו

For when one sees the visual forms of the letters in the Torah-scroll they are pictured in his thought.

וזה נקרא בחינת עשיה שבמחשבה

This is called the "action in thought," i.e., the manner in which thought envisions the letters of actual handwritten script. In terms of the spiritual Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, "action in thought" relates to the lowest World — *Asiyah*, the World of Action.

וכן כאשר שומע אותיות הדבור, הן נרשמות במחשבתו, ומהרהר בהן

Likewise, when one hears the letters of speech, they become inscribed in his thought and he meditates upon them.

וזה נקרא בחינת דבור שבמחשבה, ובחינת יצירה

This is called the “speech in thought,” i.e., thinking about the letters of speech, and it relates to *Yetzirah*.

ואותיות המחשבה לבדה, בלי הרהור אותיות הדבור, נקראות מחשבה שבמחשבה, בחינת בריאה

The letters of thought alone, without any meditation on the letters of speech, are called the “thought in thought,” and relate to *Beriah*.

In general terms, thought, speech and action correspond to *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, respectively. More particularly, “action in thought” corresponds to “*Asiyah* within *Beriah*,” “speech in thought” to “*Yetzirah* within *Beriah*,” and “thought in thought” to “*Beriah* within *Beriah*.”

והנה אותיות הדבור ממש, הן מתהוות ומקבלות חיותן מאותיות אלו עצמן שבמחשבה

Now, the letters of actual speech come into being and receive their life-force from those very same letters that are in thought.

ואף שלפעמים מדבר אדם, ומהרהר בדבר אחר

Though sometimes a person may speak [of one thing] while thinking of another,

This would tend to indicate that the letters of speech do not receive their life-force from the letters of thought.

הרי אינו יכול לדבר כי אם אותן דבורים וצירופים שכבר דברם, והיו במחשבתו פעמים רבות מאד

in such an instance he can speak only such words and combinations that he has already spoken previously and that were in his thought a great many times.

ונשאר בדבורים וצירופים אלו הרשימו מהמחשבה, שנכנסה בהם פעמים רבות

Thus in those words and combinations there remains the vestige of the thought that entered into them many times, and this serves as the life-force of the letters of his speech.

וזהו בחינת אחריים וחיצוניות נה"י מפרצוף העליון שנכנס בתחתון, להיות לו בחינת מוחין וחיות כגודע

And this, in terms of the *Sefirot*, is the hindmost aspect and the externality of the *Netzach-Hod-Yesod* of the Visage of the higher realm that enters into the lower one, serving it as the intellectual faculty of *mochin* (lit., “brains”) and life-force, as is known.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) See *Yahel Or* (Glosses of the *Tzemach Tzedek*) on this verse. [2.](#) *Tehillim* 104:2. [3.](#) See *Likkutei Sichot*, Vol. XIX, p. 11ff., and references there. [4.](#) *Iyov* 11:9. [5.](#) Note of the Rebbe: A close examination of *Likkutei Torah* shows how all that appears here in this letter is derived from it, and specifically, by combining the passage in *Ki Tissa* with that in *Vayikra*. [6.](#) Aramaic; in the original text, abbreviated as א"א. [7.](#) Aramaic;

in the original text, abbreviated as נ"ח. [8.](#) *Bereishit Rabbah* 17:7. [9.](#) *Shmot* 33:23. [10.](#) *Devarim* 34:10. [11.](#) *Kehot*, 5733. [12.](#) In his commentary to *Sukkah* 28a. [13.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “In contrast, by means of their [non-prophetic] ‘apprehension through wisdom and knowledge’ they comprehended [higher levels, such as] *Keter*, and so on.” [14.](#) *Shmot* 33:23. [15.](#) *Yeshayahu* 6:11. [16.](#) *Bereishit* 18:1. [17.](#) Heb. text emended above according to the Glosses and Emendations of the Rebbe. [18.](#) Heb. text emended above according to the Glosses and Emendations of the Rebbe. [19.](#) The above reading הַנֶּעֱלָם could imply that the manner of their apprehension is hidden from them; the variant reading בְּנֶעֱלָם would imply that the subject of their apprehension is hidden from them. [20.](#) *Bava Batra* 12a. [21.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “This is not the case with their comprehension, as [in footnote 13] above.” [22.](#)

Lit., “to those versed in the Hidden Wisdom.” In the original text, the three Heb. words are abbreviated to ל"יח, which is an abbreviation for הן ליודעי (the letter *chet* being read as if vocalized with a *tzeirei*). The letters ח"י in turn are an abbreviation for נסתרת חכמה.

[23.](#) According to the variant parenthetical text, “...understanding the G-dliness *and* the light of the blessed *Ein Sof*”; i.e., the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light too can filter down to the level of mortal understanding. [24.](#) *Zohar* III, 28a. [25.](#) *Parshat Beshalach*, 62a; cf. *Parshat Chukat*, 182a and *Parshat Vaetchanan*, 261a; *et al.* [26.](#) Cf. *Sanhedrin* 21a. [27.](#) *Shabbat Parshat Vayeishev*, 5724. [28.](#) P. 4b. [29.](#) *Tehillim* 119:96, explained in Epistle 17, above. [30.](#) As an instance of this, consider the commandment involving the nesting bird (*Devarim* 22:6-7), chosen by the Sages (*Berachot* 5:3) as a classic example of a *mitzvah* which one should not assume one knows the reason for. The Rebbe points out that in *Moreh Nevuchim* (Vol. III, sec. 48) the *Rambam* offers an explanation for this *mitzvah*, yet in his Commentary on the *Mishnayot* the *Rambam* himself writes that this is a *mitzvah* “which has no explanation”! [31.](#) *Devarim* 6:8. [32.](#) See *Megillah* 14a. [33.](#) *Tehillim* 100:3. See also *Bereishit Rabbah*, beginning of ch. 1. [34.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “*Zohar* I, 120b; *Or HaTorah* (*Yahel Or*) of the *Tzemach Tzedek* on this verse in *Tehillim* (and see further references there).” [35.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “But see commentary of *Rashi* there.” [36.](#) Parentheses appear in the original text. [37.](#)

Note of the Rebbe: “So it is written in the editions that I have seen. It would seem, however, that the text should have stated ‘*Asiyah* of *Chochmah*.’ Possibly, however, since the Alter Rebbe is speaking here of the difference between the finite and the infinite — the Torah at the level of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, as compared to the Torah at the level of *Atzilut* (where תורתך — ‘Your Torah,’ refers to the Torah of *Atzilut*, while שלמדתנו — ‘that You have taught us’ refers to the Torah of *Beriah*) — he therefore stresses ‘of *Atzilut*’.”

As to the relevance of this subject to our text: The infinity of the World of *Atzilut* lies in its correspondence to the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah* (i.e., the letter *yud* of the Four-Letter Name), while the Worlds of *Beriah*-*Yetzirah*-*Asiyah* correspond to the other [lower] *Sefirot*.”

[38.](#) See *Kohelet* 3:7. [39.](#) In the original Heb. text, parentheses around the word להשפיע indicate that it should be substituted by the bracketed word להתלבש. [40.](#) *Tehillim* 104:24. [41.](#) Heb. text emended above according to the Glosses and Emendations of the Rebbe. [42.](#) *Zohar* I, 11b. [43.](#) Heb. text emended above according to the Glosses and Emendations of the Rebbe. [44.](#) Heb. text emended above according to the Glosses and Emendations of the Rebbe. [45.](#) *Devarim* 7:11. [46.](#) *Eruvin* 22a. [47.](#) *Kiddushin* 40b. [48.](#) *Vayikra Rabbah* 35:7. [49.](#) See the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch, Hilchot Talmud Torah* 1:4, and the sources cited in the glosses there. [50.](#) In *Yahel Or* on *Tehillim*, p. 369. [51.](#) *Shir HaShirim* 1:2. [52.](#) See *Likkutei Sichot*, Vol. XV, p. 282, and sources cited in the footnotes there. [53.](#) Conclusion of Tractate *Tamid*. [54.](#) *Likkutei Sichot*, Vol. X, p. 10, and sources cited in the footnotes there. [55.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "It will have been noted that the Alter Rebbe himself added letters to *Iggeret HaKodesh* (*Sefer HaMaamarim* 5708, p. 170, *et al.*)."
[56.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "For example: In keeping with the teaching that 'from my flesh do I behold G-dliness,' [the above levels are here discussed] as found within man — in thought, speech and action."
[57.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "In all that follows, cf. *Imrei Binah, Shaar HaKriyat Shema*, sec. 32; the slight differences in the mode of explanation may be resolved without great difficulty."
[58.](#) Heb. text emended above according to the Glosses and Emendations of the Rebbe. [59.](#) Cf. *Sanhedrin* 21b. [60.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "In this respect, 'letters of speech' and 'letters of thought' are superior (to 'letters of action,' whose visual forms vanish [when depicted in another language], as they are superseded by its differing visual forms)."
[61.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "What possible connection between the combinations and the enunciations [of the letters] prompted [the Alter Rebbe] to negate it? Possibly he is here anticipating the assumption that since [the letters of other languages] are not holy, they must perforce be on a lower level than those of the Holy Tongue (and surely — different). Hence he explains that the [difference between the letters of the Holy Tongue and those of other languages lies only] in their combinations."



Epistle 20

The present Epistle deals with a subject that has not been touched upon in the *Tanya* until now. Though it is one of the most profound and abstract principles of *Chassidut*, it has a practical application.

It will be recalled that the introduction to Epistle 18 pointed out the benefits of ascertaining the practical lessons in divine service — through the performance of *mitzvot* in general and the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* in particular — that are to be found in each of these pastoral letters. For, as the Alter Rebbe's sons state in their Approbation to the *Tanya*, the purpose of the letters is to "teach the people of G-d the way by which they should walk and the deed which they should do." And this letter is especially significant, for the Alter Rebbe wrote it (as the *Tzemach Tzedek* testifies¹) "several days before his demise in the village of Piena."

What the profundity of this letter ultimately conveys is a renewed and deepened appreciation of the performance of “physical” *mitzvot* in general (i.e., those involving material things, such as wool for *tzitzit* and parchment for *tefillin*) and the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* in particular.

At the core of this letter is the principle that the creation of the physical derives from the Essence of G-d Himself; it completely transcends the luminous and revelatory levels of G-dliness from which all spiritual entities and worlds are created. For, as the Alter Rebbe writes, “Only G-d Himself — Whose Being is of His Essence, and Who is not, Heaven forfend, caused by some other cause preceding Himself — has the ability to create something out of absolute nothingness,” to create a being that seems (to the corporeal eye) to be a wholly independent entity “without any other cause preceding it.”

Everything else that exists is possible and non-essential existence, and consequently is totally dependent upon G-d as the cause for its existence. By contrast, only G-d Himself — Whose existence is an imperative and Whose being derives from His own Self, and as such needs nothing to bring about His existence — has the ability to create a being so corporeal that it is entirely unaware that its existence depends on a Creator; indeed, it is satisfied with the delusion that it is responsible for its own creation.

Apart from this grossly physical world, everything created has an apparent causal link with a source of existence. Light, for example, visibly owes its existence to its source — a luminary; speech, being an *alul* (“effect”), clearly owes its existence to the faculty of thought, which is its *ilah* (“cause”). When viewing material matter, however, one does not perceive that it derives from and is nullified to something higher than itself; it seems to exist as a wholly autonomous being.

A being such as this, which is infinitely distant from its spiritual source — its source being Divine while the being itself is physical, and hence has to be created *ex nihilo* (“from nothing”) — can be created only by G-d Himself, Who is truly without limitation and as such transcends the physical and the spiritual equally. Thus, it is specifically the physical things that were created by G-d Himself, Who is, of course, infinitely higher than all the illuminations and radiations of G-dliness that were responsible for the creation of all spiritual beings and entities.

This principle leads us to a newfound respect for the performance of commandments involving physical things — for their creation comes about from G-d Himself.

This principle is indeed new. It supplements the explanation in *Tanya*, Part I (ch. 35ff) of the distinctive quality of practical performance alluded to in the phrase quoted on its title page: “that you may do it.” That explanation highlights the superiority of the *mitzvot* performed in the realm of action over those performed with thought and speech.

This superiority is explained there only in the light of G-d’s ultimate intent: G-d desires a dwelling place, i.e., that His Presence be revealed in the nethermost level, in this spiritually dark, physical world, which seemingly does its best to conceal G-dliness. And

this dwelling place is best built through the *mitzvot* involving action, for through them G-dliness is drawn down into those aspects of this physical world that are lower than thought and speech.

The same is true with regard to the refinement and elevation of the animal soul and its transformation into goodness and holiness (for which reason the Divine soul first descended into the body): the optimal refinement and elevation of the animal soul is achieved specifically through the performance of these *mitzvot* — donning *tefillin*, wearing *tzitzit*, etc. — for they engage the power of the animal soul to a greater degree than do the commandments that are performed only in thought or in speech.

All this merely expresses the special quality of “action” as it relates to G-d’s desire and intent; it does not, however, express the superiority of the *physical object* with which a practical commandment is performed. Seemingly, a commandment performed with one’s loftier soul-powers — such as the knowledge of G-d-liness, a *mitzvah* that engages one’s mind, or the love of G-d, a *mitzvah* that engages the spiritual emotions of one’s heart — should be inherently superior to a commandment that merely engages one’s hands or feet.

For as far as the Divine Will is concerned, since this is fulfilled both by the practical *mitzvot* and by those observed in thought and in speech, the spiritual result — being united with G-d — would seem to be the same in both types of *mitzvot*. With regard to the *object* with which G-d’s Will is being fulfilled, the commandments that are performed with one’s more spiritual qualities — comprehending G-d with one’s mind and loving Him with one’s heart — would seem to be superior to the commandments that merely engage one’s physicality.

However, considering (as in the letter below) the unique standing of physical *mitzvot* inasmuch as the physical derives from G-d Himself, it follows that the practical commandments are superior to those performed in thought or in speech *by virtue of the physical objects they involve*, for these objects harbor energy that is released when they are utilized in fulfilling the Divine intent.

The previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Rebbe Rayatz, of blessed memory, once related² that when “those few heavenly soul-words” that appear in the text below were first revealed, pointing out that it is from the infinite Essence of the *Ein Sof* Himself that physical objects first come into being, the chassidim of the time found that their performance of the practical *mitzvot* was invigorated by fresh wellsprings of vitality.

אֵיִהוּ וְחַיּוּהִי חֶד

“He³ and His life-giving emanations (*chayohi*) are one;

I.e., the “lights” (*orot*) of the *Sefirot*, which (like souls) animate the “vessels” (*kelim*) of the *Sefirot*, are not merely connected to G-d: they are actually one with Him.

אֵיִהוּ וְגִרְמוּהִי חֶד בְּהוֹן

He and His causations (*garmohi*; lit., “organs”) are one in them,”

I.e., the “vessels” (*kelim*) which emanate from G-d, and which (like bodies to souls⁴) serve as receptors to the “lights” (*orot*) of the *Sefirot*, are one with Him — *in them*, i.e., in the *Sefirot*,

(פירוש: עשר ספירות דאצילות)

(⁵ that is, ⁶ in the Ten *Sefirot* of *Atzilut*.

חיוהי: הן האורות

“His life-giving emanations” — these are the lights, the *orot* of the *Sefirot*,

וגרמוהי: הן הכלים

and “His causations” — these are the vessels, the *kelim* of the *Sefirot*;

שכולן אלקות

they are all (one with the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light, for they are) Divinity.

מה שאין כן בבריאה יצירה עשיה כו'

This is not the case in the Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, and so on.)

In these lower worlds, the *kelim* of the *Sefirot* as well as a distinct measure of the *orot* are not Divinity, but created beings.

וצריך להבין היטב איך האין סוף חד עם גרמוהי, הן הכלים

Now it needs to be clearly understood how the *Ein Sof* is One with His causations, i.e., with the *kelim* of the *Sefirot*.

הרי הכלים הן בבחינת גבול ותכלית, כמו שכתוב בעץ חיים

For the *kelim* are limited and finite, as is stated in *Etz Chayim*.⁷

Each of the *Sefirot* is not only a distinct entity (*Chochmah* having a separate identity from *Binah*, and *Chesed* from *Gevurah*, etc.), but in addition each *Sefirah* is inherently finite. How then can they be One with the *Ein Sof*, Who transcends any such particular identity (such as *Chochmah* or *Chesed*) and is moreover infinite?

The *Tzemach Tzedek* explains in *Or HaTorah*⁸ that the limitation that characterizes the *kelim* of *Atzilut* is their function as the *Ko'ach HaGvul* of the *Ein Sof*, the Power of

Limitation whereby there can emanate from the [infinite] *Ein Sof* something limited and finite.

For it is stated in *Avodat HaKodesh*⁹ that “*Ein Sof* is the most perfect being of all; just as He possesses infinite powers so too does He possess finite powers, for if you were to say that He can only express Himself in an infinite manner and not in a finite manner, then you are diminishing His perfection.”

This means that in truth “infinity” is also “finite”, if it is limited to infinitude and barred from expressing itself finitely. A power that is only “infinite” and not “finite” lacks the capabilities of finitude. Since the *Ein Sof* is “the most perfect being of all,” hence possessing all qualities, He must possess a power of limitation and finitude just as He possesses infinite powers.

Avodat HaKodesh concludes that the Infinite One’s first expression of self-limitation is the emanation of the *Sefirot* — more specifically, the *kelim* of the *Sefirot* — which possess *Ko’ach HaGvul*, the Power of Limitation. As a result, the created beings that result from the enclothement of the “lights” in the “vessels” are limited in nature, even though the creative light that flows from the *orot* is infinite.

To return now to our query, as expressed above: Since the *kelim* are limited and finite, how can they be One with the *Ein Sof*, Who utterly transcends all bounds of identity and finitude?

אמנם הכוונה היא לומר, שהן אלקות לברוא יש מאין

However, the intention of the statement that the *Ein Sof* is One with His *kelim* is to say that they are Divinity with regard to creating something out of nothing, just as the *Ein Sof* is capable of doing,¹⁰

Creating something out of nothing is a capability hidden only “in the bosom of the Creator.”¹¹ As our Sages, of blessed memory, expressed it,¹² “If all the world’s inhabitants were to assemble, they would be unable to create the wing of a gnat and place within it a soul.”

It is with respect to this that the *Ein Sof* is One with the *kelim* of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Atzilut*: through them something is created out of nothing; in this respect the *kelim* are Divinity.

ולא בבחינת השתלשלות עילה ועלול לבד

and not merely by way of an evolution from *ilah* (“cause”) to *alul* (“effect”), as links in a causal progression wherein a being — the *alul*, or “effect” — evolves of itself from its *ilah*, or “cause”.

ומה שכתב הרמ"ק ענין השתלשלות עילה ועלול, וכן הוא בזוהר הקדוש, פרשת בראשית

As for the statement of R. Moses Cordovero¹³ that creative development in the *Sefirot* takes place by way of *ilah* and *alul*, and so too is it stated in the sacred *Zohar*, *Parshat Bereishit*,¹⁴

היינו בהשתלשלות הספירות בספירות עצמן

this refers to the evolution of the *Sefirot* within the *Sefirot* themselves, whereby one *Sefirah* evolves from another, e.g., *Binah* from *Chochmah*,

(בבחינת הכלים) שנקראות בלי מה, בספר יצירה

(¹⁵with respect to the *kelim*), which are termed *beli mah* (“without anything”) in *Sefer Yetzirah*¹⁶ (the “Book of Formation”¹⁷),

(The text there reads, “Ten *Sefirot* without anything: their measure is ten....”)

שאינן בבחינת יש ומהות מושג

because they are not in the category of a substance (*yesh*)¹⁸ nor of a nature that is apprehensible to created beings,

וכמו האין סוף, דלית מחשבה תפיסא ביה כלל

like the *Ein Sof*,¹⁹ “Whom thought cannot grasp at all”; so too are the *kelim* of the *Sefirot* called *beli mah*, “without anything” tangible and comprehensible by created beings,

Since the *Sefirot* are not of an apprehensible substance (they are “without anything”), they evolve from one another as *ilah* and *alul*, rather than being created as something from nothing.

The Alter Rebbe will now show that the *kelim* of the *Sefirot* are not of an apprehensible nature:

וכמו שכתוב: ופני לא יראו

as it is written,²⁰ “And My face (G-d’s *pnimiyut* and inner self) shall not be seen.”

The aspect of Divinity termed “My face,” referring as it does also to the *pnimiyut* of the *kelim*, remained hidden even from Moshe Rabbeinu, transcending even his vision and comprehension.

ונבואת משה רבינו עליו השלום והשגתו, היתה מפרק עליון דנצח דז"א

The prophecy and apprehension of Moshe Rabbeinu, peace to him, related to the upper rank of *Netzach* of *Z’eir Anpin*.

As mentioned in the previous letter (Epistle XIX), the *Sefirot* of *Netzach*, *Hod* and *Yesod* are merely the conduits by which the flow of life-giving light reaches the recipient; i.e., they are merely the externality of the *Sefirot* rather than the internal level called *panim*.

ובהשתלשלות העלול הוא מוקף מהעילה

And in the evolution, the *alul* (before it emerges as a distinct entity) is encompassed by its *ilah*,

ובטל במציאות אצלו, כזיו השמש בשמש

and is in a state of utter self-nullification in relation to it, just as a ray of the sun loses any independent identity and is essentially non-existent when it is within the sun,

This is true even after the *alul* evolves from the *ilah* and is revealed as a distinct entity: even then it is essentially non-existent in relation to its *ilah*. And the same holds true with regard to the manner in which one *Sefirah* evolves from another: that which is drawn down and revealed is totally nullified to the *ilah* from which it evolves.

כמו שכתוב בפרדס מהרמ"ק

as stated in *Pardes*²¹ by R. Moses Cordovero.²²

It would thus be impossible to create a substantive being, a *yesh*, that has a sense of existence independent of its source, through the process of *ilah* and *alul*.²³

ואף גם צמצומים רבים מאד לא יועילו להיות גשם עב כעפר, מהשתלשלות הרוחניות משכלים נבדלים, אפילו של המלאכים

Thus even numerous contractions, even enough to make the screened light utterly dissimilar to the original light, will not avail to bring about matter dense as earth, by way of an evolution from the spirituality of abstract intelligences, not even [by way of an evolution from the spirituality] [Insertion by the Rebbe: “of the abstract intelligences”] of the angels.

Angels, too, are composed of matter and form. However, since even their matter is composed of spiritual elements, coarse matter such as earth will not result, even after a multitude of contractions, for in the evolving and descending chainlike progression called *Hishtalshelut*, the lowest link remains connected — i.e., retains some qualitative relationship — to the highest link.

אלא להיות רוח הבהמה מפני שור

There will only come into being — as a result of this gradated evolvement — the spirit of an animal, that derives from the “Face of the Ox” of the Celestial Chariot,

Although the spirit that animates the body of an animal can in no way be compared to its spiritual source in the “Face of the Ox” of the Chariot, by means of *Hishtalshelut* the “soul” of an animal can eventually evolve from there, since this “soul” too is spiritual in nature. *Hishtalshelut*, however, cannot result in the innovative creation of a physical entity from something spiritual,

כמו שכתוב במקום אחר, ועיין שם היטב

as explained elsewhere; examine it well.

The Rebbe notes that this may be referring, for example, to the discourse entitled *Yaviu Levush Malchut*²⁴ in *Torah Or*.

The Alter Rebbe explains there that in a certain sense even the Supernal *Chochmah* of *Atzilut* is an entity, inasmuch as it is designated as *Chochmah*, as opposed to *ayin*, the state of “nothingness”. Therefore, it too cannot come into being by means of evolvment from the *Ein Sof*; it too must come about through the process of “something from nothing.” Indeed, as the verse states,²⁵ “*Chochmah* derives from *ayin*” — *Chochmah* emerges from its source in a manner of “something from nothing.”

Here, however, we are not speaking of creation as it comes about from the *Ein Sof*, but rather as it results from spirituality in general, even from a spiritual level such as that of the abstract intelligences, i.e., the angels. It is with regard to this that we say that *Hishtalshelut* can only result in the soul of an animal deriving from the “Face of the Ox” of the Celestial Chariot; it cannot bring into being the physical body of an animal.

ויש מאין נקרא בריאה בלשון הקדש

The coming about of substantiality *ex nihilo* (*yesh me'ayin*) is in the Holy Tongue called *beriah* (“creation”).

As the *Ramban* points out in his commentary to the Torah,²⁶ *beriah* is the only term in the Holy Tongue for absolutely innovative creation, creation *ex nihilo*.

In any progression from *ilah* (“cause”) to *alul* (“effect”), the *alul* existed previously as well, albeit in a distinctly different state. The term “creation”, by contrast, describes the coming into existence of something that until now did not exist, for, as mentioned earlier, it is impossible for *yesh* (“created substantiality”) to be found within *ayin* (“nothingness”). Were it to be otherwise, the *ayin* itself would cease to be *ayin* and would itself become *yesh*.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to anticipate a query. In point of fact, created substance is also truly nullified to the G-dliness that creates it, for “All is before Him as naught.” Why, then, do we say that creation *ex nihilo* cannot result from *ilah* and *alul* because the effect — the created substance — would be nullified to its source, when in truth even as the substance exists as a *yesh*, created *ex nihilo*, it is in any event nullified to the Divine

source that is responsible for its creation and that continuously vests itself within it to constantly create it anew?

The Alter Rebbe goes on to explain that while the above is indeed true, nevertheless, this is so only “before *Him*,” i.e., as it exists in G-d’s knowledge (for G-d, of course, views things as they truly are, so that created beings are “before Him as naught”: they are “like the non-existence of the sun’s rays while they are still found within the orb of the sun”).

A created being itself, however, regards its own existence in an entirely different light: it “knows” and “feels” beyond any shadow of doubt that it enjoys true and independent existence. This (entirely fallacious) view can only come about when it is created *ex nihilo* as a *yesh*. Were it instead to be created by a process of *ilah* and *alul*, it would be impossible for it not to be fully cognizant of its Creator; in its own view as well, it would exist in a state of *bittul bimetziut*, a state of utter self-nullification.

והגם שהיש הנברא הוא גם כן כלא חשיב קמיה

And although created substance is also as naught before Him, for everything, including the created *yesh*, is as naught before Him —

דהיינו: שבטל במציאות לגבי הכח והאור השופע בו

that is, it is essentially non-existent (Insertion by the Rebbe: “not only in relation to G-d’s Essence, which utterly transcends worlds and creation, but also within creation”) in relation to the energy and light that flow into it,

מהכלים דיו"ד ספירות דאבי"ע, שהקו אור אין סוף ברוך הוא מאיר בהם

this force and light deriving from the *kelim* of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Atzilut*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, into which the *Kav* of the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light radiates,

Though we are speaking only of the creative force — the *kelim* of the Ten *Sefirot* — that animates created beings, this too may be termed “before Him,” since within these *kelim* is found the radiance of the *Ein Sof*-light.

כזיו השמש בשמש

and thus the degree of nullification of created beings is like that of a sunray while still in its source, within the sun,

While they are still in the orb of the sun, sunrays are essentially non-existent: there they contribute no independently identifiable illumination. Nothing exists there but their source, the orb of the sun, the luminary from which they derive.

כמו שכתוב בליקוטי אמרים, חלק ב'

as explained in *Likkutei Amarim (Tanya)*, Part II²⁷ — that all created beings are truly nullified in relation to their source to the same degree as the sun’s rays are nullified within their source.

In light of the above, how can we possibly say that if creation were to result from *ilah* and *alul*, created beings would not exist in a manner of *yes* but would be nullified to their source, when in truth, even after they were created *ex nihilo* they are still truly nullified within their source, like the sun’s rays within the sun?

היינו קמיה דוקא, שהיא ידיעתו יתברך, מלמעלה למטה

[The Alter Rebbe answers:] however, this is only “before Him,” as seen from the heavenly perspective (*daat elyon*) from which G-d knows creation, His knowledge [perceiving] from above netherwards.

אבל בידיעה שממטה למעלה

But as seen from the earthbound perspective (*daat tachton*) of created beings, with a knowledge [that perceives] from below upwards,

היש הנברא הוא דבר נפרד לגמרי, בידיעה והשגה זו שממטה

created *yes* is an altogether separate thing, in this knowledge and apprehension from below.

A created being perceives itself to be altogether separate and apart from the Source that creates it, not recognizing its ongoing dependence on it. Though aware that it came into being by virtue of a G-dly Source, it nevertheless considers its own existence to be *yes* (“being”), and its G-dly Source, *ayin* (lit., “nothingness”).

This does not mean to imply, explains the Alter Rebbe, that a created being regards its Source is non-existent. Rather, the term *ayin* has a twofold connotation:

(a) “incomprehensible”: A created being is incapable of comprehending its Source. When it calls Him *ayin*, it means that He does not exist within its range of comprehension.

(b) “existing differently”: The Source exists so differently, so far beyond the pattern of existence familiar to the created being, that the latter calls its Source “non-existent” — He in fact does not exist within that earthbound frame of reference.

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

כי הכח השופע בו אינו מושג כלל וכלל

For the force that creates it and continuously flows into it is not understood [by the created being] at all.

The created being therefore calls its Source *ayin* since He does not exist in its world of comprehension.

Another reason for its calling the Source *ayin*, as the Alter Rebbe now continues, lies in the fact that He exists in an entirely different manner, there being no similarity between created and Creator.

וגם אין ערוך זה לזה כלל וכלל, לא מיניה ולא מקצתיה מהערך שמהעלול אל העילה

Moreover, there is no approximation whatever from the one to the other, from the *yesh* to the *ayin*, neither does the relation between them partially or minimally resemble the approximation between an effect (*alul*) and its cause (*ilah*).

The *ayin* does not exist at all in the same manner as does the *yesh* which it creates.

If, for example, intellection were to create a rock, the rock's manner of existence would be so distant and so different from that of its source, that from its perspective it would be immaterial whether it had been created by intellection or from nothing at all. Intellection simply does not exist in the rock's mode of existence.

שהעלול יודע ומשיג איזה השגה בעילתו

For an *alul* knows and has some apprehension of its *ilah*,

Since the *ilah* (cause) does exist in the world of comprehension of the *alul* (effect), the latter is affected by the comprehension of its *ilah*:

ובטל אצלו על ידי ידיעה והשגה זו

and it becomes nullified in relation to it (to the *ilah*) through this knowledge and apprehension.

A *yesh*, by contrast, has absolutely no apprehension of the *ayin* that is responsible for its creation.

וגם במהותם ועצמותם, אין הפרש גדול כל כך, רק שזה עילה וזה עלול

Even with respect to their intrinsic nature and essence there is not such a great distinction [between an *ilah* and its *alul*], except that one is a cause and the other is an effect;

The *ilah* and *alul* of intellect and emotion serve as a perfect example: Essentially, emotion is already to be found in its source, as “emotion within intellect” (*middot shebaseichel*), even before it exists alone as a distinct entity. But though “emotion within intellect” exists in a different manner from pure emotion, they are in essence the same.

ולא מיניה ולא מקצתיה מההפרש שבין מהות היש הנברא, למהות הכח והאור השופע בו, להוותו מאין ליש

yet [this distinction] neither partially nor minimally resembles the distinction between the essence of a created substance and the essence of the energy and light that flow into it, to create it from *ayin* to *yesh*.

Ayin and *yesh* are inherently and entirely different; the *ayin* does not exist at all in the manner that the *yesh* does.

ולכן נקרא יש מאין דוקא

This is why [creation] is called [28](#) precisely *yesh me'ayin* — *ex nihilo*, “something out of nothing.”

For although even the created *yesh* is aware that “Everything derives from You,” it nevertheless calls its Source *ayin* for the two above-mentioned reasons: the Source “does not exist” in the limited world of the creature’s comprehension, and it “does not exist” in the same manner as the *yesh*.

Having explained in general terms why the creation of a substantial *yesh* from spirituality can only come about in a manner of *ex nihilo* (and not in a manner of *ilah* and *alul*), the Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain that the first stage of the created *yesh* is the *kelim* of the Ten *Sefirot* of the Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*.

For though they are considered *Sefirot*, and as such they constitute the Divinity in these three worlds, the *kelim* of these *Sefirot* already comprise an element of *yesh*. This is true even within the World of *Atzilut*, except that there the *kelim* are *emanated* (as a *yesh hane'etzel*, implying connectedness to their Source), rather than created (as a *yesh hanivra*, implying separateness from their Source).

As the Alter Rebbe will soon state, the creation of *yesh* as a distinct entity derives primarily from the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* in the World of *Atzilut*: it is specifically through this *Sefirah* that G-d’s infinite ability to create *yesh me'ayin* is revealed.

והנה ראשית היש הנברא ותחילתו, הן הכלים דיו"ד ספירות דבריא יצירה עשיה, וגם האורות נפש רוח

Now, the *kelim* of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, and also the *orot* — *Nefesh* and *Ruach*, are the first stage and the beginning of created substantiality (*yesh*).

The *orot* (“lights”) that vest themselves in the *kelim* and thereby animate them consist of *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah*, which are simultaneously three levels in the soul, and three levels in the life-force (“light”) that animates the worlds at large.

The lower two of these, *Nefesh* and *Ruach*, also comprise an element of *yesh*.

ונבראו מבחינת הנשמה ד"ס דב"ע, שהוא אלקות

[The *kelim*] were created from the category of *Neshamah* of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, this [*Neshamah* of the Ten *Sefirot*] being Divinity.

I.e., the G-dliness of the *Sefirot* creates the *yesh* of the *kelim* of the *Sefirot* and also their *Nefesh* and *Ruach*.

והן ה"מ"ד כלים דמלכות דאצילות

And these [*orot* of the *Sefirot*] are the thirty *kelim* of [the *Sefirah* of] *Malchut* of [the World of] *Atzilut*.

In the World of *Atzilut*, even the external aspect of the *kelim* of *Malchut* is G-dliness. It is this external aspect of the *kelim* of *Malchut* that vests itself in the Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* and becomes their soul and life-force. These external *kelim* are composed of three tenfold levels — the innermost *kelim*, the intermediary *kelim*, and the outermost *kelim* — thirty in all.

וכן באצילות

It is likewise in *Atzilut*, that the emanated *yesh* derives from the external aspect of the *kelim* of *Atzilut*.

מחיצוניות הכלים דיו"ד ספירות דאצילות, שהן אלוקות, נבראו ההיכלות דאצילות

From the *chitzoniyut* (the external aspect) of the *kelim* of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Atzilut*, which are G-dliness, were created the *Heichalot* (the Celestial Chambers) of *Atzilut*,

Unlike the *kelim* and *Sefirot* in which there is vested the internal level of the *orot*, these *Heichalot* are an external aspect of the World of *Atzilut*.

שמתלבש בהן בחינת העיגולים דיו"ד ספירות

in which the category of the *Iggulim* of the Ten *Sefirot* vests itself,

The term *Iggulim* (lit., “circles”) refers to the “encompassing” mode of influence (*or makkif*) of the *Sefirot*, which does not permeate the created beings which it illuminates. A penetrating mode of influence (*or pnimi*) would make the animated object resemble the life-force that animates it. The exterior or encompassing mode of influence called *Iggulim*, by contrast, allows the animated object to perceive itself as a *yesh*, albeit an emanated form of *yesh*.

וגם גופות המלאכים דאצילות, שהן בחינת יש

and also the bodies of the angels of *Atzilut*, which are a form of *yesh*, are created from the external *kelim* of the *Sefirot* of *Atzilut*,

וכמו שכתוב: ובמלאכיו ישים תהלה

as it is written,²⁹ “And His angels He charges with deficiency,”³⁰

The phrase “His angels” implies those nearest to G-d, viz., the angels of the World of *Atzilut*. Yet even these are deficient in that they are *yesh* and not Divinity.

שאין בבחינת ביטול לגמרי, כעלול לגבי עילתו

because they are not wholly in a state of nullification as the *alul* is in relation to its *ilah*, for they are created in a manner of *yesh* from *ayin*.

אך נשמות המלאכים, שיצאו מזיווג הנשיקין

By contrast, the souls of the angels that emerged by the *zivug neshikin* (lit., “the union of kissing”), i.e., by the more ethereal manner of union of the *Sefirot*, whence spiritual entities emanate such as the souls of angels,

וכן נשמות האדם, שיצאו מזיווג דזו"נ דאצילות

and also the souls of man that emerged by the union of *zu'n*³¹ of *Atzilut* — the union of *Z'eir Anpin* and *Malchut* of *Atzilut*,

This form of union is termed *zivug gufani* (lit., “a ‘physical’ union”), relative to *zivug neshikin*. From this form of union there derives the birth of souls that become enclothed in actual physical bodies. In the state in which they exist in *Atzilut*, however, these souls,

—

קודם שירדו לבריאה, יצירה, עשיה

before their descent to *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*,

אין בכלל יש ודבר נפרד בפני עצמו

are not counted as created substantiality (*yesh*) and as [instances of] a distinct and independent entity.

אלא הן מעין בחינת אלקות, בצמצום עצום

Rather, they resemble the category of G-dliness in intense contraction, to the point of being on the level of a *Neshamah*.

וכעין הכלים דיו"ד ספירות דאצילות, שהן בבחינת גבול

They are like the *kelim* of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Atzilut* which (though they are Divinity) are by nature finite,

על ידי צמצום אור האין סוף, הוא הקו המלוכבש בנפש רוח ונשמה שלהם

on account of the contraction of the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light, viz., the *Kav* that is vested in their *Nefesh-Ruach-Neshamah*,

The restricted diffusion of the *Kav* that descends into the *kelim* lacks the infinite degree of *Ein Sof* illumination that constitutes the essence of the *Kav*. It is this contraction that makes it possible for the *kelim* of the *Sefirot* to exist in a mode of limitation, even though their union with the *orot* and their nullification to the *orot* lends them the characteristics of Divinity, as mentioned above. And in a similar state are the souls of *Atzilut* as still found within *Atzilut*.

However, with regard to the contraction of the *Kav* that is vested within them, the Alter Rebbe goes on to state that this is not merely a *tzimtzum*, a contraction involving a diminishment of the G-dly illumination. Rather, —

וכמו צמצום הראשון, להיות חלל וכו'

just like the original *tzimtzum* that occurred in the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light, a *tzimtzum* of such intensity that it was able to bring about a void — a “space” — for the existence of worlds, and so on.

This original *tzimtzum*, unlike all subsequent *tzimtzumim*, involved much more than a mere diminishment of the intensity of Divine illumination: it involved the removal of the light. The *tzimtzum* of the *Kav* which enables it to be vested within the *Nefesh-Ruach-Neshamah* of the *Sefirot* is similar to this original *tzimtzum*.

What has been said above refers to souls of *Atzilut* as they still find themselves within *Atzilut*, before they are vested within bodies. While in that lofty world they share the characteristics of Divinity, and are not detached entities.

The Alter Rebbe now says that even after their descent into this lowly world, the souls of the early *tzaddikim* did not undergo a change: they did not become sundered from G-dliness.

(ואף גם לאחר שירדו הנפש רוח ונשמה דאצילות לעולם הזה לצדיקים הראשונים, אפשר שלא נשתנה מהותן, להיות דבר נפרד מאלקות

(32) And even after the *Nefesh-Ruach-Neshamah* of *Atzilut* descended to this world to the first *tzaddikim*, it is possible that their essence did not change to become entities distinct from Divinity: they remained on the same level as they had been while still in *Atzilut*.

ולכן היו מסתלקות כשרצו לחטוא, בטרם יחטאו

That is why they withdrew [from their bodies] (i.e., they died) when they sought to sin, before they sinned.

This follows the teaching in *Tikkunei Zohar*,³³ that a soul of the level of *Atzilut* departs from the body before the person sins. In this spirit, too, that source interprets the verse,³⁴ “Your sins have separated between yourselves and your G-d”: Sins cause a cleavage between a soul and its G-dliness (i.e., the soul’s level of *Atzilut* which is an aspect of G-dliness), for sin causes the soul-level that derives from *Atzilut* to withdraw.

וקרוב לומר שגם האלפים ורבבות עלמין דיתבא בגולגלתא דאריך אנפין וזעיר אנפין

It is reasonable to assume that also³⁵ the thousands and myriads of worlds that are in the *Gulgalta* of *Arich Anpin* and *Z’eir Anpin* (abbreviated in the original Hebrew text as א”א and א”ז, respectively), as stated in the Kabbalah,³⁶

אינן עלמין ממש, כעין ההיכלות דאצילות, ובהינתן יש

are not really worlds, like the *Heichalot* of *Atzilut*, and a form of *yesh*,

אלא כעין נשמות המלאכים שיצאו מזיווג הנשיקין

but are like the souls of the angels that emerged from the *zivug neshikin*, which, as mentioned earlier, are not in the category of *yesh* as are the *Heichalot* or bodies of the angels,

ונקראו עלמין לגבי בחינת הגולגלתא ודיקנא

and are called “worlds” relative to the rank of the *Gulgalta* and *Dikna*.)

אך אינן אלקות ממש, לברוא יש מאין

They (the angels and souls of *Atzilut*) are not, however, actual Divinity, and as such able to create substantiality *ex nihilo*,³⁷

The ability to create *ex nihilo* is exclusive to the *Ein Sof*. Since the *kelim* of the *Sefirot* of *Atzilut* are utterly united with the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light, they are able to serve as conduits for the creation of *yesh* from *ayin*. The angels and souls of *Atzilut*, however, are not actual Divinity, and are thus unable to serve in this way, —

מאחר שכבר יצאו ונפרדו מהכלים דיו”ד ספירות, שבהן מלוכס הקו מאור אין סוף

because they already emerged and became separated from the *kelim* of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Atzilut* within which the *Kav* of the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light is vested.

שהאור הוא כעין המאור, הוא מהותו ועצמותו של המאציל, ברוך הוא

For the light is like its source, the luminary, i.e., the very core and Essence of the blessed Emanator,

שמציאותו הוא מעצמותו, ואינו עלול מאיזה עילה שקדמה לו, חס ושלום

Whose Being is of His Essence — His is an essential form of being; He is not, heaven forfend, brought into being by some other *ilah* (cause) preceding Himself.

An antecedent state of non-existence could not possibly apply to G-d's existence, which is an essential form of existence.

ולכן הוא לבדו, בכחו ויכלתו לברוא יש מאין ואפס המוחלט ממש

It is therefore in His power and ability alone to create something (*yesh*) out of absolute naught (*ayin*) and nothingness,

G-d is able to create substance (*yesh*) not only from the degree of *ayin* that merely lacks existence, but from “absolute naught and nothingness” — from an *ayin* that is the very antithesis of *yesh*, of substantial existence.

בלי שום עילה וסיבה אחרת קודמת ליש הזה

without this *yesh* having any other cause and reason preceding it.

The G-dly life-force, the *ayin*, that creates the *yesh*, is the exact opposite of the *yesh* that it creates. As such, it is not a cause or reason that relates to or serves as a precursor of the *yesh* that is created by it; as *ayin* it is the very antithesis of *yesh*.

This is why creation can only result from the *kelim* of the *Sefirot* of *Atzilut* within which is vested the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light, for they are actual Divinity. However, as pointed out above, angels and souls of *Atzilut* that have already emerged and become separated from the *kelim* cannot possibly act as conduits for the creation of *yesh* from *ayin*, inasmuch as they themselves are not actual Divinity.

The Alter Rebbe now anticipates the following question: Since only the *Ein Sof* can create *yesh* from *ayin*, what need is there for the *kelim* of the *Sefirot*?

He goes on to answer that the *kelim* “enable” the *Ein Sof* to create a finite *yesh*: since the *Ein Sof* is infinite, the beings that result from it would also be limitless — if not for the *kelim* of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Atzilut*.

וכדי שיהיה היש הזה, הנברא בכח האין סוף, בעל גבול ומדה, נתלבש אור אין סוף בכלים דיו"ד ספירות דאצילות

In order that this *yesh*, created by the [infinite] power of the *Ein Sof*, should have a limit and measure, the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light was vested in the *kelim* of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Atzilut* — for the *kelim* are limited, inasmuch as they divide into the distinct categories of *Chochmah*, *Chesed*, and the like,

ומתייחד בתוכן בתכלית היחוד, עד דאיהו וגרמוהי חד

and it becomes united within them so absolutely that “He (the *Ein Sof*-light) and His causations (the *kelim* of the *Sefirot*) are One,”

לברוא בהן ועל ידן ברואים בעלי גבול ותכלית

so that [He can] create with and through them creatures that have limitation and finitude.

ובפרט על ידי התלבשותן בבריאה, יצירה, עשיה

This is especially the case through their investment (i.e., the investment of the *kelim* of *Atzilut*) in *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, for this adds immeasurably to the finitude and corporeality of the resultant created beings.

As we have seen, the objective creation of the *yesh* takes place through the investment of the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light in the *kelim* of *all* Ten *Sefirot* of *Atzilut*. However, as the Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain, the subjective *yeshut* of created beings — their self-perception as entities distinct and separate from their Creator — derives principally from the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* (in the World of *Atzilut*). For the very notion of *Malchut* (“sovereignty”) can apply only to individuals who are separate from the king who rules over them, and who nonetheless nullify their will to his.

This is in keeping with the axiom,³⁸ “There is no king without a nation.” The Hebrew for “people” *עם* is etymologically related to the word *omemut*, as in the expression *gechalim omemot*, signifying embers whose fire has been dimmed. In this spirit, *am* implies a populace which is far removed from the king’s qualities and from his company. By contrast, the inherent closeness of a father and child makes it impossible for the father to *reign* over his child. Sovereignty is possible only over strangers, over those who are distant from their king.

It is for this reason that the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* creates beings that sense themselves to be separate from G-dliness, for only over them is it possible for *Malchut* to reign — so that these distinct and separate created beings should, by dint of their own spiritual service, nullify themselves to G-d’s will.

אמנם מודעת זאת שעיקר התהוות היש ודבר נפרד לגמרי, הוא ממלכות דאצילות

However, as is known, [any] *yesh* or entity that (in its own eyes) is utterly separate [from G-dliness], comes into being principally through *Malchut* of *Atzilut*,

שנעשה עתיק דבריאה

which becomes the *Atik* of *Beriah*,

Atik is the element of delight (*taanug*) which is the innermost core of will (*ratzon*). Thus, *Malchut* of *Atzilut* becomes the delight and will that propel the World of *Beriah* into being. For it is *Malchut* that is able to project a sense of pleasure in creatures that perceive themselves to be separate entities, since only thus can sovereignty result.

כי אין מלך בלא עם וכו'

for “There is no king without a nation” (*am*).

The analogy of the king who is able to rule only over subjects who are distant from him was explained above. In the analogue this corresponds to the created beings in the World of *Beriah* which are distant from G-dliness, unlike the beings in the World of *Atzilut* *אצילות* which are “close to Him” *אצלו*: they cleave to G-d. It is thus to the creatures of the World of *Beriah* that the Divine attribute of *Malchut* (“sovereignty”) relates.

וגם ריבוי הנבראים והתחלקותן, שנבראו בכח האין סוף, יחיד ומיוחד בתכלית

Also, the multitude and the diversity of creatures, [though, paradoxically,] they were created by the power of the One and absolutely uncompounded *Ein Sof*,

הוא על ידי ריבוי האותיות היוצאין ממלכות, פי ה', וברוח פיו כל צבאם

derives from the multitude of letters that issue from *Malchut*, which is known as “the mouth of G-d,” [as it is written],³⁹ “[By the word of G-d were the heavens made], and by the breath of His mouth, all their hosts.”

וה' מוצאות הפה הן מה' גבורות דנוקבא

The five organs of [Supernal] speech (corresponding to the five physical organs of speech) are of the five *Gevurot* of *Nukva* (lit., “the female [element],” i.e., *Malchut*).

ולזאת נקראת עלמא דאתגליא, כי בה נגלה כח אור אין סוף לברוא יש מאין, שלא על ידי עילה ועלול

[*Malchut*] is therefore called *Alma delTgalya* (“the Manifest World”), because through it is manifested the power of the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light to create something out of nothing, without recourse to *ilah* and *alul* (cause and effect).

The progression from *ilah* to *alul* exists among created beings as well; the creation of *yesh* from *ayin* is in the hands of the *Ein Sof* alone. And it is *Malchut* of *Atzilut* that makes this power manifest.

אבל ט' ספירות הראשונות נאצלו בהשתלשלות עילה ועלול

However, the first nine *Sefirot* that precede *Malchut* emanated by the causal evolution of *ilah* and *alul*,

ואור האין סוף, הוא מלובש בחכמה לבדה

while the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light is vested in *Chochmah* alone.

Chochmah derives from the *Ein Sof* in a manner that resembles the derivation of *yesh* from *ayin*, as in the verse,⁴⁰ “*Chochmah* derives from *ayin*.” The *Ein Sof* thus vests itself in *Chochmah* (and through it, the *Ein Sof*-light illuminates the other *Sefirot* as well).

וזה שכתוב: נעוץ תחילתן בסופן

And this is the meaning of the statement in *Sefer Yetzirah*⁴¹ regarding the Ten *Sefirot*, “Their beginning is wedged in their end.”

In the scheme of the *Sefirot*, the very *beginning* (signifying a level that transcends even the “head”) is to be found in the *culmination* of the series to an even greater extent than in the *head*. The *Sefirah* of *Chochmah* is variously termed “the head” ראש and “the first” ראשית. (The phrase⁴² חכמה ראשית is usually understood to mean “the beginning of wisdom,” but can also mean “*Chochmah* is first.”) *Malchut* is the last of the *Sefirot*. The *Sefirah* of *Keter*, which transcends even the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah*, is termed the “beginning”.

This “beginning”, then, which is called *Keter*, is “wedged” and is even more to be found in the “end” (*Malchut*) than in the other *Sefirot*, even *Chochmah*.

כי כתר הוא ממוצע בין המאציל לנאצלים, ויש בו בחינה אחרונה של האין סוף

For *Keter* is the mediator between the [infinite] Emanator and the [finite] emanated beings, and the lowest level of the *Ein Sof* is comprised in it.

Every intermediary (such as, in our case, the *Sefirah* of *Keter*) must incorporate at least some aspect of both the levels that it seeks to bridge. The aspect of infinite light contained in *Keter* is the lowest degree of *Ein Sof*. This level is the “beginning”, that level of *Ein Sof* that is “wedged” in the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*, for, as mentioned earlier, it is *Malchut* that reveals the power of the *Ein Sof* to create *yesh* from *ayin*.

ולכן נקרא כתר מלכות, כי אין כתר אלא למלך

That is why [the *Sefirah* of *Keter*, meaning “crown”] is called *Keter Malchut* (“the Crown of Sovereignty”), as stated in the introductory passage to *Tikkunei Zohar* which begins with *Patach Eliyahu*: “Supernal *Keter* is *Keter Malchut*,” for a crown is only for a king; i.e., the prime function of the *Sefirah* of *Keter* is to draw down the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light contained within it into the level of *Malchut*.

וגם כי בחינה אחרונה דאין סוף היא מלכות דאין סוף

Also, [*Keter* is called *Keter Malchut*] because the final level of the *Ein Sof* is the *Malchut* of *Ein Sof*.[43](#)

Thus, *Keter* itself possesses the quality of *Malchut*, for *Malchut* is the lowest level of the *Ein Sof*.

ולכן גם המלכות דאצילות נקרא כתר, ממטה למעלה

Consequently *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, too, is called *Keter*, [when the *Sefirot* are considered] in ascending order.

From this perspective, looking “upward”, *Malchut* (the lowest *Sefirah*) is termed *Keter* in relation to the higher *Sefirot*. This is so because *Malchut* is the prime receptor for the down-flow of *Keter* which then illuminates the higher *Sefirot* by means of or *chozer* (“reflected light”) — like a beam of light that travels earthward through space, strikes a surface, and rebounds with renewed intensity.

The above concerns the ability of *Malchut* to manifest the power of *Ein Sof* in creating *yesh* from *ayin*, and to enable created beings to perceive themselves as entities distinct from their Creator. For this very reason, however, this creative ability cannot be considered a revelatory aspect of the *Ein Sof*-light. Rather, it demonstrates its capacity to conceal.

The Alter Rebbe therefore now goes on to discuss ways in which *Malchut* serves to reveal this light. (Souls, for example, though Divine, descend nevertheless within the limitations of created beings.) By virtue of its revelatory aspect, *Malchut* is called *Alma deItgalya* (“the Manifest World”), for through the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* the *Ein Sof*-light is revealed within the worlds.

ומה גם כי בריאת הנשמות ממנה, להיות יש ודבר נפרד בפני עצמן בעולם הבריאה

This is especially so since through [*Malchut*] the creation of souls takes place, enabling them to be *yesh* and separate entities in the World of *Beriah* — and notwithstanding their becoming a *yesh* they still retain their aspect of G-dliness.

While yet in *Atzilut*, souls have no sense of being a *yesh*, since they are entirely nullified to G-dliness. Upon entering the World of *Beriah*, however, they perceive themselves as being distinct and substantive creatures. Notwithstanding this, they remain G-dly entities and draw down G-dliness within the worlds.

ונקרא בשם לידה, כקריעת ים סוף, דבעתיקא תליא

This [derivation of souls from *Malchut*] is termed *leidah* (“birth”), a process that requires the intervention of a higher power emanating from the *Ein Sof*, like the splitting of the Red Sea, which (as stated in the *Zohar*[44](#)) “depended on *Atik*.”

Atik (עתיק, related to נעתק, implying removal and separation from the created worlds) is the inner (i.e., higher) level of *Keter*, whose outer (i.e., lower) level is termed *Arich*. *Atik* is the final degree of the *Ein Sof*; *Arich* is the source and root of emanated beings.

The Kabbalah teaches that the birth of souls is comparable to the splitting of the Red Sea, and like it requires the power of the *Ein Sof* as found in *Atik*. The Alter Rebbe now explains that this infinite power is needed not only for the birth of souls but for their gestation as well.

וגם כל גידול הנשמות כל ז' חדשים, מזיווג של שמיני עצרת עד שביעי של פסח

Also, the whole growth of the souls, throughout the seven months from the union of *Shmini Atzeret* until the birth on the Seventh Day of *Pesach*,

It is taught in the Kabbalah⁴⁵ that the union that “conceives” souls takes place on *Shmini Atzeret*, while the “birth” of souls takes place on the Seventh Day of *Pesach*, at the time of the crossing of the Red Sea.

הוא כמו גידול ז' בבטן אימא עילאה

resembles the growth of *Zu'n* — the *Sefirot* of *Za* and *Malchut* of *Atzilut* that were formerly concealed — in the womb of *Imma Ilaah* (“the Supernal Mother”), i.e., in the innermost degree of *Binah* of *Atzilut*.

שהוא על ידי אורות עליונים מאימא עילאה, ומלמעלה למעלה, עד אין סוף המתלבש בה כל ט' או ז' ירחי לידה

This takes place by means of the Supernal *orot* of *Imma Ilaah*, and of yet higher, as far as the *Ein Sof* which vests itself in it (i.e., in *Binah*) in order to bring about the growth of *Zu'n* throughout the nine or seven months of pregnancy.

Just as *Zu'n* of *Atzilut* is “delivered” from *Binah* of *Atzilut*, known as *Imma Ilaah* (“the Supernal Mother”), so too do souls gestate in *Malchut*, which is known as *Imma Tataah* (“the Nether Mother”), since *Malchut* incorporates within itself the Supernal *orot* of the *Ein Sof*.

וככה הוא בבריאת נשמות ומלאכים לעולם הבריאה

The same is true of the creation of the souls and angels in the World of *Beriah*: they, too, result from the Supernal *orot* of the *Ein Sof* that are drawn down into *Malchut* of *Atzilut*.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to state that these Supernal *orot* of the *Ein Sof* that descend into *Malchut* of *Atzilut* not only make possible the birth and gestation, but are also responsible for the actual “conception”.

וגם כל עיקר ושרש הטיפה שמקבלת ומתעברת מז"א, הוא ממוחין דאבא ואמא

Also, the very essence and root of the “seminal drop” which [*Malchut*] receives and through which she is impregnated by *Z’eir Anpin*, derives from the *Mochin* of *Abba* and *Imma* (lit., the “father” and “mother”), i.e., *Chochmah* and *Binah*, respectively.

ובכל זיווג, נמשכת לאבא ואימא מאריך אנפין ועתיק יומין, ומלמעלה למעלה עד אין סוף

And with every conjunction of *Chochmah* and *Binah* which is intended to bring about a birth, there issues forth to *Abba* and *Imma* [the seminal drop] from *Arich Anpin* and *Atik Yomin*, and from even higher, up to the *Ein Sof*.

רק שהכל בהעלם במוחין עד לידת הנוקבא, הנשמות והמלאכים וההיכלות לעולם הבריאה

Everything is concealed, though, in the *Mochin*, until the *Nukva* gives birth to (i.e., until *Malchut* reveals) the souls and the angels and the *Heichalot* for the World of *Beriah*.

נמצא שזהו גילוי אור אין סוף ממש, על ידי העיבור והלידה

Hence, by means of the “gestation” and “birth”, there is truly a revelation of the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light.

Not only is the infinite power of *Ein Sof* drawn down through *Malchut* to bring about *yesh*: in addition, the *Ein Sof*-light is actually revealed by means of the “gestation” and “birth” of souls. By virtue of this role *Malchut* is termed *Alma deItgalya*, in addition to its function in drawing down the power of G-dliness in a concealed manner within creation.

ובזה יובן היות המצוות במלכות, ה' של שם הוי"

It will now be understood — in terms of the *Sefirot* and the corresponding letters of the Divine Name — why the *mitzvot* are in *Malchut*, the [latter] *hei* of the Four-Letter Name of G-d,

והתורה בזעיר אנפין, וא"ו של שם הוי"

while the Torah is in *Z’eir Anpin*, the *vav* of the Four-Letter Name of G-d.

הגם שלמעלה באריך אנפין, המצוות הן בגולגלתא, בלבנונית

Though on a higher plane — as *mitzvot* and Torah are found in the level of *Keter* — in *Arich Anpin*, the *mitzvot* are in the *Gulgalta* (lit., the “skull” that encompasses the *Mochin*) and, more specifically, in the “Whiteness” (i.e., in the level of *Chesed* of the *Gulgalta*, or *Chesed* of *Arich Anpin*),

היא האורחא דבפלוגתא דשערי, דמתפלגא לתרי"ג אורחין דאורייתא שבז"א

i.e., the “path” that is in the parting of the *Se’arot* (lit., the “hairs”) which divide into the 613 paths (i.e., effusions) of the Torah as it is in *Z’eir Anpin*,

Thus, *mitzvot* are on the encompassing level of *Gulgalta* that transcends the level of *Mochin*,

ושרש התורה דנפקא מחכמה עילאה, הוא במוחא סתימאה דאריך אנפין, והיינו החכמה דטעמי המצוות

and the root of the Torah which [merely] issues from the Supernal *Chochmah* though it ultimately derives from a root which is loftier than Supernal *Chochmah* is in the “Concealed *Mochin*” of *Arich Anpin*, which is the wisdom underlying the reasons for the commandments.

The “Concealed *Mochin*” of *Arich Anpin* that utterly transcends comprehension contains the wisdom underlying the reasons for the commandments. These reasons will first be revealed with the revelation of the “Concealed *Mochin*,” when *Mashiach* comes.

Insofar as Torah and the *mitzvot* are rooted in *Keter*, then, the *mitzvot* are on a higher plane than Torah; Torah is rooted in “Concealed *Chochmah*,” the level of *Mochin* in *Keter*, while the *mitzvot* are rooted in *Gulgalta*, the encompassing level of *Keter* that transcends *Mochin*.

Why is it, then, that in their standing within the *Sefirot* and within the corresponding letters of the Four-Letter Name of G-d, Torah is loftier than *mitzvot*? — For the *mitzvot* are situated in *Malchut*, and in the corresponding final letter *hei* of the Divine Name, while Torah is in *Z’eir Anpin*, and in the corresponding letter *vav* of the Divine Name.

This is the question which the Alter Rebbe now answers:

אלא שהוא כחותם המתהפך

However, this is like an inverted seal.

The stamp of an engraved seal leaves an impression which is the exact opposite of itself: right becomes left and left becomes right; whatever protrudes becomes indented, and whatever was indented, protrudes.

So, too, the “protruding” or superior level of *mitzvot* in *Keter* descends by means of *Hishtalshelut* within the *Sefirot* in an “indented” or lower manner, while the “indented” or lower level of Torah descends within the *Sefirot* in a “protruding” or loftier manner.

ונעוץ תחלתו בסופן

Thus “Their beginning is wedged in their culmination”: The “beginning” or superior level of *Keter* in which the *mitzvot* are rooted descends and is “wedged” at the culmination of the lowest level of the *Sefirot*, viz., the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*,

הוא כח האין סוף ברוך הוא, לברוא יש מאין

that being the power of the blessed *Ein Sof* to create *yes*h from *ayin*, “something” from “nothing”, (for, as explained above, the power of *Keter* is vested within *Malchut*),

ולא על ידי עילה ועלול, שיהיה העלול מוקף מעילתו, ובטל במציאות

and not by way of *ilah* and *alul*, whereby the *alul* (the effect) would be encompassed by its *ilah* (the cause), and essentially nonsubsistent [relative to it],

Such a manner of creation could not possibly fulfill the Divine intent in creation.

רק יהיה היש דבר נפרד מאלקות

but in such a way that the *yes*h should be — in its self-perception — an entity distinct from [its source in] Divinity,

בכדי שיהיה המאציל ברוך הוא מלך על כל הנפרדים

so that the blessed Emanator can be King over all such [self-styled] separate beings,

על ידי שיקיימו מצותיו שיצוה עליהם

through their fulfillment of the commandments that He will command them.

It is only thereby that G-d’s desire to reign over created beings is fulfilled. For, as explained above, His sovereignty can find expression only over creatures who consider themselves to be separate entities from Him, but who nevertheless nullify their will to His through their actual performance of *mitzvot*.

וסוף מעשה במחשבה תחלה

Moreover, “The final act — those *mitzvot* that are performed with physical objects — was present in the beginning תחלה of thought,” in the level of thought that transcends even the “first” Divine thought חכמה ראשית. Within this sublime level a Divine intent desires the fulfillment of those *mitzvot* which involve physicality.

ולכן אמרו בירושלמי: ולית ליה לרבי שמעון שמפסיק ללולב וכו'

That is why the Sages asked in the *Yerushalmi*:⁴⁶ “Is then R. Shimon not of the opinion that one interrupts [Torah study] in order to fulfill the commandment of *lulav*?!...” — i.e., that even Torah study defers to a *mitzvah*, the time for whose performance has arrived.

The Sages asked this question in response to R. Shimon’s earlier statement that he and his colleagues would not interrupt their Torah study even for the recitation of the *Shema*. Their assumption was that whatever would be true of the *mitzvah* of *lulav* would also be true with regard to the recitation of the *Shema*.

The *Yerushalmi* then goes on to differentiate between *Shema* and other commandments with regard to interrupting one's Torah study, explaining that both *Shema* and Torah study involve learning. Surely, however, R. Shimon would interrupt his Torah study for the performance of practical commandments in their proper time.

Insertion by the Rebbe: "And even Torah study itself presupposes the prior performance of the *mitzvot* — for they are its beginning, and on them depends its very existence (as in the forthcoming analogy on [the relationship between] the afterbirth and the child)."

וכל הלומד שלא לעשות, נוח לו שנהפכה שלייתו על פניו וכו'

Moreover, as the *Yerushalmi* proceeds to quote R. Yochanan, "Whoever learns with the intention not to practice, it were better for him had his afterbirth turned over...", and he would not have been born.

Why does the *Yerushalmi* relate to the afterbirth instead of simply stating that "it were better for him had he not been born"?

כי השליא נוצרה תחלה מהטיפה, והיא לבדה היתה עיקר הולד עד ארבעים יום, שהתחילה צורת הולד

For the afterbirth was formed first by the seminal drop, and until the fortieth day, when the embryo begins to take on form, it alone was the essential substance of the embryo.

וככה המצות הן עיקר התורה ושרשה, הגם שהמצוה היא גופנית, והתורה היא חכמה

In like manner, the commandments are the essence and root of the Torah, even though a commandment is corporeal and the Torah is wisdom, hence ethereal,

Insertion by the Rebbe: "This does not raise a problem as to the consequent standing of the Torah relative to the *mitzvot*, for the reason explained above [using the analogy of the inverted seal]."

רק שזה בחיצוניות, וזה בפנימיות

except that this (the lofty standing of the *mitzvot*) is on an external (*makkif*) level, while the other (the Torah) exists on an internal level, and thus infuses the *mitzvot* with vitality and soul,

וכדלקמן

as will be explained below.

Thus, should a person study Torah and not intend to perform the *mitzvot*, he is lacking the very root and foundation of the Torah, and it would thus have been better for him had his afterbirth turned over.

והנה כמו כן מזיווג זו"ן דבי"ע, נבראו מאין ליש כל הנבראים והנוצרים והנעשים

Similarly, by the union of *Za* and *Nukva* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*, there were created — as *yes*h from *ayin* — all the beings that were created in the World of *Beriah*, formed in the World of *Yetzirah* and made in the World of *Asiyah*,

As explained above, *Malchut* of *Atzilut* as well as the union of *Zu'n* (*Za* and *Nukva*) of *Atzilut* creates the souls and angels of the World of *Beriah*, creatures which are created in a manner of *yes*h. And as explained above, this comes about through the power of the *Ein Sof* and the *Kav* that is vested in *Malchut* in general and in the union of *Zu'n* in particular.

So, too, the union of *Zu'n* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* results in the creation of the beings that pertain to these worlds (and, as the Alter Rebbe will conclude, here too there is a vestiture of a glimmer of the *Kav*, the infinite *Ein Sof*-light).

על ידי אור הנשמה שבתוכן, שהיא אלקות מהכלים דיו"ד ספירות דמלכות דאצילות

by the light of the *Neshamah* within them — for it (the *Neshamah*) is Divinity of the *kelim* of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Malchut* of *Atzilut*.

The ten *kelim* of *Malchut* of *Atzilut* descend into the *Sefirot* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* to serve as the *Neshamah* and Divinity of the *Sefirot* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*.

וגם בתוכה, הארת הקו דאור אין סוף

In it, within *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, there is also present the radiation of the *Kav* from the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light,

Since the light of the *Kav* is similar to its source, the Luminary, it can bring about the creation of *yes*h from *ayin*, as explained above.

המלוכב באצילות עד הפרסא

which is vested in *Atzilut* as far as the *Prassa*, the curtain or veil that screens off *Atzilut* from *Beriah*, so that the light of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* will be utterly different from the essence of the G-dly light in *Atzilut*.

והארת הקו, שהיה מאיר בכלים דיו"ד ספירות דמלכות

This radiation of the *Kav*, that radiated in the *kelim* of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Malchut* of *Atzilut*,

בקע הפרסא עמהם, ומאיר בהם, בבריאה יצירה עשיה, כמו באצילות ממש

pierced the *Prassa* together with them, and radiates in them — in the thirty *kelim* of *Malchut* of *Atzilut* that becomes a *Neshamah* for *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* — in *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, just as in *Atzilut* itself.

This aspect of the illumination of the *Kav* that previously radiated within the *kelim* of *Atzilut*, remains constant even beyond the *Prassa* between *Atzilut* and *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, that causes the light of the latter three worlds to be completely different from that of *Atzilut*. For the thirty *kelim* of *Malchut* of *Atzilut* pierce the *Prassa* and hence retain their Divine characteristics, becoming the light and soul of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*. The same is therefore true of the ray of the *Kav* that is within them and thus also pierced the *Prassa* together with them, so that it too radiates within the light of the soul of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, thereby creating and animating the beings that populate those three worlds.

וכן גם הקו בעצמו, המלוּבש בסיוּם וסוף נצח הוד יסוד דאדם קדמון

The same is the case (not only with the ray of the *Kav* that is vested within the *kelim* of *Atzilut*, but) also with the *Kav* itself, which is vested in the conclusion and end of the *Netzach*, *Hod* and *Yesod* of *Adam Kadmon* (abbreviated in the Hebrew original as נה"ק (דא"ק),

שהוא סוף רגלי היושר שלו המסתיימים במלכות דעשיה

i.e., the end of [the *Kav*'s] “feet of *Yosher*” which conclude in *Malchut* of *Asiyah*:

הנה הארת הקו מאירה משם, ומתלבשת באור הנשמה דיו"ד ספירות דבריאה יצירה עשיה, שהוא אלוקות

a radiation from the *Kav* radiates from there — from *Netzach*, *Hod* and *Yesod* of *Adam Kadmon* — and vests itself in the light of the *Neshamah* of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, which is Divinity.

Adam Kadmon (lit., “Primordial Man”), “Who observes and looks to the end of all generations”), represents the first Divine thought concerning and encompassing all of creation. The particulars that are found within this thought serve as the basis of life for all of creation.

Within this level are to be found two modes of emanation, called *Iggulim* (lit., “circles”) and *Yosher* (lit., “straightness”). The former (transcendent) mode of emanation encompasses all of creation equally, while the latter (immanent) mode of emanation animates the various levels of creation by permeating each according to its particular rank.

The concluding level of *Yosher* (the “feet” of *Yosher*) of *Adam Kadmon* comes to an end in the very last level of the lowest World (which is *Asiyah*), i.e., at the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* of *Asiyah*. It is with regard to this level that the Alter Rebbe states above that the radiation from the *Kav* that illuminates even as far as *Malchut* of *Asiyah* “vests itself in

the light of the *Neshamah* of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, which is Divinity.”

(The fact that it does so is not due to its vestiture in the *kelim* of *Atzilut*, but because of the *Kav* that radiates within *Adam Kadmon*, and as such is to be found within all levels of creation, even as far as the last level of *Malchut* of *Asiyah*. For *Malchut* of *Asiyah* too derives from the primordial thought of *Adam Kadmon*.)

והארה דהארה מתלבשת בנפש רוח דיו"ד ספירות דבריאה יצירה עשיה

And a radiation from [this] radiation [of the *Kav*] vests itself (not only in the light of the *Neshamah* of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, but also) in the *Nefesh-Ruach* of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*,

ואף גם בכל הכלים שלהם

and also in all their *kelim* (i.e., in the *kelim* of the *Sefirot* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*),

Though these *kelim* are not actual Divinity, they are nevertheless irradiated by a glimmer of a glimmer of the *Kav*. It is not the investment of the *Kav* within the *kelim* of *Atzilut* that brings this about, for *Atzilut* only illuminates and is vested within that which may be called Divinity. Rather, the Primordial Thought of *Adam Kadmon* causes the *Kav* itself (which transcends *Atzilut*) to irradiate a glimmer of a glimmer of its light even within the *kelim* of the *Sefirot* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*.

והארה דהארה דהארה הוא בכל הנבראים ונוצרים ונעשים

while a radiation of [that] radiation of the [original] radiation is immanent in all the beings that were created in the World of *Beriah*, formed in the World of *Yetzirah* and made in the World of *Asiyah*,

This enables all created beings to be imbued with the Divine purpose of their creation, a purpose which is to be fulfilled by them. This intent, which originates in the Primordial Thought of *Adam Kadmon*, is the animating force of all created beings.

The meaning of “a radiation of a radiation of the radiation” is as follows: While a radiation of something is not the same as the object itself, nevertheless it is of the same nature. For example, the radiation of the *Kav* is still basically Divinity; it is of the same *mahut* (“essential nature”). By contrast, “a radiation of a radiation” (such as “a radiation of a radiation of the *Kav*”) differs from the *Kav* in essence, though still resembling it in the manner of its external manifestation; its *metziut* is the same.

This is why the “radiation of the radiation” vests itself in the *Nefesh-Ruach* of the *Sefirot* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*. For they are not of the same *mahut* as their antecedent *Sefirot* in *Atzilut*, inasmuch as the *Sefirot* in *Atzilut* are actual Divinity while they are not. However, the *Sefirot* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* are similar to the *Sefirot* in *Atzilut*,

for they have in common the spiritual manifestation (the *metziut*) of *kelim* and *Sefirot*. True, they are not actual Divinity, but neither are they a manifestation (a *metziut*) of created beings.

Proceeding one step further, “a radiation of a radiation of the radiation” does not even share the *metziut*, the outward manifestation, of the original radiation. Thus, “a radiation of a radiation of the radiation” of the *Kav* vests itself within all created beings — within all entities that are *yesh* — which were “created, formed and made.”

כמו שכתוב: הימים וכל אשר בהם, ואתה מחיה את כולם

as it is written,⁴⁷ “The seas, and all that they contain [were made by You], and You give life to them all.”

I.e., life-force is drawn down from “You” — from the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light — into all of creation, by way of “a radiation of a radiation of the radiation” of the *Kav*.

וכל זאת בבחינת התפשטות החיות, להחיותם

Now all this is by way of an extension of the vital force to animate them.

With regard to this indirect mode of illumination there is a difference in the manner of vestiture — in *Atzilut*; in the light of the *Neshamah* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*; in the *Nefesh-Ruach* and the *kelim* of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*; and ultimately, in all created beings.

אמנם מציאותו ומהותו של אור האין סוף אינו בגדר מקום כלל

However, the essence and nature of the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light is in no way subject to space; hence it cannot be said that this light is to be found in *Atzilut* in one manner, and in another manner in the lower three worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* and all their ramifications:

וסובב כל עלמין בשוה

rather, it encompasses all worlds equally.

ואת השמים ואת הארץ אני מלא, בהשוואה אחת

[Thus G-d says,⁴⁸ “I fill the heavens and earth” — uniformly.

ולית אתר פנוי מיניה, אף בארץ הלזו הגשמית

Likewise,⁴⁹ “There is no place — or spiritual level — devoid of Him,” even in this physical world.

רק שהוא בבחינת מקיף וסובב

[The Divine light is present,] however, [only] in an “encompassing” and “encircling” manner — not in a palpable indwelling, but in a concealed transcendence,

וכמו שכתוב הפירוש בלקוטי אמרים

as this concept (i.e., *makkif*, or *Sovev Kol Almin*) is explained in *Likutei Amarim*.⁵⁰

ולא התפשטות והתלבשות החיות, להחיותם ולהוותם מאין ליש

As to the presence in the worlds of the very essence and nature of the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light, this is not by way of an extension and investment of the life-force, thereby animating them and bringing them into being from *ayin* to *yesh*.

For even creation *ex nihilo*, though it involves a *concealed* power of the *Ein Sof*-light, is by definition an act of revelation and expansion that takes place by means of the *Sefirot* and spiritual levels that draw down and reveal this concealed power. This cannot result directly from the essence of the *Ein Sof*-light that is utterly *concealed* within creation.

כי אם על ידי הארה דהארה דהארה וכו' מהקו, כנזכר לעיל

Rather, [this extension of life-force and creative power emanates] only by means of a radiation from a radiation of the radiation, etc., from the *Kav*, as discussed above.

וגם מאור הסובב ומקיף לארבע עולמות, אצילות בריאה יצירה עשיה, בשה

Also, from the [transcendent *Ein Sof*-] light that “encircles” and “encompasses” the Four Worlds — *Atzilut*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* — uniformly,

מאיר אל הקו הפנימי, דרך הכלים דיו"ד ספירות דבי"ע

there is a radiation to the inner *Kav*, by way of the *kelim* of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*. The *kelim* thus encompass and transcend the light that is vested within them.

ובהארתו תוך הכלים, נותן בהם כח ועוז לברוא יש מאין

By its radiation within the *kelim*, it endows them with power and strength to create *yesh* from *ayin*.

It has already been explained that the creation of the respective beings of each of the Four Worlds comes about through the *kelim* of the *Sefirot* of that particular world. Their ability

to create *yes*h from *ayin* (which can come about only from the essence of the *Ein Sof*-light that encompasses all worlds) results from the radiation of the encompassing light within them.

ומאחר שהבריאה היא על ידי הכלים

Now, because creation takes place by means of the *kelim*, which are finite and diverse, and the infinite light radiates within and through them,

לזאת הם הנבראים בבחינת ריבוי והתחלקות וגבול ותכלית

created beings are numerous and diverse, limited and finite,

ובפרט על ידי האותיות, כנזכר לעיל

especially since [the Divine radiation which brought them into being is revealed] by means of the letters, as explained above, for these letters (of speech) are even more finite and more diverse than the *kelim*.

To summarize: Both the indwelling aspect (the *Kav*) and the transcendent (“encompassing”) aspect of the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light are present not only within the *Sefirot*, the *Neshamah*, *Nefesh-Ruach* and the *kelim*, of each of the worlds, but also within all the created beings of these worlds. The difference lies only in the degree of manifestation — whether it be a “radiation”, a “radiation of a radiation,” or a “radiation of a radiation of a radiation.”

When the creative light is present at the first and most direct level (“radiation”), though it is not the essence of the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light that is manifest, the light will still be of the same nature; it retains the same *mahut*. When it manifests as a “radiation of a radiation,” the creative light will be essentially different, and merely bear some external resemblance to its source in the manner of its manifestation; only its *metziut* remains Divine. When, however, it is manifest as a “radiation of a radiation of a radiation,” as is the case with all created beings, it does not retain even the *metziut* of the original radiation; the Divine radiation merely descends into the *metziut* of the created being.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to say that when the radiation descends in the third manner, it is manifest only in creatures of the lowest order, those deriving from the Element of Earth, this Element being lower than the other Elements of Fire, Air and Water. And it is mainly within the physical earth that the Divine power of creating *yes*h from *ayin* is revealed. This power derives from the essence of the *Ein Sof*-light; it is primarily found in the encompassing light, and is revealed through the *Kav*, the inner light.

This becomes apparent in the ability of the earth to make things grow: the physical growth of vegetative matter from the *spiritual* power of growth found in the earth is a

clear demonstration of *yesh* resulting from *ayin*. Furthermore, the earth reveals this power constantly: it constantly produces vegetation as *yesh* from *ayin*. In this it differs from all living things that were created during the Six Days of Creation. Unlike all living things which, once created, simply reproduce, the earth consistently continues to reveal its creative power of *yesh* from *ayin*.

Thus, though the radiation within the earth is merely a “radiation of a radiation of a radiation,” it nevertheless demonstrates G-d’s creative power — because it comprises both the encompassing light, and the light of the *Kav* which activates the power of the encompassing light to create and animate created beings.

The Alter Rebbe also explains that the distinctive power described above was revealed specifically within the earth, because Earth is the lowest Element of all. For, as explained above, it is specifically at the lowliest level of creation that the “rebounding light” manifests the essence of the original illumination with superior intensity.

ועוד זאת, יתר על כן, על כל הנ"ל

Furthermore, in addition to all that was mentioned above,[51](#)

הארה דהארה דהארה

the radiation of the radiation of the radiation, which descends into a created being utterly concealed, being then neither the *mahut* nor the *metziut* of Divinity, and nevertheless containing both the inner illumination of the *Kav* and the encompassing light,

וכל הנ"ל

and all the above, i.e., the manner in which both these levels of illumination ultimately radiate within created beings,

היא מראה כחה ויכלתה ביסוד העפר הגשמי, בגילוי עצום

demonstrates its power and ability, inasmuch as it is a G-d-ly radiation descending from *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, in the Element of the physical Earth in an immense manifestation

ביתר עז מיסודות העליונים ממנו, וגם מצבא השמים

surpassing [that of] the elements (viz., Fire, Air and Water) that transcend it, and even the heavenly hosts.

שאין בכחם ויכלתם להוציא יש מאין תמיד

For they do not have it in their power and ability to constantly bring forth something from nothing (*yesh me'ayin*),

כיסוד העפר, המצמיח תמיד יש מאין, הם עשבים ואילנות

like the Element of Earth that constantly makes something (*yesh*) sprout from nothing (*ayin*), namely the herbs and trees that constantly grow from the earth's vegetative power.

Even those plants that result from sowing and planting are produced in a manner that resembles *yesh me'ayin*, for the seed or seedling disintegrates, and serves merely to arouse the vegetative power.

(והמזל המכה ואומר: גדל)

([52](#))As for the *mazal*, the individual angel of destiny, “that strikes [each herb] and says, ‘Grow!’” —

Our Sages teach that [53](#)“There is no blade of grass below that does not have a *mazal* above that strikes it and says to it, ‘Grow!’” Would it not seem, then, that in addition to the earth's vegetative power there is another factor in growth?

היינו, לאחר שכבר צמח העשב

this takes place [only] after the plant has already sprouted.

Once the plant exists as a created entity, it merely has to grow taller, the tree has to produce fruit with a certain taste, and so on — and these stages relate to the *mazal*.

ואינו אומר לו לצמוח מאין ליש, אלא מקוטן לגדול, ולשאת פרי, כל מין ומין בפרטי פרטיות

The *mazal* does not tell it to sprout *ex nihilo* into substantiality, but only to grow from being small to being large, or to bear fruit of its own particular species.

In *Or HaTorah*, [54](#) the *Tzemach Tzedek* explains that the *mazal* sends forth an arousal to the power of growth that is found within the grass or tree, causing it to grow. The basic cause of growth, however, lies in the above-mentioned vegetative power.

Elsewhere, [55](#) the *Tzemach Tzedek* explains that the above-quoted “smiting” means that the *mazal* illumines the particular tree or grass with which it is connected, causing it to be drawn to its source and hence to grow ever larger.

אבל בטרם יצמח, למי יאמר כל מזל ומזל לכל עשב ועשב בפרטי פרטיות

For before it sprouts, to whom would the individual *mazal* of each particular herb ordain all its details?)

מהכח הצומח שבו, שהוא אין ורוחני, והם גשמיים

[The above-mentioned plants of the earth grow, then,] from the vegetative property within it, which is insubstantial and spiritual, while they are physical.

What we have here, then, is *yesh* from *ayin*, which, as explained above, derives from the essence of the *Ein Sof* and finds expression in the Element of Earth. Why specifically there?

ואין זאת אלא משום דרגלי דאדם קדמון מסתיימים בתחתית עשיה

This is so only because the “feet” of *Adam Kadmon* culminate at the lowest level of *Asiyah*,

The “feet” (i.e., the last and lowliest levels) of *Adam Kadmon*, the Primordial Thought that encompasses all the levels of creation, concludes in the lowest degrees of the nethermost world, the World of *Asiyah*, and specifically, in the lowly Element of Earth within it.

ותחת רגליו מאיר אור אין סוף ברוך הוא, הסובב כל עלמין

And “below His feet,” i.e., below the lowest levels of *Adam Kadmon*, radiates the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light which encircles (i.e., transcends) all worlds,

At the very “place” at which there ceases the indwelling Divine illumination that permeates all the worlds, there begins the “encompassing” degree of Divine light that transcends all the worlds.

בלי הפסק רב ביניהם, רק עיגולי א"ק לבדו

without any great interruption between them, except for the *Iggulim* of *Adam Kadmon* alone.

The Primordial Thought of *Adam Kadmon* consists of two modes of illumination — *Yosher* (lit., “straightness”, i.e., a permeating mode) and *Iggulim* (lit., “circles”, i.e., a transcendent mode). Where the former mode ceases and there remains only the latter (which is not absolute infinity like the *Ein-Sof* light that transcends all worlds), there is found the absolutely infinite illumination of the *Ein-Sof* light that transcends all worlds equally.

וגם הקו מאור אין סוף, המסתיים בסיום רגלי א"ק, מאיר ממטה למעלה, בבחינת אור חוזר

Also, the *Kav* of the *Ein Sof*-light, culminating at the end of the “feet” of *Adam Kadmon*, radiates from below upwards, in a mode of *Or Chozar*, a reflected light.

As mentioned above, this is a light that rebounds upward with increased intensity from a surface which blocks its further downward progress. Hence, for example, the atmosphere closest to the earth’s surface is warmer than the atmosphere in altitudes which are nearer

to the sun. In the same way, when the beam of the *Kav*, whose function is to infuse the inner reaches of all created beings with Divine light, reaches the furthest stages of the Divine thought that encompasses all worlds and created beings, it bounces back with sharper impetus: it is now an *Or Chozer*.

כמו שהמלוכש באריך אנפין, ואבא ואמא, וז"א ונוקבא דאצילות, מאיר באור חוזר ממלכות דאצילות

This is like the investment [of the *Kav*] in *Arich Anpin*, *Abba* and *Imma*, and *Za* and *Nukva* of *Atzilut*, which radiates as an *Or Chozer* from *Malchut* of *Atzilut*,

ומלכות דאצילות, היא בחינת כתר ממטה למעלה

and *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, [if the *Sefirot* are considered] from below upwards, is [thus] a category of *Keter*, as mentioned earlier in this Epistle,

ונעוץ תחלתן בסופן

and “their beginning is wedged in their end.”

With regard to *Malchut* this means that the “beginning” of *Keter* which is loftier than *Chochmah* is to be found within *Malchut*. With regard to the *Kav* it means that the “beginning” of the *Kav* is wedged in the culmination of the “feet of *Adam Kadmon*” which ends in the nethermost levels of the World of *Asiyah*, in the Element of Earth.

Since the purpose of the *Kav* is to reveal Divinity, the Element of Earth best reveals that aspect of G-d’s infinity which expresses itself in creating *yesh* from *ayin*, as the Alter Rebbe now concludes.

וככה הוא בסיום הקו דאור אין סוף, המסתיים בסיום היושר דרגלי אדם קדמון

It is likewise at the culmination of the *Kav* of the *Ein Sof*-light, culminating at the ending of the *Yosher* of the “feet” of *Adam Kadmon*:

I.e., when the “feet” of the lowest levels of *Adam Kadmon* descend into the interior of the various levels all the way down to the very lowest level, the Element of Earth at the lowest level of *Asiyah*, —

מאיר ממטה למעלה לבחינת אור הנשמה דמלכות דמלכות דעשיה

it (i.e., the *Kav*) [then] radiates from below upwards, from the glimmer of a glimmer of a glimmer that is found within the physical earth, to the category of the light of the *Neshamah* of the *Malchut* of the *Malchut* of *Asiyah*,

This light, the *Or HaNeshamah*, is in fact the lowest level of spirituality within *Asiyah*. For *Asiyah* is the lowest of the worlds; *Malchut* is the final *Sefirah* within *Asiyah*; and of the ten component *Sefirot* that comprise *Malchut*, “*Malchut* of *Malchut*” is the lowest.

Nevertheless, since it is, after all, the “light of the *Neshamah*,” it is actual Divinity, as the Alter Rebbe now goes on to say.

שהוא אלקות ממש, מחיצוניות הכלים דמלכות דאצילות

which is actual Divinity, originating in the *chitzoniyut* (the exterior aspect) of the *kelim* of *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, which, as said above, becomes the “light of the *Neshamah* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*.”

In this lowest level of “light of the *Neshamah*,” that which is in *Asiyah*, there is found the illumination of the final degrees of *Asiyah* (i.e., that which in *created beings* is the final level), and this “enables” the *Ein Sof* to reveal its capacity for creating *yesh* from *ayin* as demonstrated in the above-described constant power of growth.

ולפי מה שכתוב בספר הגלגולים, פרק כ', הובא בלקוטי אמרים

According to the statement in ch. 20 of *Sefer HaGilgulim*, cited in *Likutei Amarim*,[56](#)

מתלבשת תחלה הארה זו של הקו דאור אין סוף, באור האצילות שבעשיה

this radiation from the *Kav* of the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light vests itself first in the light of *Atzilut* in *Asiyah*,

וממנה לבריאה ויצירה שבעשיה

and from there to the *Beriah* and *Yetzirah* in *Asiyah*,

ומהן לבחינת אור הנשמה, דמלכות דמלכות דעשיה

and from them to the category of the light of the *Neshamah* of the *Malchut* of the *Malchut* of *Asiyah*.

ועל ידי זה יש כח ועוז בסיום הכלי דמלכות דמלכות דעשיה, שביסוד העפר

From this derives the [creative] power and force in the culmination of the *keli* of the *Malchut* of *Malchut* of *Asiyah*, i.e., the lowest degree and *Sefirah* of *Asiyah*, within the Element of Earth.

והוא מאמר תדשא הארץ וגו', להיות פועל בקרב הארץ, תמיד לעולם ועד

This is the constant and everlasting effect, throughout the earth, of the creative utterance,[57](#) “Let the earth bring forth herbs...,” this fiat being the source of the power of vegetative growth

בחינת אין סוף

(58) in a mode of infinitude,

Not only is the capacity for growth an instance of *yesh me'ayin* and a result of G-d's infinitude: the same is true of its constant recurrence.

ולא בלבד בששת ימי בראשית, כמאמר: ישרצו המים, ומאמר: תוצא הארץ נפש חיה

and not only during the Six Days of Creation, as with the fiat, 59 “Let the waters bring forth [an abundance of creeping creatures],” and the fiat, 60 “Let the earth bring forth living beings.”

Ever since these one-time creative utterances, every living being derives from another, and not *ex nihilo* from the earth or water.

מחכמה דמלכות דמלכות דעשיה

[These fiats derive] from the *Chochmah* of the *Malchut* of the *Malchut* of *Asiyah*.

שבשבעת ימי בראשית האיר בעולם הזה הארה מאור אין סוף בחסד חנם

For during the Seven Days of the Beginning there shone in this world a radiation from the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light in a mode of gratuitous kindness,

בלי העלאת מיין נוקבין כלל

without any [prior] elevation of *mayin nukvin* at all.)

During those days there was no spontaneous arousal initiated from the world below, in the form of divine service on the part of the “female” or recipient element, in order to elicit a reciprocal arousal from above. (After these seven days, however, G-d ordained that henceforth there must first be an arousal initiated from below.) By virtue of the gratuitous and unearned Di-vine kindness of those first seven days, each of the above-quoted fiats (“Let the water bring forth...” and “Let the earth bring forth...”) effectively brought about an instance of creation *ex nihilo*, of *yesh* from *ayin*.

The fiat “Let the earth sprout forth...,” by contrast, operates constantly:

להצמיח עשבים ואילנות ופירות מאין ליש תמיד, מדי שנה בשנה

to make grasses and trees and fruits sprout *ex nihilo* into substantiality, constantly, year by year. 61

שהוא מעין בחינת אין סוף

This [constancy] is a kind of infinity,

שם יתקיים עולם הזה ריבוי רבבות שנים, יצמיחו מדי שנה בשנה

for if this world were to exist for myriads of myriads of years, they would still sprout forth from year to year.

אלא שיש מהן על ידי העלאת מיין נוקבין, והם הזרועים והנטועים

There are, though, some [plants, trees and fruit] that result from a [prior] “elevation of *mayin nukvin*,” i.e., whose seeds serve as the above-mentioned arousal from below which calls forth the power of vegetative growth within the earth, namely, those which are sown and planted.

ואף על פי כן, הם כמו יש מאין

Nevertheless, these [too] are like *yesh me'ayin*,

שהגרעין הנטוע, אין לו ערך כלל לגבי הפרי, וגם נגד כל האילן עם הענפים והעלין

for the planted seed is of no estimation whatever in relation to the fruit, nor in relation to the whole tree with the branches and leaves.

Whereas the difference between the fruit and its source in the kernel is mainly qualitative (as in the taste, for example), the difference between the kernel and the resultant tree is more quantitative. By both of these criteria, then, the growth of a tree from a seed possesses an element of *yesh me'ayin*.

וכן במיני זרעונים וירקות, וגם במיני תבואה, להתהוות מאות גרעינין מגרעין אחד, הוא כמו יש מאין

The same applies to the various species of seeds and vegetables, and to the various species of grain: that hundreds of kernels should come into being from a single kernel, resembles *yesh me'ayin*;

ומכל שכן, הקשין והשבליים

and how much more so, with respect to their straw and spikes, which are so much more different from the parent kernel, and thus even more conspicuously come into being as if “from nothing.”

והנה הפירות על ידי העלאת מיין נוקבין, היא הזריעה והנטיעה, הם משובחים מאד מאד מהעולים מאליהן, מכח הצומח לבדו שבארץ

Now, [62](#) these fruits that [grow] by means of an “elevation of *mayin nukvin*,” i.e., by sowing and planting, are far, far superior to those that come up independently, only from the vegetative property in the soil.

ומזה נשכיל המשכות אורות עליונים באצילות, בריאה, יצירה, עשיה

And from this we will be able to understand [the concept of] the elicitation of the Supernal *orot*, the Divine illuminations, [that are drawn down] in the Worlds of *Atzilut*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*,

The lights that are drawn down to this world in response to man's divine service surpass by far the lights that are granted through "an arousal from above" as an unearned gift.

שהוא תכלית בריאת האדם

([63](#) which is the ultimate purpose for the creation of man),

כמו שכתוב במקום אחר

as is explained elsewhere.

ומזה

And from this, from the earlier explanation of the paradox of *Or Chozer*, whereby it is specifically in the lowest levels of *Asiyah* that the light of *Sovev Kol Almin* and the light of the *Kav* rebound most intensely,

יובן היטב בענין סדר המדרגות: דומם, צומח, חי, מדבר

we can clearly understand the subject of the order of the levels [of created beings] — the inorganic, the vegetative, the animal, and the articulate being (i.e., man),

שהן בחינת עפר, מים, אש, רוח

which correspond to and are expressed within the composition of all created beings as the Elements of Earth, Water, Fire and Air.

שאף שהחי הוא למעלה מהצומח, והמדבר למעלה מהחי

For though the animal [level] is higher than the vegetative [level], [64](#) and the articulate being is higher than the animal,

אף על פי כן, החי ניזון וחי מהצומח, והמדבר מקבל חיותו משניהם

nevertheless, the animal is nourished and lives by the vegetative, and the articulate being receives his vitality from them both,

וגם חכמה ודעת

and even wisdom and knowledge.

שאין התינוק יודע לקרות אבא ואמא, עד שיטעום טעם דגן כו'

For, as the *Gemara* states,⁶⁵ “A child does not know how to call ‘father’ and ‘mother’ until it has tasted grain.”

ועדיין לא אכילנא בישרא דתורא כו'

[It is likewise written,]⁶⁶ “I had not yet eaten the meat of oxen....”

This was the explanation which R. Nachman gave to Rava, as to why the previous evening he had been unable to give the better answer to his query that he had now given. Thus we see that the meat of a mere animal is able to stimulate the mind of man.

The key to this paradox, whereby the animal kingdom is nourished by the inferior vegetative kingdom, and man needs both of these inferior orders of creation, has been explained above:

כי הוא בחינת אור חוזר ממטה למעלה, מתחתית העשיה

For this is an instance of *Or Chozer*, the light that is reflected from the lower levels to the higher, from the lowest level of *Asiyah*,

שמתגלית שם ביתר עז, הארה דהארה כו'

where there is an exceedingly strong manifestation of the radiation of the radiation, and so on, of the glimmer of a glimmer of a glimmer that is found within the physical earth,

מאור אין סוף, הסובב כל עלמין

from the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light that encircles all worlds, i.e., from the degree of *Sovev Kol Almin* that transcends all worlds equally,

ומהקו אור אין סוף, שבסיום רגלי היושר דאדם קדמון

and from the *Kav* from the *Ein Sof*-light at the culmination of the “feet” of the *Yosher* of *Adam Kadmon* — the final level of the internalized illumination that is found in all worlds. This illumination shines there:

בבחינת אור חוזר, כנ"ל

in a mode of *Or Chozer*, as stated above.

ויובן היטב בזה, טוב טעם ודעת

This will enable one to gain a reasoned understanding

מה שהמלאכים עליונים שבמרכבה: פני שור ופני נשר

how it is that the Supernal angels of the *Merkavah*, the “Celestial Chariot,” namely, the “Face of the Oxen” and the “Face of the Eagle,”

נהנים מאד, וניזונים ומסתפקים

derive great enjoyment, and are nourished and content,

מרוח הבהמה והעוף, העולה אליהם מהקרבנות שעל גבי המזבח

from the spirit of the cattle and fowl that ascends to them from the sacrifices on the altar.

The phrase, [67](#) לאשי לחמי קרבני את (“My sacrifice, the bread of My burnt offerings...”), may be understood on a non-literal level to mean that the sacrifices provide sustenance for G-d’s “fires”, i.e., for the angels.

וכדקדוק לשון הזהר הקדוש: ואתהניין מיסודא ועיקרא דילהון

As the holy *Zohar* expresses it precisely, [68](#) “They derive enjoyment from their element and essence”: the spiritual root (as opposed to the animal component) of the sacrifices is reflected back to its angelic source in a mode of *Or Chozar*.

ואחרי הדברים והאמת האלה, דעת לנבון נקל

Now, after these words and this truth, knowledge comes easily to the discerning,

להבין על ידי כל הנ”ל, גודל מעלת המצות מעשיות

to understand through all the above the sublime worth of the practical commandments, those performed with physical objects and with man’s physicality.

אשר הן תכלית ירידת הנשמות לעולם הזה הגשמי

For [these commandments] are the ultimate purpose for the descent of souls to this physical world,

כמו שכתוב: היום לעשותם

as it is written, [69](#) “Today [is the time] to do them.”

I.e., specifically “today”, in this world of action, are we provided with the opportunity to perform *mitzvot* with physical objects whose creation came about from G-d’s very essence, and which contain the concealed power of His very being. By performing *mitzvot* with these objects we release this concealed power.

ויפה שעה אחת בתשובה ומעשים טובים בעולם הזה, מכל חיי עולם הבא

[It is likewise written,]⁷⁰ “Better one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world, than all the life of the World to Come.”

עד כאן מצאנו מכתב יד הקודש

At this point the first publishers of *Iggeret HaKodesh* wrote: *Until here we found of his holy writing.*

FOOTNOTES ¹. *Derech Mitzvotcha*, p. 170a. ². *Acharon shel Pesach*, 5694. ³. Note of the Rebbe: “*Etz Chayim*, *Shaar* 47, ch. 12, *et al.*” ⁴. *Tikkunei Zohar*, Introduction II (beginning *Patach Eliyahu*). ⁵. Parentheses are in the original text. ⁶. Note of the Rebbe: “*Chayohi* and *garmohi* can also be interpreted otherwise.” ⁷. *Shaar* II, ch. 3 *et passim*. ⁸. *Vayeitzei*, p. 182b. ⁹. Part I, beginning of ch. 8. ¹⁰. Note of the Rebbe: “This is not to say that the *Ein Sof* is one with the *kelim* of the *Sefirot*; rather, that they unite in an action that can only come about through the *Ein Sof* or through *uniting* with the *Ein Sof*, with the action coming about by the *Ein Sof* and *through* the *kelim*.” ¹¹. Note of the Rebbe: “And for the reason provided below, on p. קל ע”ב [i.e., p. 260 of the standard Hebrew text].” ¹². See *Yerushalmi*, *Sanhedrin* 7:13; *Bereishit Rabbah* 39:14; *Vayikra Rabbah* 19:2; *et al.* ¹³. *Pardes Rimonim*, *Shaar* VI, ch. 6, *et al.* ¹⁴. I, 19b ff. ¹⁵. Parentheses are in the original text. ¹⁶. 1:2, *et passim*. ¹⁷. Note of the Rebbe: “Including the formation (*Yetzirah*) of the *Sefirot*.” ¹⁸. Note of the Rebbe: “Not even of the *yesh* of *Beriah*, the proof of this being — and to the extent that — they are not [even of an apprehensible nature to created beings].” ¹⁹. Cf. Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar*, p. 17a. ²⁰. *Shmot* 33:23. ²¹. *Pardes Rimonim*, *Shaar* VI, ch. 6, *et al.* ²². Note of the Rebbe: “This is why even the creation of the *kelim* of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* — which are not One, but separate entities — cannot come about through the process of *ilah* and *alul*.” ²³. Note of the Rebbe: “So, too, regarding the *yesh* of *Asiyah*.” ²⁴. P. 90b. ²⁵. *Iyov* 28:12. ²⁶. On *Bereishit* 1:1. ²⁷. *Shaar HaYichud VehoEmunah*, ch.3. ²⁸. Note of the Rebbe: “[Not only from the perspective of the *yesh*, but] also according to the truth.” ²⁹. *Iyov* 4:18. ³⁰. The last word of the Hebrew quotation is vocalized with a *kamatz*, *kamatz katan*, and *kamatz*. ³¹. In the Hebrew text, the letters ז”ר are an abbreviation for ז”א (itself an abbreviation for אנפין זעיר, representing the six “male” *middot*) and נוקבא (the “female” or recipient element, viz., the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*). ³². Parentheses are in the original text. ³³. *Tikkun* 70 (p. 124a). ³⁴. *Yeshayahu* 49:2. ³⁵. The Rebbe here refers the reader to an explanation of the *Tzemach Tzedek* in *Or HaTorah*, *Shmot*, p. 199, which may be summarized as follows: The “thousands and myriads of worlds” alludes not to actual worlds, but to extremely rarefied spiritual degrees (“letters”) that descend into *Asiyah* and result in the

creation of actual worlds. Hence, the above statement of the Alter Rebbe (“the thousands...*yesh*”) means that “The created beings that came about from the ‘letters’ are indeed separate entities, while the ‘letters’ themselves are Divinity; they are termed ‘worlds’ only in relation to *Gulgalta*; i.e., they are ‘letters’ that have previously been drawn forth to serve as a source and root for the creation of worlds....” [36](#). Cf. *Zohar* III, 128b. [37](#). Cf. *Or HaTorah*, loc. cit. [38](#). *Bachaye*, *Vayeishev* 38:30, et al.; *Shaar HaYichud VehaEmunah*, ch. 7. [39](#). *Tehillim* 33:6. [40](#). *Iyov* 28:12. [41](#). 1:7. [42](#). *Tehillim* 111:10. [43](#). Note of the Rebbe: “Cf. the Note [of the Alter Rebbe] in ch. 52 of Part I [of *Tanya*]; also p. קלא ע"ב [i.e., p. 262 of the standard Hebrew text].” [44](#). II, 52b. [45](#). See *Likkutei Torah*, *Parshat Tzav*, p. 16b, and sources listed there. [46](#).

Shabbat 1:2.

Note of the Rebbe: “It will be observed that this entire discussion appears earlier in the *Yerushalmi*, in Tractate *Berachot* (1:2), except that there the *sukkah* precedes the *lulav*, whereas in Tractate *Shabbat* the *lulav* precedes the *sukkah*. It would therefore appear reasonable to assume that [the Alter Rebbe] preferred to cite specifically this tractate (presumably because the law at hand applies primarily to *Shabbat*). Somewhat problematic, however, is the fact that the expression used in both discussions (as recorded in current editions of the *Talmud*) is ‘to make a *lulav* and to make a *sukkah*,’ whereas the difference between these cases is self-evident. See the Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim*, beginning of sec. 641. At any rate, this is not the forum for a lengthy discussion.”

See also *Likkutei Sichot*, Vol. XX, p. 267, footnote 10, and the sources listed there.

[47](#). *Nechemiah* 9:6 [48](#). *Yirmeyahu* 23:24 [49](#). *Tikunei Zohar* 57:91b. [50](#). *Tanya*, ch.48. [51](#). Note of the Rebbe in his Glosses and Emendations: “Both the language and the intent [of the seemingly repetitious Hebrew introductory phrases] invite attention.” [52](#). Parentheses are in the original text. [53](#). *Bereishit Rabbah* 10:6. [54](#). On *Bamidbar*, p. 196. [55](#). *Op. cit.*, p. 786. [56](#). Note of the Rebbe: “See ch. 6 (in the Alter Rebbe’s Note); ch. 18; see also end of ch. 51 and end of ch. 52.” [57](#). *Bereishit* 1:11. [58](#). Parentheses are in the original text. [59](#). *Bereishit* 1:10. [60](#). *Ibid.* 1:24. [61](#). “Coming after ‘constantly’, the phrase ‘year by year’ suggests something of a contradiction. This is not the case in the text above (foot of Hebrew p. 132a), where לעולם תמיד means ‘constant and everlasting,’ as is evident from the continuation there (‘in a mode of infinitude’). Our text should therefore be understood in the spirit of the similar text at the end of Epistle 14, above: ‘And this is the meaning of *Forever*...; ...rather, every year....”’ [62](#).

Note of the Rebbe: “The relevance here of this passage (regarding the superiority of fruits that are planted) is not immediately apparent.”

It could be seen as being connected with the above discussion of the superior quality of those mitzvot that come at the ‘end’ (and likewise as being connected with the conclusion of this Epistle, on the sublime worth of practical *mitzvot*). For even with regard to all the things that now, too, are bestowed upon us by way of gratuitous kindness, if they are

[earned] by means of the performance of a *mitzvah* or through mortal prayer, they too are ‘far, far superior’ מאד מאד משובחים.

Compare the explanation in *Likkutei Torah* of how the Spies’ complaint was negated by the response that the Land was ‘very, very’ good מאד מאד הארץ טובה.”

[63.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [64.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “[It is superior] also with regard to its creation; ‘nevertheless [it] is nourished...[by the vegetative].’ (This enables us to understand why the Element of Earth is not mentioned here, for everything comes from the Earth. It may likewise be said that for this reason, even after having been created, [everything] depends on it and is nourished by it.)” [65.](#) *Berachot* 40a. [66.](#) *Bava Kama* 71a. [67.](#) *Bamidbar* 28:2. [68.](#) III, 341a. [69.](#) *Devarim* 7:11; *Eruvin* 22a. [70.](#) *Avot* 4:17.



Epistle 21

אחרי דרישת שלומם כמשפט לאוהבי שמו

Having first duly inquired after the welfare of those who love [G-d’s] Name,

This pastoral letter was written by the Alter Rebbe to rouse those of his followers who had pledged an annual contribution to Kollel Chabad. This fund supported their fellow chassidim who had settled in the Land of Israel, where they now studied Torah and engaged in divine service. The Alter Rebbe here urges that instead of waiting until the end of the year, his followers should give part of the promised sum weekly or at least monthly. For apart from the quality of alacrity, the eager promptness that ought to be displayed during the performance of *mitzvot* in general and the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* (“charity”) in particular, there is an additional quality involved, as will soon be explained.

The Alter Rebbe begins this epistle by greeting his fellow Jews as “lovers of G-d’s Name.”¹ This appellation especially suits those helping their brethren who serve G-d in the Holy Land. For upon this land² “G-d’s gaze is fixed constantly,” and this verse uses G-d’s ineffable Name *Havayah*, indicating that the Land is directly illuminated and animated by the sublime level of Divinity indicated by that singular and unique Name.

אל המתנדבים בעם, לעשות צדקת ה' עם ארצו הקדושה

those among the people who willingly volunteer to practice the righteous charitability of G-d towards His Holy Land

לתת מדי שנה בשנה חוק הקצוב, מעות ארצנו הקדושה, תבנה ותכונן במהרה בימינו

by giving every year a set sum of money for [the inhabitants of] our Holy Land (May it be rebuilt and established speedily, in our days!),

אליהם תטוף מלתי, ותזל כטל אמרתי

“may my word [call]”³ to them and “my speech trickle like dew”⁴

לזרוז לזריזים

in order to bestir those who are [naturally] swift, for⁵ “One hurries only the swift,”

ולחזק ידים רפות

and to strengthen weak hands,⁶ for their unquestioned willingness⁷ is hampered only by their poverty,

במתן דמים, מעות ארץ ישראל, מדי שבת בשבתו, ולפחות מדי חדש בחדשו, מערכו הקצוב לערך שנה

so that they should contribute moneys for the Land of Israel every week, or at least every month,⁸ from the amount assigned for the year, proportionately,

וכל כסף הקדשים אשר עלה על לב איש להתנדב בלי נדר לפרנסת אחינו, יושבי ארצנו הקדושה, מדי שנה בשנה

as well as all the⁹ “dedicated money” that each individual was inspired to donate annually (without a vow) for the support of our brethren who live in the Holy Land.

It would seem that in these last few lines the Alter Rebbe means to add the following: Not only are the amounts that were always given in previous years to be given henceforth on a weekly or monthly basis, but additional amounts are to be divided likewise.

כי הנה, מלבד הידוע לכל גודל מעלת הזריזות בכל המצות, הנאמר ונשנה בדברי רז"ל: לעולם יקדים אדם לדבר מצוה כו'

For, first of all, everyone knows the great virtue of alacrity with respect to all commandments, which is spoken of repeatedly in the words of our Sages, of blessed memory. [For example:]¹⁰ “At all times should one be prompt in [fulfilling] a commandment.”

וזריזותיה דאברהם אבינו, עליו השלום, היא העומדת לעד לנו ולבנינו עד עולם

So, too, it is [the merit of]¹¹ “the eager promptness of our father Abraham” (peace upon him), who hastened to the *Akedah*, the Binding of Isaac,¹² that stands by us and our children, for ever.

כי העקדה עצמה אינה נחשבה כל כך לנסיון גדול, לערך מעלת אברהם אבינו, עליו השלום

For the *Akedah* itself, which G-d constantly recalls, is not really regarded as so great a test in relation to the stature of our father Abraham, peace upon him,

בשגם כי ה' דיבר בו: קח נא את בנך כו'

especially considering that G-d Himself said to him,¹³ “Please take your son, [and bring him as an offering].”

והרי כמה וכמה קדושים שמסרו נפשם על קדושת ה', גם כי לא דיבר ה' במ

After all, there have been numerous saintly individuals who gave their lives for the sanctification of G-d, even though He did not speak to them.

How, then, can this be considered such a great test for Abraham, when G-d Himself commanded him to offer his son?

רק שאברהם אבינו, עליו השלום, עשה זאת בזריזות נפלאה

The point is that our father Abraham (peace upon him) did this with wondrous alacrity, for, as the verse testifies,¹⁴ “Abraham rose very early and [himself¹⁵] saddled his donkey,”

להראות שמחתו והפצו למלאות רצון קונו, ולעשות נחת רוח ליוצרו

in order to demonstrate — to others as well — his joy and eager desire to fulfill the will of his Master and to bring gratification to his Maker.

The Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, of blessed memory, explains in a discourse dated the 12th of Tammuz 5709,¹⁶ that the divine service of penitents should involve affecting others as well. Now the challenge of the *Akedah* required that Abraham, the epitome of love and kindness, *reverse* his essential nature, in which the attribute of *Chesed* predominated, and act with all the severity of the attribute of *Gevurah*. (Hence G-d avers,¹⁷ “I now know that you *fear* G-d.”) In this diametrical reversal Abraham resembled a penitent. And, like a penitent, he sought to share with others his delight at fulfilling G-d’s will.

וממנו למדו רז"ל לקיום כל המצות בכלל, ובפרט מעשה הצדקה העולה על כולנה

Indeed, it was from [the example of Abraham], and with the power that he vested within all his descendants, that our Sages (of blessed memory)¹⁸ learned [that alacrity is required] in the fulfillment of all the commandments in general, and in particular with respect to the act of charity which is superior to them all,¹⁹

המגינה ומצלה בפירותיה בעולם הזה מכל מיני פורעניות המתרגשות

in that it protects and saves one — by its²⁰ “fruits [that are repaid] in this world”²¹ — from all kinds of calamities that may come about,

כדכתיב: וצדקה תציל ממות, וכל שכן משאר מיני יסורים הקלים ממות

as it is written,²² “And *tzedakah* saves from death,” and how much more so, from other kinds of suffering that are milder than death.

כל שכן שטוב לנו, גם בעולם הזה, להקדימה כל מה דאפשר

It is thus certainly to our benefit, even in this world, to be as expeditious as possible in [the giving of charity], even more so than in the fulfillment of other commandments, whose reward may not be as palpable in this world,

שהרי אדם נידון בכל יום

for, after all,²³ “A man is judged every day,” so that it is quite possible that he is in need of the merit of today’s *tzedakah* to protect him from today’s judgment.

The reason given until this point for dividing one’s annual pledges into weekly or at least monthly payments, was *the quality of alacrity* in performing a *mitzvah*. The Alter Rebbe now adds two further reasons for not deferring frequent payments to one consolidated contribution at the end of the year: (a) every single act of *tzedakah* refines the soul of the donor; (b) every single act of *tzedakah* brings about a Supernal Union in the *Sefirot* and *Partzufim*.²⁴

אך גם זאת מצאנו ראינו בעבודת הצדקה מעלה פרטית גדולה ונפלאה, אין ערוך אליה

Indeed, in the service of charity we have also found and noted a particularly great and incomparably wondrous virtue,

As explained above, in *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle XII, the “act of charity” (*maaseh hatzedakah*) remains steadily within the conventional limits set by one’s natural inclination. In the case of the “service of charity” (*avodat hatzedakah*), by contrast, the individual serves G-d by toiling, refining himself and excelling himself, until he is able to be charitable in a manner that leaps above and beyond his custom and nature.

The Alter Rebbe now teaches that even if the amount one gives is not out of the ordinary, nevertheless, if it is given with great frequency, this too qualifies as divine *service*, —

להיות מעשה הצדקה נעשית בפעמים רבות

when the act of charity is performed numerous times,

The Alter Rebbe is referring here not to one's annual pledge but to the actual giving of the numerous increments which add up to its total amount, —

וכל המרבה הרי זה משובח

and whoever does so frequently is praiseworthy,

ולא בפעם אחת ובבת אחת, גם כי הסך הכולל אחד הוא

rather than at one time and all at once, even when the total sum is the same. Even then, it is far preferable to give the same amount over a longer period on numerous occasions,'—

כמו שכתב הרמב"ם ז"ל, בפירוש המשנה ששנו חכמים ז"ל: והכל לפי רוב המעשה

as R. Moses Maimonides, of blessed memory, wrote in his commentary on the [following] *mishnah*²⁵ taught by the Sages,²⁶ of blessed memory: “And everything is [judged] according to the multiplicity of action,” as opposed to the stature of the deed.

On this *mishnah* the *Rambam* explains that though a one-time donation of (say) a thousand²⁷ gulden is truly praiseworthy, the trait of benevolence does not thereby become embedded within the donor's psyche to the same extent as it would if he would give these same thousand coins one at a time.

והנה, מלבד כי הרמב"ם ז"ל ביאר היטב טעמו ונימוקו: כדי לזכך הנפש על ידי רבוי המעשה

Now, apart from the underlying reason [for this] that R. Moses Maimonides, of blessed memory, clearly explained, viz., “in order to refine the soul by means of the multiplicity of action,”

הנה מקרא מלא דיבר הכתוב: פעולת צדקה לחיים

an explicit verse in Scripture states that “the effect of *tzedakah* is for life.”

In his Notes and Emendations at the conclusion of [the Hebrew edition of] *Tanya*, the Rebbe refers the reader to the following two verses: In *Mishlei* 10:16 we find, צדיק פעולת, לחיים — “The effect of a *tzaddik* is for life,” and in *Mishlei* 11:11 we find, לחיים צדקה כן — “So is *tzedakah* for life.” Accordingly, the Rebbe notes that the Alter Rebbe's citation of the three words צדקה פעולת לחיים (“the effect of *tzedakah* is for life”) as part of “an explicit verse” is problematic.

Seemingly, this difficulty could be resolved by interpreting thus: Since “the effect of a *tzaddik*” is *tzedakah* (in the spirit of the verse,²⁸ “G-d is a ‘*tzaddik*’: He loves acts of *tzedakah*”), the verse which states that “the effect of a *tzaddik* is for life” in fact seeks to imply that “the effect of a *tzaddik* — viz., *tzedakah* — is for life.”

From the comment of the Rebbe, however, it is apparent that this interpretation is unsatisfactory, for surely “an explicit verse” should be explicit, without resort to interpretation.

דהיינו, שפעולתה וסגולתה: להמשיך חיים עליונים מחיי החיים, אין סוף ברוך הוא

This means, the effect and mystical consequence [of *tzedakah*] is to elicit and draw down supernal life from the Fountainhead of Life (lit., “from the Life of life”), the blessed *Ein Sof*,

לארץ החיים

to the Land of Life, i.e., to *Malchut* of *Atzilut*.

The *Sefirah* of *Malchut* in the World of *Atzilut* is known as the “Land of Life” because (relative to the more “heavenly” levels) it is the *lowest* level within that World. It is known as the “Land of Life” because it provides life to all the created beings of the three lower Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*.

The effect of *tzedakah*, then, is to draw down life-giving Divine energy into the recipient (or “feminine”) attribute called *Malchut* of *Atzilut*. The *source* of this life (the “Fountainhead of Life”) is called *Za*, which is the last level within the worlds that are *Ein Sof*, or infinite. The name *Za* is an acronym of the initials (ז"א) of אנפין זעיר, i.e., the bracket of six masculine *middot*, or emotive attributes of *Atzilut*. (This *yichud* of masculine and feminine *middot* is the “Supernal Union” spoken of below.)

היא שכינת עוזינו, שעליה נאמר: ואתה מחיה את כולם

[The Land of Life, i.e., *Malchut* of *Atzilut*] is the *Shechinah* which gives us strength, i.e., the Divine Presence that animates and fortifies created beings, of which it is said,²⁹ “And You animate them all.”

The word אתה (“You”) alludes to the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* (the source of G-d’s creative speech) in the World of *Atzilut*, for its spelling indicates all the letters from *alef* to *tav*, from the first letter of the alphabet to the last, while its letter *hei*, numerically equivalent to five, alludes to the five organs of verbal articulation, the source of the letters.³⁰

והיא סוכת דוד הנופלת עד עפר

[The *Shechinah*] is identified with³¹ “the *sukkah* of David that has fallen” down to the very dust, during the time of exile.³²

וכמאמר רז"ל: גלו לאדום, שכינה עמהם כו'

As our Sages, of blessed memory, taught:³³ “When [the Jewish people] were exiled to *Edom*, the *Shechinah* went with them...”

Accompanying them in all their wanderings throughout this last and lowest exile of ours, the *Shechinah* has thereby been humbled down to the lowest depths. At a time like this, acts of *tzedakah* can reinvigorate it with the infinite life that they elicit from the Fountainhead of Life, the *Ein Sof*.

כי באתערותא דלתתא, להחיות רוח שפלים, דלית ליה מגרמיה כלום, אתערותא דלעילא

[*Tzedakah* has this effect] because the arousal [which man initiates] from below, to revive the spirit of the humbled (i.e., the pauper) “who has nothing at all of his own,” elicits an arousal from Above,

The quoted phrase describing the poor is advisedly borrowed from the Kabbalists’ description of the *Shechinah* as the *Sefirah* (viz., *Malchut* of *Atzilut*) which³⁴ “has nothing at all of its own, but what is given to it by others,” i.e., by the higher *Sefirot*. The similar phrase quoted above thus highlights the fact that mortal man’s charitable initiative in reviving the spirits of his poor neighbor does not merely *echo* or *parallel* the “charity” with which the *Ein Sof* revives the humbled *Shechinah*: it quite literally *activates* it.

Tzedakah, then, draws down life from the Fountainhead of Life to the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, which is also known as the Land of Life, —

ובפרט בהתנדב עם, להחיות יושבי ארץ החיים ממש

especially when people offer voluntarily to sustain the inhabitants of the actual Land of Life, for *Eretz Yisrael*, the geographical Land of Life, corresponds to the heavenly Land of Life,³⁵ viz., *Malchut* of *Atzilut*.

ודי למבין

This will suffice for those who understand.

וכל משכיל על דבר גדול ונפלא כזה

Now whoever is enlightened as to so great and wondrous a matter, i.e., the cosmic dynamic traced above, whereby an act of *tzedakah* draws down Supernal life from the blessed *Ein Sof* to animate the exiled *Shechinah*,

ימצא טוב טעם ודעת כמה גדולים דברי חכמים ז”ל, שאמרו: הכל לפי רוב המעשה

will discover and appreciate how profound are the words of the Sages, of blessed memory, when they said,³⁶ “Everything is [judged] according to the multiplicity of action.”

דהיינו מעשה הצדקה הנעשה בפעמים רבות, להמשיך חיים עליונים, ליחד יחוד עליון, פעמים רבות

This refers to the act of charity which is performed numerous times, thereby eliciting the supreme [form of] life, i.e., life that derives from the infinite Fountainhead of Life, by repeatedly bringing about the Supreme Unification of *Kudsha Brich Hu* and His *Shechinah*.

Every act of *tzedakah* draws *Kudsha Brich Hu* and *Ein Sof* downward to His *Shechinah*, down into the lowest levels of this world.

והיינו נמי כעין מה שכתב הרמב"ם: לזכך הנפש

This is also similar to what Maimonides wrote in praise of the repeated giving of *tzedakah*: “to refine the soul (*nefesh*).”

These words allude as well to the Supreme Unification that is thereby effected in the worlds above.

כנודע מזוהר הקדוש, דשכינה נקראת נפש, כי היא חיינו ונפשנו

For, as is known from the sacred *Zohar*,³⁷ the *Shechinah* is called *nefesh* (“Soul”), because it is our life and our soul,

וכתיב: כי שחה לעפר נפשנו

as in the phrase,³⁸ “Our Soul is stooped to the dust,” which alludes to the descent of the *Shechinah* into exile.

ולכן אמרו רז"ל: גדולה צדקה שמקרבת את הגאולה

And that is why our Sages, of blessed memory, said,³⁹ “Great is charity, for it brings the Redemption near,”

להקימה מעפר מעט מעט

by raising [the *Shechinah*] from the dust by gradual stages with every act of *tzedakah*,

עד כי יבא שילה

“until⁴⁰ *Shiloh* will come”⁴¹ — i.e., until *Mashiach* comes,⁴² at which time the *Shechinah* will be reinstated to its pristine height.

Appendix to Epistle 21

The *Tzemach Tzedek*⁴³ asks the following question: Why do our Sages find it necessary to point out that⁴⁴ “Each and every coin [that a Jew gives for charity] adds up to a large sum,” when in point of fact, whenever a Jew gives even a single coin for charity he is performing a *mitzvah* commanded in the Torah?

Thus, for example,⁴⁵ “R. Elazar would give a coin to a poor man, and then pray, for it is written,⁴⁶ ‘Through *tzedek* will I behold Your Countenance’” — and *tzedek* (“righteousness”) is closely related to *tzedakah* (“charity”). The giving of a single coin thus constitutes a *mitzvah* worthy of reward, for if⁴⁷ “G-d does not withhold the reward of any creature, even for words fitly spoken,” He surely rewards the fulfillment of a fully-fledged commandment ordained by the Torah. This applies especially to the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, which is⁴⁸ “equivalent to all the other *mitzvot*.” Thus, too, the *Rambam* writes⁴⁹ that this commandment should be observed even more scrupulously than all other positive commandments. Moreover,⁵⁰ “Israel will be redeemed [from exile] only by virtue of their acts of charity.” Indeed, G-d Himself praises Abraham for his charitable conduct,⁵¹ which he also taught to his children after him.

Considering, then, the sublime status of every single act of *tzedakah*, why do the Sages find it necessary to stress that all the individual coins contributed accumulate to total a large sum?

This would suggest, the *Tzemach Tzedek* goes on to say, that though the reward for one large contribution is greater, our Sages seek here to reassure us that even modest increments add up and become equally worthy of this superior reward.

On the other hand, the very need for this reassurance would lead one to believe that giving one lump sum is *superior* to making smaller, periodic payments. It will be recalled, however, that the *Rambam* demurs, noting that “everything is [judged] according to the *multiplicity of action*” (as opposed to the stature of the deed), so that a generous one-time donation of (say) a hundred gulden is *less* praiseworthy than a hundred instances of giving one coin at a time.

(And here the *Tzemach Tzedek* quotes the entire text of our above letter of the Alter Rebbe, with all its explanations on both the revealed and the esoteric planes of the Torah, to demonstrate the superiority of piecemeal giving.) Does this not conflict with the attitude that leads the Sages to go as far as seeking a proof-text to reassure us that many individual coins *may be considered to be as valuable* as one large sum?

The *Tzemach Tzedek* goes on to ask another question. The *Gemara* and the halachic codifiers determine that the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* is properly fulfilled only if one gives a certain mini-mum — not less than a tenth of one’s earnings. Accordingly, if one made numerous charitable contributions, then even though on each such occasion he effected a Supernal Union and drew down Supreme Life to this world, he nevertheless did not perform the *mitzvah* (in its most complete form) unless he tithed. Conversely, if he gave a tenth or a fifth of his earnings at one time, and thereby brought about a Supernal Union only once, he nevertheless fulfilled the *mitzvah* properly. How can this be? Why should he be deemed to have fulfilled his obligation better than his friend, whose repeated charitable activity (though totalling less than a tithe) recharged this world with renewed spiritual energy on so many occasions?

In order to resolve this, the *Tzemach Tzedek* introduces two themes which he expounds at length, but which will be mentioned here only briefly.

(a) In one of the Kabbalistic schemes (בכ"ר א"ק) by which the letters of the Holy Tongue may be arranged, the alphabet is divided into sets of three letters each. In the first set, the first letter is *alef* (numerically equivalent to one), the second letter is *yud* (numerically equivalent to ten), and the third letter is *kuf* (numerically equivalent to one hundred). The three letters of the second set are *beit* (two), *kaf* (twenty), and *resh* (two hundred). The alphabet goes on in this vein.

These numbers allude to different degrees of divine effluence that may be drawn down to this world. The degree of spirituality that is alluded to by the letter *yud* is ten times greater than that alluded to by the letter *alef*; the degree of spirituality alluded to by the letter *kuf* is ten times greater than the degree of spirituality alluded to by the letter *yud*; and so on, to one thousand and ten thousand.

In terms of the *Sefirot*, single digits denote the emotive attributes (the Divine *middot*), double digits denote the intellective attributes (the Divine *mochin*), hundreds designate the level of Divinity that transcends Divine intellect, while thousands and tens of thousands respectively denote the levels of Divinity known as *Ratzon* ("the Divine Will") and *Taanug* ("Delight"). In terms of the levels of the soul within an individual Jew, the five classes of numbers correspond to the five soul-levels called (in ascending order) *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah*, *Chayah* and *Yechidah*.

Using this numerical scheme of the Hebrew letters, the *Tzemach Tzedek* explains that by giving *tzedakah* in a single-digit amount one is only able to illuminate this lowly world with the level of spirituality that is alluded to by a single-digit number, while when one gives a double-digit amount one draws down an illumination that is alluded to by double-digit numbers. And so on, when one gives in the hundreds, thousands and tens of thousands: the larger the amount, that much greater is the commensurate spirituality that is drawn down.

(b) The second theme introduced by the *Tzemach Tzedek* explains how *tzedek* (צדק — "righteousness"), which derives from the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*, is transformed into *tzedakah* (צדקה — "charity") by the addition of the letter *hei*, and thereby elevated. The added letter *hei*, numerically equivalent to five, represents the five degrees of Supernal Kindness (חסדים ה').

To revert now to the two manners of giving *tzedakah* described above. At first glance one is tempted to say that they are entirely different, each possessing a quality that the other lacks. For on the one hand, a person who gives away a hundred gold coins at a time draws down a flow of Divine illumination from the lofty level of "one hundred," while his friend who gives only a few coins at a time brings down the Divine effluence from no higher than the single-digit level of holiness.

Nevertheless, though the latter and lesser illumination is indeed elicited on each such occasion, even a hundred such occasions are outshone by the brilliant light that derives from a higher level. For relative to higher degrees of holiness, all lower degrees are considered as naught. (Thus, for example, speaking of the hierarchies of angels, it is written that the “horns of the *Chayot HaKodesh*” are superior to all the inferior levels of angels.)

Likewise,⁵² “There are those who earn their World [to Come] in a single hour.” One hour of repentance as earnest and intense as the repentance experienced by R. Elazar ben Durdaya, surpasses the lifelong divine service of a veritable *tzaddik*, with all his daily love and awe of G-d. For the sheer power and drive of such repentance reaches up and draws down spiritual energy from a far superior source.

We might therefore be tempted to conclude that one can accomplish more by giving *tzedakah* in one lump sum, because of its qualitative superiority, than in many increments. Besides, since by giving less than a tithe in many increments one has not fully discharged his obligation, it would appear that there is something lacking in the total sum that he was to give.

How, then are we to understand the Alter Rebbe’s teaching, based on the *Rambam*, that giving a hundred single coins on a hundred occasions is superior and more worthy of reward than giving them all at once?

The *Tzemach Tzedek* resolves this in the light of the above-quoted teaching of our Sages that⁵³ “Each and every coin [that a Jew gives for charity] *adds up to a large sum*.” I.e., his one hundred individual gifts of one coin all accumulate together when he gives the hundredth coin. His cumulative giving can thus draw down spiritual energy from a “triple-digit” source, just as if he had given away all his coins at once. With his modest but steady giving, this unspectacular donor has succeeded in earning both the quantity of the repeated deed (by effecting an oft-repeated Supernal Union) and the quality of the one-time deed (by drawing down illumination from a superior source).

This, concludes the *Tzemach Tzedek*, is a wondrous and unique characteristic of the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*. The earlier hundred-time or thousand-time gifts do not dissipate; rather, as they accumulate, they are compounded with the later gifts until they ultimately produce one powerful hundredfold or thousandfold *mitzvah*.

In this light the *AriZal* interprets the verse,⁵⁴ לעד עומדת וצדקתו — “and his righteousness (or charity) endures forever”: The spiritual impression (the “letter”) that is inscribed in the Supernal worlds by the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* outlasts the “letters” inscribed by the performance of any other *mitzvah*.

In summary: The quantitative *and* qualitative benefits of giving *tzedakah* in many increments thus enable one to appreciate the teaching of *Rambam* afresh.

The *Tzemach Tzedek* now proceeds to consider the above-quoted ruling of the author of *Levushei Serad*.⁵⁵

Though the *Tzemach Tzedek* quotes this sage with regard to practice, he himself goes only as far as to say that *the last coin in the series* grants its giver the merit and the reward of having given the entire amount all at once. The *Levushei Serad* goes further: *On every single occasion* that one gives a coin (from the total of a hundred coins that he had decided to give) it is considered as if he had given that total all at once. He argues as follows. This individual had in fact wanted to give the whole amount, but divided it into increments only because he sought to gratify his Maker. Hence, whenever he gives part of it, it is as if he had given the sum of one hundred, one hundred times!

The difference in their opinions could well be understood as follows.

The *Tzemach Tzedek* discusses the effects of *tzedakah* in terms of the resultant Supernal Union, and this is accomplished only through one's actual deed, not through his intent; in point of fact, the larger amount was given only once. The *Levushei Serad*, by contrast, speaks in terms of the resultant Divine gratification, and this is accomplished through one's intent as well. Hence, since the donor's intent as he gives each coin is ultimately to give the entire amount, it follows that the delight he causes his Maker results from each of his smaller gifts as well.

However, as mentioned earlier,⁵⁶ the Rebbe understands the above letter of the Alter Rebbe as follows: Since the Alter Rebbe discusses the "multiplicity of action" as a continuation of the theme of alacrity, it is obvious that when he recommends that charity be given weekly or monthly, he means thereby to hasten the giving and not delay it. The quality of alacrity obviously outweighs even that of giving in increments, if the latter policy will delay one's donation. Surely, the hungry recipient or the charitable organization needs to be helped without delay.

The policy of giving in small increments can thus be followed only in a situation such as that which the *Levushei Serad* posits: If one has a large amount to give on a given day, he should not give the entire amount at once, but rather should give it a little at a time. In this way he has given the entire amount by the end of the day, but has also managed in the course of the day to practice charity many times over.

This will of course be workable only when one's contributions are not going directly to a poor person on the same day. And, as the Rebbe pointed out above, this was the case with the periodic collections for the Kollel Chabad fund which occasioned Epistle 21.

FOOTNOTES ^{1.} Note of the Rebbe: "See also *Iggeret HaKodesh*, in Epistle V above, where the Alter Rebbe states that by giving *tzedakah* one 'makes the Holy Name'; [moreover,] *tzedakah* is motivated by the attribute of kindness, whose inner dimension is love." ^{2.} *Devarim* 11:12. ^{3.} Cf. *Iyov* 29:22. ^{4.} *Devarim* 32:2. ^{5.} *Makkot* 23a; *Sifri*, *Bamidbar*, sec. 1. ^{6.} Cf. *Yeshayahu* 35:3. ^{7.} Note of the Rebbe: "...For, as the text continues, we are speaking of those who had been 'inspired to donate.'" ^{8.} Note of the

Rebbe: “It will be observed that in the quoted verse (at the conclusion of the Book of *Yeshayahu*), ‘every week’ [lit., ‘every *Shabbat*’] refers to the Sabbath day at the conclusion of the week, while ‘every month’ refers to the beginning of the month, *Rosh Chodesh*.” [9.](#) *II Melachim* 12:5. [10.](#) *Nazir* 23b; *Bava Kama* 38b. [11.](#) *Chullin* 16a. [12.](#) *Bereishit* 22:1-19. [13.](#) *Ibid.* v. 2. [14.](#) *Ibid.* v. 3. [15.](#) See commentary of *Rashi* there. [16.](#) *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5709, p. 184. [17.](#) *Bereishit* 22:12; see also *Sefer HaMaamarim* — *Kuntreisim*, Vol. II, p. 642. [18.](#) *Pesachim* 4a, *et al.* [19.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Cf. *Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah*, beginning of ch. 12.” [20.](#) *Peah* 1:1. [21.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “See also *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle III.” [22.](#) *Mishlei* 10:2. [23.](#) *Rosh HaShanah* 16a. [24.](#)

With regard to the possibility that the Alter Rebbe may be meaning to indicate that one should not give a large amount of *tzedakah* at the very beginning of the year, the Rebbe notes the following:“

According to this logic the Alter Rebbe is directing that the entire amount should not be given in Tishrei [at the beginning of the year] but *only one-twelfth*, while the remainder is *held back*, and *no more than* one-twelfth given each month thereafter! And this immediately follows his explanation of the praiseworthy quality of prompt performance!“

It is thus self-evident that the Alter Rebbe intends that one should act thus only if it in no way at all conflicts with giving at the earliest possible opportunity and with alacrity. It is also obvious, considering the reason given, that this applies equally to all charities, not only that of the Land of Israel.“

In addition to Maimonides’ above-quoted observation in his Commentary on the *Mishnah* [that the *Mishnah* speaks not of the amount of the deed but of the frequency of the deed], this is moreover stated as a legal directive in *Levushei Serad*, *Hilchot Tzedakah* 113:215, which is quoted in the discourse beginning *LeHavin ... Kol Perutah*. (See this separately-published *maamar*, in which the *Tzemach Tzedek* discusses all the above at length.)“

It would seem that the Alter Rebbe’s explanation (and this letter in general) relates specifically to the money that was collected for the Kollel, for the following reason: In those days it was conveyed to the Holy Land by a special messenger once a year (having been collected from the various towns only once in many months), as mentioned in many letters of the Rebbeim. This being so, the question naturally arises: What benefit could there possibly be in giving it weekly to a local collector? In this letter, therefore, the Alter Rebbe explains the twofold benefit: (a) promptness; (b) the frequency of the deed.”

[25.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “...And more briefly, as a point of law, in *Hilchot Deot* 1:7.” [26.](#) *Avot* 3:15. [27.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “The *Tzemach Tzedek* (*loc. cit.*) quotes the variant reading of R. Ovadiah of Bartenura: ‘One hundred.’” [28.](#) *Tehillim* 11:7. [29.](#) *Nechemiah* 9:6. [30.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “See above, *Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah*, end of ch. 2.” [31.](#) *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 93. [32.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “...Especially so during *ikvot Meshicha* [i.e., the generation at the end of the exile, which can hear the approaching ‘footsteps of *Mashiach*’]; see *Iggeret HaKodesh*, end of Epistle IX.” [33.](#) *Megillah* 29a (according to the text of *Ein Yaakov*), quoted above in the first part of *Tanya*, end of ch.

17. [34](#). Cf. *Zohar* I, 249b. [35](#). Note of the Rebbe: “*Iggeret HaKodesh*, end of Epistle VIII.” [36](#). *Avot* 3:15. [37](#). See *Zohar Chadash*, *Ruth* 84a. [38](#). *Tehillim* 44:26. [39](#). *Bava Batra* 10a. [40](#). *Bereishit* 49:10. [41](#). Note of the Rebbe: “This unusual conclusion, ‘Until Shiloh will come’ (cf. the conclusion of ch. 36, *et al.*), becomes clear in the light of the teaching of the *Zohar* (I, 237b) on this verse: ‘In another place..., but here the *Shechinah* will arise....’” [42](#). *Onkelos* and *Rashi* on *Bereishit* 49:10, based on *Sanhedrin* 98b. [43](#). *Or HaTorah* — *Inyanim U’Maamarei Razal*, p. 40. [44](#). *Bava Batra* 9b. [45](#). *Ibid.* 10a. [46](#). *Tehillim* 17:15. [47](#). *Bava Kama* 38b. [48](#). *Bava Batra* 9a. [49](#). *Hilchot Matnot Aniyim* 10:1. [50](#). *Shabbat* 139a. [51](#). *Bereishit* 18:19. [52](#). *Avodah Zarah* 10b. [53](#). *Bava Batra* 9b. [54](#). *Tehillim* 111:3. [55](#). See footnote 24, above. [56](#). See footnote 24, above.

Epistle 22

Part (a)

In the present letter the Alter Rebbe bemoans the fact that his chassidim trouble him by seeking advice on physical matters, such as their livelihoods. Such advice, he argues, is within the province of prophets, not of Torah scholars. In conclusion he explains how one should accept physical suffering in such a way that it enhances his love and fear of G-d.

The opening and closing passages of the original letter, which were not reproduced in *Tanya*,^{[1](#)} throw considerable light on the middle passage, which appears below.

At the beginning of the original letter, the Alter Rebbe defines set times during which he will henceforth receive people for private audience — *yechidut*. He then protests in strong terms that the many requests for advice on mundane affairs interfere with other areas of his Torah activity. As our Sages ask,^{[2](#)} “Is it conceivable that Moses spent the whole day judging? When would he then find time to study Torah?”

This leads on to the portion of the letter that appears here in *Tanya*. In the original letter, the Alter Rebbe then concludes by declaring that the appointed times for visits and private audiences must be adhered to. Moreover, he “penalizes” those who will not heed his decree, going so far as to threaten to leave the country if he is not heeded.

As we all know, however, chassidim in every generation have in fact asked their Rebbe for advice in mundane matters and, moreover, each of the Rebbeim has in fact obliged. How is this possible? Elder chassidim of earlier generations used to explain that the Alter Rebbe himself sanctions this conduct — in the letter that he wrote “close to the time of his passing,”^{[3](#)} regarding the value of “fraternity and counsel from afar with regard to all family matters....”

My beloved, my brethren and friends:

מאהבה מסותרת, תוכחת מגולה

Out of [my] hidden love [for you, springs] an overt rebuke.[4](#)

לכו נא ונוכחה

“Come now and let us debate”;[5](#)

זכרו ימות עולם, בינו שנות דור ודור

remember the days of old, consider the years of every generation.[6](#)

ההיתה כזאת מימות עולם, ואיה איפוא מצאתם מנהג זה, באחד מכל ספרי חכמי ישראל הראשונים והאחרונים

Has such a thing ever happened in days past? Where indeed have you found such a custom in any of the books of the early or latter sages of Israel,

להיות מנהג ותיקון לשאול בעצה בגשמיות, כדת מה לעשות בעניני העולם הגשמי

that it should be the custom and established norm to ask for advice in mundane matters, as to what one ought to do in matters of the physical world?

אף לגדולי חכמי ישראל הראשונים, כתנאים ואמוראים, אשר כל רז לא אנס להו, ונהירין להון שבילין דרקיע

[Such questions were not asked] even of the greatest of the former sages of Israel, such as the *tannaim* and *amoraim*, the authors of the *Mishnah* and the *Gemara*,[7](#) “from whom no secret was hidden,” and [8](#) “for whom all the paths of heaven were clearly illuminated,”

כי אם לנביאים ממש אשר היו לפנים בישראל, כשמואל הרואה, אשר הלך אליו שאול לדרוש ה', על דבר האתונות שנאבדו לאביו

but only of actual prophets who used to live among the Jewish people, such as Samuel the Seer to whom Saul went to inquire of G-d through him about the donkeys that his father had lost.

Why, indeed, were sages of stature such as the *tannaim* and *amoraim* not asked about mundane matters?

כי באמת כל עניני אדם, לבד מדברי תורה ויראת שמים, אינם מושגים רק בנבואה

For in fact all matters pertaining to man, except for words of Torah and the fear of heaven, are apprehended only by prophecy.

ולא לחכמים לחם

[As the verse states,⁹] “there is no bread unto the wise,”

כמאמר רז"ל: הכל בידי שמים, חוץ מיראת שמים

and as our Sages, of blessed memory, said,¹⁰ “Everything is in the hands of heaven except for the fear of heaven.”

ושבעה דברים מכוסים כו': אין אדם יודע במה משתכר, ומלכות בית דוד מתי תחזור כו'

Likewise,¹¹ “Seven things are hidden...: no man knows how he will earn his living, nor when the Kingdom of David will be restored...,” i.e., when *Mashiach* will come.

הנה הושוו זה לזה

Note that these [two questions] are likened to one another. Just as no one knows exactly when *Mashiach* will come, so, too, no one knows by what means he in fact will obtain his sustenance.

ומה שכתוב בישעיה: יועץ וחכם חרשים

As for the phrase in Isaiah,¹² “A counselor and a man whose wisdom silences all,” suggesting that Torah wisdom qualifies one to advise in other fields as well, —

וכן מה שאמרו רז"ל: ונהנין ממנו עצה ותושיה

and also, as for the statement of our Sages,¹³ of blessed memory, regarding one who studies Torah *lishmah*, “for its own sake,” that “people derive from him the benefit of *etzah* (counsel) and *tushiyah* (wisdom),” —

היינו בדברי תורה, הנקרא תושיה

these teachings refer specifically to [counsel in] matters of the Torah, which is called¹⁴ *tushiyah* (assistance).

כמאמר רז"ל: יועץ, זה שיודע לעבר שנים ולקבוע חדשים

Thus the Sages, of blessed memory, said: A counselor is one who knows how to intercalate years, making certain years leap years by interpolating an additional month of Adar, and how to determine the months, establishing what day is *Rosh Chodesh*, the first day of the lunar month,

שסוד העיבור קרוי עצה וסוד בלשון התורה, כדאיתא בסנהדרין דף פ"ז, עיין שם בפירוש רש"י

for in Torah terminology the principle of intercalation is called “counsel” and “a secret,” as stated in Tractate *Sanhedrin*, p. 87; see the commentary of *Rashi* there, which states explicitly that the terms “counselor” and “advice” are related to the principle of intercalation.

* * *

אך האמת אגיד לשומעים לי, כי אהבה מקלקלת השורה, והנה היא כסות עיניים שלא לראות האמת

However, I shall relate the truth¹⁵ to those who listen to me: ¹⁶“Love upsets the natural order of conduct,” for it is a covering of the eyes that prevents people from seeing the truth.

The Alter Rebbe is quick to insist that his listeners’ love for the “life of the body” is no doubt motivated by a spiritual purpose. Nevertheless, they become so enmeshed in this love that they soon come to love the “life of the body” for its own sake as well. This latter love upsets the natural order to the point that it drives people to seek advice on material matters.

מרוב אהבתם לחיי הגוף

Because of their great love for the life of the body —

לשם שמים, לעבוד בו את ה' ברשפי אש ושלהבת גדולה מאהבת נפשם את ה'

[though this love is indeed experienced] for the sake of heaven, so that with [the body] they can serve G-d with flashes of fiery fervor and an ardent flame,¹⁷ this love being even greater than their soul’s love for G-d —

ועל כן היטב חרה להם בצער הגוף, חס ושלוש, ה' ירחם

they are extremely irate when their body undergoes suffering. (Heaven forbend; may G-d show compassion!)

ואין יכולין לקבל כלל, עד שמעבירם על דעתם, לכתת רגליהם מעיר לעיר, לשאול עצות מרחוק

Thus they are not able to bear [it] at all, to the point that it drives them out of their mind, causing them to tramp about from city to city to seek advice from afar.

But why indeed does G-d cause suffering? Moreover, how are we to respond to life’s difficulties, if it is not proper to seek advice on them from Torah sages and *tzaddikim*? The Alter Rebbe goes on to explain:

ולא שעו אל ה', לשוב אליו ברוח נמוכה והכנעת הגוף

Those who seek merely to be rid of their physical afflictions are not following the proper path of the Torah, for in doing so, they do not turn to G-d by [penitently] returning to Him with humble spirit and submission of the body

לקבל תוכחתו באהבה, כי את אשר יאהב ה' וכו'

to accept His chastisement with love,¹⁸ “for it is him whom G-d loves [that He chastises].”

For misfortunes are in fact a call from G-d that one should repent. Indeed, they should be a source of satisfaction: out of G-d's particular love for him, he has been chosen to be roused to repentance.

וכמו אב רחמן חכם וצדיק, המכה את בנו, שאין לבן חכם להפוך עורף לנוס למצוא לו עזרה, או אפילו מליץ יושר לפני אביו הרחמן והצדיק וחסיד

This is analogous to a compassionate, wise and righteous father who hits his son. Surely a wise son should not turn his back to escape and find himself help, or even an intercessor to his father, who is compassionate, righteous and kind (chassid).

The Rebbe Rayatz once remarked¹⁹ that when the Alter Rebbe first speaks of the father who punishes, he does not use the term “chassid”. (He uses it only later, in the context of the intercessor.) The reason, says the Rebbe, is that a father who smites his child may indeed be compassionate, righteous and wise — but he is not a chassid, for a chassid does not hit!

In any event, we see that if the child is truly wise he will not flee from punishment.

רק להיות ישר יחזו פנימו עם אביו, פנים בפנים, לסבול הכאותיו באהבה, לטוב לו כל הימים

Rather, he will look straight at his father, face to face, bearing his smacks lovingly for his lifelong benefit.

To transpose this to the analogue: Every Jew ought to look straight at his Father, “face to Face.”

והנה למעלה, בחינת פנים

Now in the Divine realm, the concept of “Face”

הוא הרצון והחשק אשר אבינו שבשמים משפיע לבניו כל טוב עולמים וחיי נפש וגוף

is the willingness and desire with which our Father in heaven bestows upon His children all the good of the worlds — the physical and the spiritual worlds — as well as life for the soul and body;

באהבה ורצון, חשיקה וחפיצה, על ידי תורת חיים, שהיא רצונו יתברך, אשר נתן לנו

[all of this He bestows] out of love and willingness, out of inner desire and delight, through the Torah of Life, which is His blessed Will, that He gave unto us.

The present passage is based on the body language that typically accompanies a gift.

As explained earlier in *Tanya* (ch.22), one gives a gift to a good friend face to face: the giver's eyes rest on the face of the recipient. Through his very stance the giver thus expresses the fact that his gift stems from his "face" (*panim*) and innermost core (*pnimiyut*). When, however, one gives something to an enemy, he averts his face. This simply gives outward expression to his real aversion: the gift is not prompted by any inner desire, but by some external factor.

In our context, then, G-d's loving willingness in showering us with His gifts is described by the metaphor of "Face".

כמו שנאמר: כי באור פניך נתת לנו תורת חיים כו'

As we recite in the *Amidah*,²⁰ "For in the light of Your Face, You have given us...the Torah of Life....,"

לעשות בה רצונו

with which (and through which) to carry out His will.

ועל זה נאמר: באור פני מלך חיים ורצונו כו'

And of this it is written,²¹ "For in the light of the King's Face there is life, and His will...."

מה שאין כן לעובדי גילולים, משפיע חיי גופם שלא ברצון וחשיקה וחפיצה

To the heathens, however, He grants the life of their bodies²² without willingness, pleasure and delight.

לכך נקראים אלהים אחרים, שיונקים מבחינת אחוריים

For this reason they are referred to as *elohim acherim* ("other gods"), for they draw [their life-force] from *achorayim* (the "hinderside" of Divinity).

To continue the above metaphor: The Divine “*reluctance*” to grant life-force to the heathens — i.e., the so-called *external* level of Divine desire — is here described by a term that is the opposite of the “Face”, which expressed G-d’s innermost will.

וכך הוא באדם: הרצון והחשק הוא בחינת פנים

It is likewise with man: willingness and pleasurable desire, i.e., man’s innermost desires, relate to the “face”.

Thus, turning to G-d “face to Face” means that a man accepts willingly and with inner desire whatever is apportioned to him from the Supernal Face, from G-d’s innermost desire. In our context, this refers to a willing acceptance of G-d’s admon-ishments as expressed in physical suffering.

ואם אינו מקבל באהבה ורצון, כאלו הופך עורף ואחור, חס ושלום

If one does not accept [this suffering] with love and willingness, it is as if he turns his neck and back [on G-d], heaven forbid.

ועצה היעוזה לקבל באהבה, היא עצת ה' בפי חז"ל: לפשפש במעשיו

The suggested advice to enable one to accept [it] with love, is G-d’s counsel through the mouth of our Sages, of blessed memory²³ — “to examine one’s conduct.”

The *Gemara* says that “if one sees afflictions befalling him, he should examine his deeds” and repent.

וימצא לו עונות הצריכין מירוק יסורים, ויראה לעין גודל אהבתו אליו, המקלקלת השורה

He will find sins that require scouring by means of suffering. He will then clearly see G-d’s great love towards him which “upsets the natural order of [Divine] conduct,”

כמשל מלך גדול ונורא, הרוחץ בכבודו ובעצמו צואת בנו יחידו מרוב אהבתו

as in the simile of a great and awesome king who, out of his immense²⁴ love for his only son, personally washes off the filth from him.

כמו שכתוב: אם רחץ ה' את צואת בנות ציון כו' ברוח משפט כו'

As it is written,²⁵ “When G-d will wash off the filth from the daughters of Zion... with a spirit of justice²⁶...”²⁷

When one becomes aware of G-d’s great love for him, a love that is expressed by scouring him with the cleansing agent of suffering:

וכמים הפנים אל פנים

Then,²⁸ “as in water face reflects face,”

The verse goes on to say, “...so is the heart of man to man.” And the same is true of the heart of mortal man to Supernal Man:

תתעורר האהבה בלב כל משכיל ומבין יקר מהות אהבת ה' אל התחתונים

there will be an arousal of love in the heart of everyone who perceives and understands the preciousness of the nature of G-d's love for the nether beings, for those who find themselves in this world, the lowest of all worlds.

אשר היא יקרה וטובה מכל חיי העולמים כולם

This [Divine love] is dearer and better than all the [kinds of] life of all the worlds, both spiritual and material;

כמו שכתוב: מה יקר חסדך וכו'

as it is written,²⁹ “How precious is Your lovingkindness (*Chesed*)....”

כי טוב חסדך מחיים כו'

[It is likewise written,³⁰ “For Your *Chesed* is better than life....”

The motivating nucleus of *Chesed* is love. Thus it is written,³¹ “I have loved you with an everlasting love, and have therefore drawn down *Chesed* upon you.”

כי החסד, שהוא בחינת אהבה

For *Chesed*, which is a manifestation of love,

הוא חיי החיים שבכל העולמות, כמו שנאמר: מכלכל חיים בחסד

is the Fountainhead of life that is present in all the worlds; as it is said in the *Amidah*,³² “He sustains life through *Chesed*.”

Chesed and love are thus the sustaining life-force of all living beings.

ואז

And then, i.e., when one realizes G-d's great love for him that finds expression in afflictions, and when this in turn arouses a love within him so that he will better receive G-d's love, then:

גם ה' יתן הטוב

G-d, too, will grant goodness, of a kind that the naked eye can clearly and palpably perceive as good,

ויאר פניו אליו

and make His Face (the innermost dimension of Divinity) shine towards him³³

בבחינת אהבה מגולה, אשר היתה תחלה מלובשת ומוסתרת בתוכחת מגולה

with a manifest love, which had earlier been garbed and hidden in a manifest rebuke,

The overt admonition that stems from G-d's hidden love will then be transformed into a revealed love.

ויתמתקו הגבורות בשרשן

and the expressions of Divine severity (the *gevurot*) will be sweetened at their source,

Within their source these expressions of Divine severity are ultimately benevolent; as they descend to the world below they become manifest in the form of suffering. The *gevurot*, then, will be sweetened at their source,

ויתבטלו הדינין, נצח סלה ועד

and thereby these expressions of Divine severity will become nullified forevermore.

Part (b)

The following letter was placed here by the compilers of *Iggeret HaKodesh* — “after the first editions (see list) had been published,” as the Rebbe points out — as an addendum to Epistle XXII, Part (a). The connection, however, is not immediately apparent. Perhaps it lies in the *opening* passage of Part (a), the passage which does not appear in this collection,³⁴ in which the Alter Rebbe laments that questions on material affairs occupy too much of his time — for this theme also figures in the letter before us.

אהוביי אחיי ורעיי

My beloved, my brethren and friends:

In these terms the Alter Rebbe addresses his chassidim.

מגודל טרדתי אשר הקיפו עלי יחד, וסבוני כמים כל היום וכל הלילה, תמיד לא יחשו

Due to the immensity of my preoccupations³⁵ which³⁶ “all together surround me” and “encircle me like water” — “all day and all night, never holding their peace,”³⁷

לא אוכל מלט משא לאמר עם הספר כל אשר בלבבי

I am unable to unload the burden³⁸ of writing down all that is in my heart.

אך בקצרה באתי כמזכיר ומחזיר על הראשונות בכלל

Briefly, however, I come as one who reminds and³⁹ “repeats earlier subjects” in general,

ובפרט אל המתנדבים בעם

in particular to⁴⁰ “those of the people who offer themselves willingly [in prayer],” beyond the customary measure, —

לעמוד על העבודה, זו תפלה

that they should stand [steadfast] in [their divine] service, i.e., prayer, which the Sages call⁴¹ “service of the heart,” a form of divine service which works in the heart and on the heart,

בקול רם

[and pray] with a loud voice,⁴²

להתחזק מאד בכל עוז ותעצומות, נגד כל מונע מבית ומחוץ

strengthening themselves vigorously, with all their might and power, against any internal or external obstacle,

ביד חזקה, כמשמעו

with a “strong hand,” plainly and simply.

שהוא רצון יריאיו, אשר למעלה מן החכמה והתבונה אשר נתן ה' בהמה לדעת לעשות את כל אשר צוה ה' בהשכל ודעת

This [service] relates to⁴³ “the will of those who fear Him”; this transcends the wisdom and understanding with which G-d imbued them so that they will know and do all that He commanded, with intelligence and discernment.

Wisdom and understanding are gifts from G-d; as we say in the daily prayers,⁴⁴ “It is You Who graciously bestows discern-ment upon man....” As to the superior faculty of *will*, however, it is left to the initiative of every G-d-fearing Jew to arouse this within himself by accepting the yoke of heaven.

רק רצון פשוט, ורוח נדיבה

[There should be] but a simple will, uncompounded by the particular form or limitations that characterize an intellectually-generated will, and a spirit of voluntary self-dedication,

בכל איש אשר ידבנו לבו לעבוד עבודה תמה, לעשות נחת רוח ליוצרו

in every man whose heart prompts him to serve⁴⁵ “a whole service,” [intending only] to cause gratification to his Maker.

ועל זה נאמר: כי עם קשה עורף הוא, וסלחת

Of this [superrational degree of will] it is written,⁴⁶ “For this is a stiff-necked people, and You should pardon” — i.e., because they are a “stiff-necked people.”⁴⁷ This obstinate and superrational will of theirs warrants their being pardoned, —

כי הסליחה היא גם כן למעלה מן החכמה

for pardon, too, transcends wisdom.

Just as a mortal’s will flies free, untrammelled by his intellect, so too, Above: the divine source of pardon transcends Supernal Wisdom.

כי שאלו לחכמה כו'

Thus [it is written],⁴⁸ “they asked Wisdom [what should be the lot of the soul that sins].” The attribute of Wisdom ruled that a sinning soul must be judged and punished; it did not allow for repentance and pardon.

ומשה רבינו, עליו השלום, ביקש מדה כנגד מדה ודי למבין

So too Moses our Master, peace to him, invoked⁴⁹ “measure for measure”; and suffice this for the discerning.

Moses pleaded that G-d grant forgiveness to the same extent that an individual repents with a simple will that transcends his understanding; he desired that man’s repentance elicit and call down to this world the divine source of pardon which likewise transcends Supernal Wisdom.

* * *

ועוד זאת אדרוש ממעלתכם

Furthermore, I earnestly ask of my esteemed listeners

On the above matters between man and G-d, the Alter Rebbe referred to himself as merely “repeating reminders.” Here, however, as he begins to speak of the relationship between man and man, he uses stronger terms.

שלא להשליך דברי אחרים, אשר ערכתי שיה להיות כל איש ישר והולך בתומו, כאשר עשה האלקים את האדם ישר

not to cast aside my words, in which I have asked that every man be upright and walk with integrity, just as⁵⁰ “G-d made man upright”;

ולא לבקש חשבונות רבים מעלילות מצעדי גבר, ומחשבות אדם ותחבולותיו

nor to seek⁵¹ “numerous calculations” regarding⁵² “the pretexts of man’s steps and a person’s thoughts and devices.”

It is not man’s task to weigh the motives of his fellow.

כי זו מלאכת שמים היא, ולא מלאכת בשר ודם

For that is the work of heaven and not an occupation for flesh and blood.

ולהאמין באמונה שלימה במצות חז"ל: והוי שפל רוח בפני כל אדם, בכלל

Rather, every one should believe with absolute faith in the precept of our Sages,⁵³ of blessed memory: “And be humble of spirit before every man,” without exception.⁵⁴

כי יציבא מלתא ותקין פתגמא, שכל אחד מתוקן מחבירו

For it is a true statement and a correct proverb that every man becomes better through his fellow.

Since every individual possesses specific qualities that others lack, the realization by disparate people that in essence they comprise one whole, enables them all to be complemented and perfected by each other.

* * *

The above form of address, “Furthermore, I earnestly ask of my exalted listeners...,” is expounded by the Previous Rebbe, the saintly Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, on the non-literal level of *derush*. Noting that ממעלתכם אדרוש can also be understood as speaking of “calling forth exalted qualities,” the Previous Rebbe once remarked:⁵⁵ “This form of address does not mean that the Alter Rebbe was confining his appeal to an exclusive group of exalted individuals; after all, he was addressing this letter to his chassidim at large. Rather, in using this phrase he was implying an underlying plea: *Call forth your exalted qualities!*”

With regard to the following pair of phrases, “not to cast aside my words, in which I have asked...,” the Previous Rebbe explains that the former phrase refers to the indirect and transcendent (*makkif*) mode in which the Alter Rebbe influenced his chassidim, while the second phrase refers to his simultaneously direct and internalized (*pnimi*) mode of influence.

Finally, the Previous Rebbe points out that the Alter Rebbe's following affirmation that "every man [literally:] is *better than* his fellow," really means that one's fellows enable one to become a better person; i.e., as translated above, "every man *becomes better through* his fellow."

* * *

וכתיב: כל איש ישראל כאיש אחד חברים

Thus too it is written,[56](#) "All the men of Israel associated together like one man."

כמו שאיש אחד מחובר מאברים רבים, ובהפרדם נוגע בלב, כי ממנו תוצאות חיים

Just as one man is composed of many limbs and when they become separated this affects the heart, for from it there issues life,

אם כן אנחנו היות כולנו כאיש אחד ממש, תיכון העבודה בלב

therefore, by our truly being all like one man, the service [of G-d] in the heart i.e., prayer will be firmly established.

To consider both this divisiveness and this harmony on the cosmic level, in terms of the relation of souls to the Divine Presence: The above sentence means[57](#) that divisiveness among Jews affects, as it were, the Divine Presence, the "heart" of the Jewish people; conversely, since the task of prayer is to connect a soul with its source in the Divine Presence, cultivating one's sense of unity with one's fellows — which in turn connects all souls with the *Shechinah* — enhances the divine service of prayer.

ומכלל הן כו'

And from the affirmative [you may infer the negative].[58](#)

(In keeping with Rabbinic usage, the bracketed clause is euphemistically omitted in the Hebrew original, and merely hinted at by "etc.") I.e., when unity is lacking, the service of prayer is likewise imperfect.

ועל כן נאמר: לעבדו שכם אחד דוקא

That is why it is said,[59](#) "To serve Him with one purpose" (literally, "with one part" or "with one shoulder"): only when all Jews fully unite in this way can it be said that they "serve Him."

ועל כן, אהוביי ידידיי, נא ונא לטרוח בכל לב ונפש לתקוע אהבת רעהו בלבו

The Alter Rebbe resumes his plea to his chassidim: Therefore, my beloved and dear ones, I beg again and again that each of you exert himself with all his heart and soul to firmly implant in his heart a love for his fellow Jew,

ואיש את רעת רעהו אל תחשבו בלבבכם, כתיב

and, in the words of Scripture,[60](#) “let none of you consider in your heart what is evil for his fellow.”

ולא תעלה על לב לעולם

Moreover, [such a consideration] should never arise in one’s heart [in the first place];

ואם תעלה

and if it does arise, for even a person who has attained the rank of a *Beinoni* cannot prevent a thought from presenting itself to his mind,

יהדפנה מלבן כהנדוף עשן, וכמו מחשבת עבודה זרה ממש

one should push it away from his heart[61](#) “as smoke is driven away,” as if it were an actual idolatrous thought.[62](#)

כי גדולה לשון הרע כנגד עבודה זרה וגילוי עריות ושפיכות דמים

For to speak evil [of another] is as grave as idolatry and incest and bloodshed.[63](#)

ואם בדבור כך כו'

And if this be so with speech, [then surely thinking evil about another is even worse[64](#)];

וכבר נודע לכל חכם לב יתרון הכשר המחשבה על הדבור

for all the wise of heart are aware of the greater impact [on the soul] of thought over speech,

הן לטוב והן למוטב

whether for the good or for the better.

This really means, “whether for good or for bad.” Here, too, however, the Alter Rebbe uses a traditional euphemism (“for the better”), which could be understood to mean, “for that which needs to *become* better.”[65](#)

Thought is a soul-garment that is more intimately involved with the soul than speech. For this reason, (a) good thoughts leave a deeper impression on oneself than good speech, and

conversely evil thoughts leave a deeper impression than evil speech; (b) thought is a constant, just as the soul itself is a constant, whereas with regard to speech,⁶⁶ “There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.”

וה' הטוב, המברך את עמו בשלום, ישים עליכם שלום וחיים עד עולם

May the good L-rd, Who blesses His people with peace, bestow peace and life upon you forever more,

כנפש אוהב נפשם מלב ונפש

as is the wish of him who loves you deeply from heart and soul.

FOOTNOTES ¹. They appear in full in *Igrot Kodesh* (Letters) of the Alter Rebbe (Kehot, N.Y., 5740), sec. 24. ². *Shabbat* 10a. ³. *Igrot Kodesh* (op. cit.), sec. 65. ⁴. Cf. *Mishlei* 27:5. ⁵. *Yeshayahu* 1:18. ⁶. Cf. *Devarim* 32:7. ⁷. Cf. *Chullin* 59a. ⁸. See *Berachot* 58b. ⁹. *Kohelet* 9:11. ¹⁰. *Berachot* 33b. ¹¹. *Pesachim* 54b. ¹². 3:3. ¹³. *Avot*, beginning of ch. 6. ¹⁴. *Sanhedrin* 26b, et al. ¹⁵. Cf. *Daniel* 11:2. ¹⁶. *Bereishit Rabbah* 55:8. ¹⁷. Cf. *Shir HaShirim* 8:6. ¹⁸. *Mishlei* 3:12. As in many other instances, the Alter Rebbe ended his quotation with “etc.”, choosing not to spell out the painful final words of the verse. ¹⁹. *Sefer HaSichot* 5704, p. 15. ²⁰. *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 60, et al. ²¹. *Mishlei* 16:15. ²². Note of the Rebbe: “This requires further examination, for seemingly this also applies to the life-force of their souls. See *Tanya*, ch. 22, and end of ch. 3.” ²³. *Berachot* 5a. ²⁴. Note of the Rebbe: “A point awaiting clarification: In the analogue the Alter Rebbe writes ‘great’ (a qualitative term?) while in the analogy he writes ‘immense’ (a quantitative term?).” ²⁵. *Yeshayahu* 4:4. The Heb. text above has been corrected in accordance with the Table of Glosses and Emendations. ²⁶. Note of the Rebbe: “Cf. *Shaar HaKollel* on the *Yehi Ratzon* recited at the burning of *chametz*.” ²⁷. See *Rashi* on the verse. ²⁸. Cf. *Mishlei* 27:19. ²⁹. *Tehillim* 36:8. ³⁰. *Ibid.* 63:4. ³¹. *Yirmeyahu* 31:2. ³². *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 51, et al. ³³. Cf. *Bamidbar* 6:25. ³⁴. It appears in full in *Igrot Kodesh* (Letters) of the Alter Rebbe (Kehot, N.Y., 1987), p. 53. ³⁵. Note of the Rebbe: “The early editions should be scanned, because from the continuation of this sentence one would expect the plural form (טרדותי).” ³⁶. Note of the Rebbe: “[The two quoted phrases are] a paraphrase of *Tehillim* 88:18 — in inverse order, as with several of the expressions that follow.” ³⁷. Cf. *Yeshayahu* 62:6. ³⁸. Hebrew text corrected according to *Luach HaTikkun*. The metaphor is borrowed from *Yeshayahu* 46:2; see *Rashi* there. ³⁹. Cf. *Keritot* 8a. ⁴⁰. *Shoftim* 5:9; on the connection with prayer see *Rashi* there. ⁴¹. *Taanit* 2a. ⁴². The *Shemoneh Esreh*, of course, is always recited in a whisper, except on the Days of Awe; see Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch* 101:2-3. ⁴³. *Tehillim* 145:19. ⁴⁴. *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 53. ⁴⁵. Cf. *Yoma* 24a. ⁴⁶. *Shmot* 34:9. ⁴⁷. Note of the Rebbe: “From this we understand that their ‘stiff-neckedness’ is a positive trait.” ⁴⁸. *Talmud Yerushalmi*, *Makkot* 2:6. ⁴⁹. *Devarim Rabbah* 11:9. ⁵⁰. *Kohelet* 7:29. ⁵¹. *Kohelet* 7:29. ⁵². From the *Mussaf* prayer of Rosh HaShanah; *Machzor for Rosh HaShanah* (Kehot, N.Y., 1983; bi-lingual edition), p. 135. ⁵³. *Avot* 4:10. ⁵⁴.

In *Tanya* ch. 30, this same teaching of the Sages (a) is not introduced by an injunction that one “*believe* [in it] with absolute faith”; (b) it *is* followed by a consideration of the conduct of others.

Concerning these differences the Rebbe notes: “Ch. 30 speaks of man’s service with regard to himself — his battle with the evil inclination and his efforts to refrain from evil and to do good, and so on. This demands the kind of meditation outlined there, that will lead to proper thought, speech and action — a detailed consideration of the conduct of another individual, who is less righteous, [and yet whose divine service one has to learn to regard as being in fact superior to one’s own]. Belief plays no part in this; all that matters there is that one’s mind should compel him to conduct himself as he ought.”

Here, however, in *Iggeret HaKodesh*, our text speaks of the need to become one with every other Jew — all of us like actually one man. The Alter Rebbe therefore has to make provision for the possibility that if one individual imagines a flaw in another or in a group of people, he should not think about it, etc., as is soon stated; rather, he should *believe* in this teaching of the Sages. Indeed, in order for it to be truly internalized he should believe in it ‘with absolute faith,’ and certainly not contemplate the details of the conduct of this individual or the other.”

[55.](#) *Sefer HaSichot* 5705, p. 51. [56.](#) *Shoftim* 20:11. [57.](#) See below at length in Epistle XXXI. [58.](#) *Sifrei, Eikev* 11:19. [59.](#) *Zephaniah* 3:9. [60.](#) *Zechariah* 8:17. [61.](#) *Tehillim* 68:3. [62.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “This comparison is perhaps explained by the statement of our Sages that one is punished only for idolatrous thoughts (*Kiddushin* 40a).” [63.](#) *Arachin* 15b. [64.](#) Here, too, the bracketed words are euphemistically omitted in the Hebrew original, and merely hinted at by “etc.” [65.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “On this meaning of למוטב, see *Likkutei Torah* (conclusion of *Parshas Korach*).” [66.](#) *Kohelet* 3:7.



Epistle 23

In the letter that follows, the Alter Rebbe urges chassidim to devote the daily interval between *Minchah* and *Maariv* to the group study of *Ein Yaakov*, and to the laws in the *Shulchan Aruch* that have frequent and practical application. He introduces this appeal by explaining how sublime is the Divine Presence that dwells within Jews when they study Torah publicly. Indeed, only in the World to Come can this lofty level of Divinity be manifestly received as a reward — except when it abides *over* Jews and *within* Jews when, in this world, they study Torah together.

בגזירת עירין פתגמא ומאמר קדישין

“This statement is made by decree of the wakeful [angels] and by the word of [those] holy ones,”

This phrase¹ is used by the Sages² (and here by the Alter Rebbe) to denote eminent Torah scholars, who are likened to ministering angels;³ specifically —

חכמי המשנה, עליהם השלום

the Mishnaic Sages, peace be upon them,

ששנו במשנתם: עשרה שיושבין ועוסקין בתורה, שכינה שרויה ביניהם

who taught in their *Mishnah*:⁴ “If ten people sit together and engage in the study of the Torah, the Divine Presence (*the Shechinah*) rests among them.”

A similar teaching⁵ — “The *Shechinah* hovers over every gathering of ten Jews” — means only that the Divine Presence hovers over them in a transcendent (lit., “encompassing”) manner, as explained at the end of ch. 11 of *Tanya*. In this instance, however, where ten Jews are studying Torah together, the *Shechinah* rests “among them” — in an internalized manner.

כי זה כל האדם

“For this is the whole [purpose] of man.”⁶ As the *Gemara*⁷ interprets this verse: “The entire world was created solely for this purpose.”

ואף גם זאת היתה כל ירידתו בעולם הזה, לצורך עליה זו

Moreover, [the soul’s] very descent to this world was for the purpose of this ascent, which is accomplished through public Torah study,

אשר אין עליה למעלה הימנה

and no [possible] ascent is higher than this.

The ultimate ascent of the soul, the reason for which the soul initially descended, is attained not only after it completes its descent, after it leaves the body; rather, through public Torah study while the soul is still within the body, it causes the *Shechinah* to rest in this nether world, and is thereby elevated more than by any other means.

כי שכינת עוזו אשר בגבהי מרומים, והשמים ושמי השמים לא יכלכלו אימתה

For the *Shechinah* of [G-d’s] Might which is in the supernal heights, and Whose awesomeness⁸ “the heavens and the heavens of the heavens cannot contain,”

תשכון ותתגדל בתוך בני ישראל, כמו שכתוב: כי אני ה' שוכן בתוך בני ישראל

dwells and becomes magnified among the Children of Israel, as it is written,⁹ “For I, G-d, dwell among (תוך) the Children of Israel,”

על ידי עסק התורה והמצות בעשרה דוקא

as a result of [their] study of the Torah and observance of the commandments in groups of [at least] ten, for ten Jews constitute a congregation.

כמו שאמרו רז"ל: אתיא תוך תוך כו'

For, as our Sages of blessed memory said,¹⁰ “We infer a conclusion from [two appearances of] the word *toch*.”

In certain specified cases, the Sages draw an analogy from one expression in the Torah to the identical expression in a different context. A comparison of this kind (a *gezeirah shavah*) is made between two appearances of the above word. One verse states,¹¹ “I will become sanctified in the midst (*toch*) of the Children of Israel,” while another verse states,¹² “...from the midst (*toch*) of this congregation.” From this we learn that the recital of a *davar shebikedushah*, a text involving the sanctification of G-d’s Name, requires a “congregation.” From a verse regarding the spies, where G-d refers to the ten evil spies as a congregation, we learn that a congregation is not less than ten people.

The Rebbe Rayatz asks:¹³ Of all the possible contexts, why do our Sages derive this rule from the evil assemblage of the spies?

Answering his own question, the Rebbe Rayatz explains that with these words Moses sought to insulate the people from the *makkif* of evil, from the transcendent [and most intense] dimension of evil. (As far as the *pnimi* of evil was concerned, the permeating [but less intense] dimension of evil, Moses was able to rectify it.) Now, since everything in the realm of holiness has its counterpart in *kelipah*, in the forces of evil,¹⁴ it follows that the level of holiness referred to here is the transcendent level. Thus, when a congregation of at least ten participants engages collectively in prayer or in Torah study or in the observance of a *mitzvah*, they elicit a response from a transcendent level of Divine light, from an or *makkif*, that is utterly superior to the light called forth by a group of fewer than ten.

ועל זה נאמר: בקרבך קדוש

Concerning this it is written,¹⁵ “The Holy One is within you.”

This means to say that a level of Divinity which is holy in the sense that it is initially distinct from this world, is thereby drawn down and integrated *within* the ten or more people involved.

As the Rebbe Rayatz explains in the above-mentioned talk, the Alter Rebbe had spoken earlier of the transcendent degree of illumination that merely encompasses one; at this

point he cites the phrase “The Holy One is within you” to indicate that this encompassing illumination can also become internalized *within* a Jew.

ואין דבר שבקדושה בפחות מעשרה

Likewise, “[the congregational recital of] a *davar shebikedushah*, a text involving the sanctification of G-d’s Name, requires a quorum of ten,” as quoted above.¹⁶

Thus, in order that the holiness be “within you,” it is necessary that the Torah be studied in groups of at least ten.

ומשום הכי נמי אצטריך להו לרז”ל למילף מקרא, מנין שאפילו אחד שיושב ועוסק בתורה כו’

This also explains why our Sages, of blessed memory, had to derive from Scripture [an answer to their question],¹⁷ “From where do we know that even one person who sits and engages in the study of the Torah, [the Holy One, blessed be He, sets a reward for him]?”

The *Mishnah*¹⁸ derives its answer from the verse,¹⁹ “He sits alone and [studies] in stillness; indeed, he takes [the reward] unto himself.” Evidently, then, a proof text was needed to show that even individual study is rewarded.

ואף גם זאת לא מצאו לו סמך מן המקרא, אלא לקביעת שכר בלבד, ליחיד לפי ערכו, לפי ולפי ערך המרובים

And even so [the Sages] did not find in Scripture support for that, i.e., they did not find support for the proposition that an individual can bring about the previously-mentioned indwelling of G-d’s holiness, but only for the allotment of a reward to the individual, proportionate to himself [and]²⁰ in proportion to the many.

If there are fewer than ten individuals, the reward is divided equally among them. According to the version “[and] in proportion...,” the more individuals participate, the greater the reward for each of them.

אבל לענין השראת קדושת הקב”ה, אין לו ערך אליהם כלל

But as to causing an indwelling of G-d’s holiness,²¹ [the individual] cannot be compared to [the congregation] at all.

The sanctity drawn down through group study of the Torah is immeasurably more sublime.

* * *

וההפרש שבין השראה לקביעות שכר, מובן למביני מדע

The distinction between [causing a Divine] indwelling (by collective study) and the allotment of a reward (to an individual student), is understood by discerning thinkers.

כי קביעת שכר הוא שמאיר ה' לנפש תדרשנו באור תורתו, שהוא מעטה לבושו ממש

For the allotment of a reward is what takes place when G-d irradiates²² “the soul that seeks Him” with the light of His Torah, which is truly the covering in which G-d garbs Himself.

Through this garment, i.e., through the Torah, G-d irradiates the soul of the Jew who seeks Him. This search for Him can take place either during the service of prayer that precedes one's study of Torah, or during one's actual study. As explained at the conclusion of ch. 37 of *Tanya*, the Talmudic phrase קורא בתורה can mean not only “reading (i.e., studying) the Torah,” but also “calling [G-d] through the Torah.” In this sense, when one studies Torah one resembles a child who calls his father, asking him to come and be with him.

ולכן נקראת התורה אור, שנאמר: עוטה אור כשלמה

For this reason the Torah is called “light”, as it is written,²³ “He garbs Himself in light, as with a garment.”²⁴

This verse refers to the degree of illumination (diffused by the Torah) which, like a garment, is finite.

Likewise, the faculties of the soul are inherently limited, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Since the light that emanates to the soul must be integrated within its faculties, this illumination itself must also be limited. In the words of the Alter Rebbe:

והנפש היא בעלת גבול ותכלית בכל כחותיה

Now the soul is limited and finite in all its faculties.

לכן גם אור ה' המאיר בה הוא גבולי, מצומצם, ומתלבש בתוכה

Therefore, the light of G-d that radiates in it is also limited and contracted, and vests itself within it.

ועל כן יתפעל לב מבקשי ה' בשעת התפלה וכיוצא בה

This is why the hearts of those who seek G-d are ecstatically aroused at the time of prayer and the like.

כי בו ישמח לבם, ויגיל אף גילת ורנן

For their hearts rejoice in Him and exult²⁵ “even with exultation and song,”

ותתענג נפשם בנועם ה' על ה' ואורו

and their souls delight in the pleasantness of G-d²⁶ and His light

בהגלותו ממעטה לבושו, שהיא התורה

as it becomes revealed through the covering in which [G-d] garbs Himself, which is the Torah;

ויצא כברק חצו

“and His arrow comes forth like lightning”:²⁷ from this garment, this illumination initially emanates to the soul with all the vigor of a lightning bolt.²⁸

וזו היא קביעת שכר התורה, הקבועה תמיד בנפש עמלה בה

This is the allotment of the reward for the [study of] Torah, which is always fixed in the soul that labors in it.

Being fixed within the soul constantly, this reward is received by the soul not only in the World to Come — when the soul is enabled to apprehend rewards that are not to be obtained in this world²⁹ — but in this world as well. And since this kind of reward consists of a finite degree of illumination, it can be received by the soul even as the soul finds itself within the body.

This is why it is written that a reward awaits even one individual who studies Torah.

אבל ההשראה

Indwelling, however, i.e., that degree of indwelling of which it is written that “the Shechinah dwells among them,”

היא הארה עצומה מאור ה', המאיר בה בלי גבול ותכלית

is an intense radiation from the light of G-d, that radiates in it — within the soul itself, and not within its inherently limited faculties — without limit or end.

ואינו יכול להתלבש בנפש גבולית, כי אם מקיף עליה מלמעלה, מראשה ועד רגלה

It cannot become vested (i.e., integrated and internalized) within a finite soul, but encompasses it from above, like a transcendent (*makkif*) light, “from its head to its foot,” so that all the levels and faculties of the soul, from the highest to the lowest, are surrounded by this infinite Divine light.

כמו שאמרו חז"ל: אכל בי עשרה שכינתא שריא, כלומר: עליהם, מלמעלה

As our Sages, of blessed memory, taught,³⁰ “The *Shechinah* hovers over every gathering of ten Jews” — over them, from above.

Just as the *Shechinah* hovers over all Jews in an encompassing manner even when they are not studying Torah, so, too, even with regard to the indwelling of the *Shechinah* that is brought about by congregational Torah study: this illumination of the soul, being infinite, must be primarily transcendent.

כמו שכתוב: ויהי נועם ה' אלקינו עלינו, ומעשה ידינו כוננה עלינו

Thus it is written,³¹ “May the pleasantness of the L-rd our G-d be upon us; establish upon us the work of our hands”;

כלומר: כי נועם ה' אשר הופיע במעשה ידינו, בעסק התורה והמצות

i.e., [we ask] that the pleasantness of G-d which has appeared through the work of our hands, in [our] involvement in the Torah and the commandments³² —

דאורייתא וקודשא בריך הוא כולא חד

for³³ “the Torah and the Holy One, blessed be He, are entirely one” —

יתכונן וישרה עלינו מלמעלה

become established and rest upon us from above, in an encompassing manner,

להיותו בלי גבול ותכלית, ואינו מתלבש בנפשנו ושכלנו

for it is without limit and end, and does not become vested within our [finite] soul and intellect.

ועל כן אין אנו משיגים בשכלנו הנעימות והעריבות מנועם ה' וזיו השכינה בלי גבול ותכלית

This is why we do not apprehend with our intellect the delightfulness and sweetness of “the pleasantness of G-d,” and the unlimited splendor of the *Shechinah*,

אשר מתכונן ושורה עלינו במעשה ידינו בתורה ומצות ברבים דוקא

that is established and rests upon us through the work of our hands, in [our] *joint* study of the Torah and [our] joint fulfillment of the commandments.

An *infinite* order of illumination is elicited only by collective Torah study and performance of *mitzvot*.

ועל זה אמרו רז"ל: שכר מצוה בהאי עלמא ליכא

And of this our Sages, of blessed memory, said,³⁴ “In this world there is no reward for the [performance of the] commandments.”

Since this world is finite, it cannot be a receptor for the infinite revelation of Divine radiance that is called forth by the performance of the *mitzvot*.

כי אי אפשר לעולם להשיגו, כי אם בהתפשטות הנפש מהגוף

For it is impossible for the world to attain it (i.e., the reward of infinite light) except when the soul is divested from the body and unencumbered by it;

ואף גם זאת, על דרך החסד, כמו שכתוב: ולך ה' חסד, כי אתה תשלם לאיש כמעשהו

and even then, [the soul is able to receive this light only] by way of grace; as it is written,³⁵ “Kindness, O G-d, is Yours, for You render to every man according to his work.”³⁶ I.e., granting every man an infinite degree of illumination according to his work in Torah and *mitzvot* is an act of kindness on G-d’s part.

וכמו שאמרו רז”ל: שהקב”ה נותן כח בצדיקים כו’

Thus our Sages, of blessed memory, taught³⁷ that the Holy One, blessed be He, gives the righteous the capacity [to receive their reward in the World to Come].

Even then this gift is needed, for even after the soul divests itself of its body it is finite, while the reward that it receives is infinite.

מה שאין כן במלאכים

This is not so, however, with the angels,³⁸ which are incapable of receiving an infinite degree of revelation;

כמו ששמעתי מרבותי, כי אילו נמצא מלאך אחד עומד במעמד עשרה מישראל ביחד, אף שאינם מדברים בדברי תורה

as I heard from my masters, viz., the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezritch, that if one³⁹ angel⁴⁰ were to stand in the presence of a gathering of ten Jews, even if there were no words of Torah between them, yet still, since the *Shechinah* rests upon every gathering of ten Jews,

תפול עליו אימתה ופחד בלי גבול ותכלית, משכינתא דשריא עליהו, עד שהיה מתבטל ממצאותו לגמרי

such a boundless and infinite terror and dread would then befall him on account of the *Shechinah* that abides over them, that he would become utterly nullified.

The sanctity of ten Jews congregating together, even if they are not engaged in Torah study, is so intense, than an angel would become utterly nullified when confronting the indwelling of the *Shechinah* that abides in the presence of ten Jews.⁴¹

In *Sefer HaSichot* 5704,⁴² the Rebbe Rayatz relates that when his father taught him this letter for the second time, and they came to the above theme of the superiority of souls over angels, he noted that “As I heard from my masters” refers to both the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezritch; the phrase “I heard from my teacher” (in the gloss to ch. 35) refers to the Maggid of Mezritch.

The Rebbe Rashab went on to tell him that this theme is one of the laws that are studied in Gan Eden.

Then, having shared with him eight narratives regarding the laws studied in Gan Eden, he concluded: “And all this is discussed in *Tanya* in order to [encourage] the establishment of daily study groups in *Ein Yaakov*, concerning which the Alter Rebbe states that most of the secrets of the Torah are concealed in it, and that moreover it atones for man’s sins.

At that time, too, the Rebbe Rayatz writes,⁴³ his father told him that chassidim of old used to include as part of their indispensable daily study sessions — in addition to *Mishnayot*, a page of *Gemara*, and *Tanya* — a passage of *Ein Yaakov*, and at least one law (of two paragraphs) in *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*.⁴⁴ If a paragraph was long, it was studied as one law, though usually one law is divided there into two paragraphs.

* * *

ועל כן רע בעיני המעשה אשר נעשה תחת השמש בכלל

Therefore, evil in my eyes is⁴⁵ “the conduct that takes place under the sun” in general,

The Alter Rebbe is referring here to those who engage in business or labor — temporal occupations that are “under the sun,” in contrast to Torah, that is “above the sun.” To them, too, his forthcoming words of rebuke are addressed, and he finds it “evil in his eyes” that before or after prayer they devote their time to lightminded talk instead of to Torah study.

ובפרט בין אחיי ורעיי הנגשים אל ה', הגשה זו תפלה

especially among my brethren and friends who draw near to G-d⁴⁶ — and⁴⁷ “drawing near means prayer,” for prayer, particularly when accompanied by the *avodah* of measured meditation, constitutes a “drawing near” to G-d,

ואחר תפלה או לפניו, נעשה מושב לצים, רחמנא ליצולן

when after prayer or before it, [the gathering] becomes a “company of scoffers,” heaven forfend.

כמו שאמרו רז"ל: שנים שיושבים, ואין ביניהם דברי תורה כו'

As our Sages, of blessed memory, said,[48](#) “If two people sit together and no words of Torah are exchanged between them, [this is a company of scoffers].”

ואם נעשה מושב לצים בעשרה, דשכינתא שריא עלייהו, אין לך עלבונא וקלנא דשכינתא גדול מזה, רחמנא ליצילן

Now if a “company of scoffers” is constituted by ten people, over whom the *Shechinah* abides, there is no greater insult and shaming of the *Shechinah* than that, heaven forbend.

ואם אמרו רז”ל על העובר עבירה בסתר, שדוחק רגלי השכינה, חס ושלום

And if our Sages, of blessed memory, said[49](#) of him who commits a transgression in secret that “he repulses the feet of the *Shechinah*,” heaven forbend,

העובר עבירה ברבים דוחק כל שיעור קומה של יוצר בראשית, כביכול

then he who commits a transgression in public repulses the whole measure of the stature of the Creator, as it were.[50](#)

כמו שאמרו רז”ל: אין אני והוא וכו’

As our Sages, of blessed memory, said,[51](#) “It is impossible for Me and him [to live together in the world].”

But repulsing the *Shechinah* does not mean that the actions of the transgressor cause it to be utterly absent, for the above passage speaks of shaming the *Shechinah* while it is present.

אלא שמלך אסור ברהטים כו’

Rather,[52](#) “The King is held captive in the gutters”[53](#) [“of the mind”[54](#)] — shackled in the channels of people’s unworthy thoughts which, like gushing currents, flash fleetingly through the mind. This is indeed a humiliation of the *Shechinah*.

אבל ווי למאן דדחקין לשכינתא, כד יוקים לה קודשא בריך הוא, ויימא לה: התנערי מעפר קומי וגו’

But[55](#) woe unto those who repulse the *Shechinah*, when G-d will raise her (the *Shechinah*) and say to her,[56](#) “Awake, arise from the dust....”

ועל תלת מילין מתעכבי ישראל בגלותא: על דדחקין לשכינתא, ועל דעבדין קלנא בשכינתא וכו’, כמו שכתוב בזוהר הקדוש

So, too, “On account of three things are the Jewish people detained in exile — because they repulse the *Shechinah*, and because they shame the *Shechinah*,” and so on, as stated in the sacred *Zohar*.[57](#)

* * *

על כן, אהובי אחיי ורעיי, אל נא תרעו הרעה הגדולה הזאת

Therefore, my beloved ones, my brethren and friends: do not commit this great evil — of turning a gathering of worshipers before or after prayers into a “company of scoffers,”

ותנו כבוד לה' אלקיכם בטרם יחשך, דהיינו בין מנחה למעריב כל ימות החול

and [58](#) “give glory unto the L-rd your G-d before it grows dark,” i.e., between *Minchah* and *Maariv* every weekday, [59](#)

ללמוד בעשרה פנימיות התורה, שהיא אגדה שבספר עין יעקב

by studying in groups of [at least] ten the innermost (i.e., the mystical) dimension of the Torah, i.e., the *Aggadah* contained in *Ein Yaakov*.

שרוב סודות התורה גנוזין בה

For most of the secrets of the Torah are concealed in it (i.e., in the *Aggadah*);

ומכפרת עונותיו של אדם

moreover, it atones man's sins,

כמבואר בכתבי האריז"ל

as explained in the writings of R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory. [60](#)

והנגלות שבה

As to the revealed (non-mystical) passages in [the *Aggadah*],

הן דרכי ה' שילך בהם האדם

these are the ways of G-d in which a man ought to walk,

וישית עצות בנפשו במילי דשמיא ובמילי דעלמא, וכידוע לכל חכמי לב

and [they enable him] to take counsel in his soul in heavenly matters (such as Torah and *mitzvot*) and in worldly matters, as is known to all the wise of heart.

וגם ללמוד מעט בשלחן ערוך, אורח חיים, הלכות הצריכות לכל אדם

In addition, between *Minchah* and *Maariv*, [people] should study a little — out of the *Shulchan Aruch*, in [the section called] *Orach Chayim* — the laws that are essential for every person to know.

ועל זה אמרו רז"ל: כל השונה הלכות בכל יום כו'

Of this our Sages, of blessed memory, said:⁶¹ “Whoever studies Torah laws (*halachot*) every day [is assured of life in the World to Come].”

שהן הלכות ברורות ופסוקות, הלכה למעשה

This refers to clear and definitive rulings that are of practical relevance,

כמבואר בפירוש רש"י ז"ל שם

as explained in the commentary of *Rashi, ad loc.*⁶² — that the term *halachot* refers to final rulings, without the surrounding debates and argumentation.

This is actually explained by *Rashi* a little earlier in Tractate *Megillah*, not on the teaching about “Whoever studies *halachot*...,” but in connection with a eulogy for someone who used to “study *halachot*.”

In Tractate *Niddah*, commenting on this teaching, *Rashi* states that the term *halachot* refers to *Mishnayot*, *Beraitot* and *Halachah leMoshe miSinai*, none of which include the discussions of the *Gemara*. This is also the case with regard to the *Shulchan Aruch*.

ובשבת קדש, בעלות המנחה, יעסקו בהלכות שבת, כי הלכתא רבתי לשבתא

On the holy Sabbath, moreover, towards the time of *Minchah*, [people] should occupy themselves with the laws of the Sabbath. For⁶³ “the law of Sabbath is a weighty law,” with many details to be mastered.

ובקל יכול האדם ליכשל בה, חס ושלום, אפילו באיסור כרת וסקילה, מחסרון ידיעה

A person can easily stumble in it, heaven forbid, even in a prohibition punishable by extirpation or stoning, because of ignorance [of these laws],

ושגגת תלמוד עולה זדון, חס ושלום

and⁶⁴ “an unwitting error in [observance due to insufficient] study is accounted as an intentional transgression,” heaven forbid.

ואין צריך לומר באיסורי דברי סופרים, שרבו כמו רבו למעלה, ובפרט באיסורי מוקצה, דשכיחי טובא

It goes without saying [that the same applies to] the Rabbinic injunctions which are ever so numerous, and especially so with respect to the prohibitions of *muktzeh* that occur frequently;

וחמורים דברי סופרים יותר מדברי תורה

and⁶⁵ “[infringements of] the words of the *Sofrim* (i.e., the Rabbinic injunctions) are more serious than [infringements of] the words of the Torah (i.e., explicit Scriptural commandments).”

כמו שאמרו רז"ל: שכל העובר על דברי חכמים, אפילו באיסור קל של דבריהם, כמו האוכל קודם ערבית וכהאי גוונא, חייב מיתה, כעובר על חמורות שבתורה

As our Sages, of blessed memory, said:⁶⁶ “Whoever transgresses the words of the Sages,” even a minor prohibition of theirs — as, for instance, he who eats before the evening prayer, and the like — “is liable to the death penalty,” just like one who transgresses grave prohibitions [explicit] in the Torah.⁶⁷

At any rate, since we see from the above that it is vital that one study and know the laws of the Sabbath, they should be studied in public as the time for *Minchah* draws near.

וכל יחיד אל יפרוש עצמו מן הציבור, אפילו ללמוד ענין אחר

And let no individual separate himself from the congregation, when they are studying *Ein Yaakov*, *Shulchan Aruch* and the like, even in order to study something else;

כי אם בדבר שהציבור עסוקים בו

rather, [every individual should participate only] in whatever the congregation is busy with.

ואין צריך לומר שלא יצא החוצה, אם לא יהיו עשרה מבלעדו

It goes without saying that one should not leave if there are not ten without him;

ועליו אני קורא הפסוק: ועוזבי ה' יכלו כו'

to him [who does leave] I apply the verse,⁶⁸ “And those who forsake G-d (i.e., who forsake the study of His Torah) shall be consumed....,”

כמו שאמרו רז"ל על כל דבר שבקדושה

as our Sages, of blessed memory, have said⁶⁹ with respect to every sacred matter.

כי אין קדושה כקדושת התורה

For there is no holiness like the holiness of the Torah,

דאורייתא וקודשא בריך הוא, כולא חד

since⁷⁰ “the Torah and the Holy One, blessed be He, are entirely one.”

Strictly speaking, our Sages applied the above verse (“And those who forsake G-d shall be consumed”) only to a person whose leaving bars the congregational recital of a *davar shebikedushah*, a text involving the sanctification of G-d’s Name, which cannot be done without a quorum of ten. By contrast, though the quality of Torah study is enhanced by a quorum of ten, this is not a prerequisite condition.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that there is “no holiness like the holiness of the Torah”: when ten Jews study together they draw down a most exalted degree of holiness and an intense indwelling of the *Shechinah*, as explained above. In this sense, then, an individual whose leaving disrupts a study group of ten may be likened to one whose leaving prevents a minyan from reciting *Kedushah* or the like.

וכל הפורש מן הציבור כו'

Moreover,⁷¹ “Whoever separates himself from the community [will not merit to witness (and participate in) the community’s consolation].”

ושומע לי ישכון בטח, ובימיו ובימינו תושע יהודה, וירושלים תשכון לבטח

The Alter Rebbe concludes:⁷² “But he who listens to me shall dwell securely,” and⁷³ in his days and in ours, Judah shall be saved and Jerusalem shall dwell securely.⁷⁴

אמן, כן יהי רצון

Amen, may this be His will.

FOOTNOTES ¹. *Daniel* 4:14. ². Note of the Rebbe: “*Pesachim* 33a.” ³. Note of the Rebbe: “*Rashi, loc. cit.*; see there.” ⁴. *Avot* 3:6. ⁵. *Sanhedrin* 39a. ⁶. *Kohelet* 12:13. ⁷. *Berachot* 6b. ⁸. Cf. *I Melachim* 8:27. ⁹. *Bamidbar* 35:34. ¹⁰. *Berachot* 21b. ¹¹. *Vayikra* 22:32. ¹². *Bamidbar* 16:21. ¹³. *Sefer HaSichot* 5704, p. 29. ¹⁴. *Kohelet* 7:14. ¹⁵. *Hoshea* 11:9. ¹⁶. *Berachot* 21b. ¹⁷. Cf. *Avot* 3:6. ¹⁸. Cf. *Avot* 3:6. ¹⁹. *Eichah* 3:8. ²⁰. Brackets are in the original text. ²¹.

Note of the Rebbe: “The question here is well known — that the above-quoted *mishnah* (*Avot* 3:2) teaches that [even if only] ‘two people sit together and exchange words of Torah, the *Shechinah* dwells in their midst.’”

This may be understood in the light of *Or HaTorah* [by the Tzemach Tzedek] on *Parshat Eikev*, p. 542; see also *Berachot* 6a.“

At the end of Part VI of *Magen Avot*: (1) there is a different version of the above letter; (2) according to the explanation there (evidently taken from the *Tzemach Tzedek*), the above difficulty can be resolved.”

See also *Tanya, Mahadura Kama*, p. 261, footnote 13, line 48.

[22.](#) *Eichah* 3:25. [23.](#) *Tehillim* 104:2. [24.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “The proof text usually cited is the verse (*Mishlei* 6:23), ‘For a *mitzvah* is a lamp and the Torah is light.’ Here, however, the Alter Rebbe seeks to show that the study of ‘the Torah [that] is light’ *results in a Divine irradiation*, for ‘the light of His Torah,’ like a garment, reveals many aspects of that which is clothed in it. (This is why [the Alter Rebbe writes above that ‘the Torah is simply] called *light* (אור),’ for this term shows — more than the term אור תורה — that [the light of the Torah] serves as a garment by which Gd is revealed.) See also the *Tzemach Tzedek* on the phrase *Oteh or*.” [25.](#) *Yeshayahu* 35:2. [26.](#) The variant reading literally means “over G-d”; i.e., they delight in G-d Himself. [27.](#) *Zechariah* 9:14. [28.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “See *Iggeret HaKodesh*, end of Epistle XV, [regarding the light that comes forth] from “the source [of the intellect, ... like ... a flash of lightning].”” [29.](#) *Kiddushin* 39b. [30.](#) *Sanhedrin* 39a. [31.](#) *Tehillim* 90:17. [32.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “The interpretation that the ‘work of our hands’ refers to the ‘study of the Torah’ and the ‘fulfillment of the commandments,’ requires further examination.” [33.](#) *Zohar* II, 90b; see also II, 60a, and III, 73a. [34.](#) *Kiddushin* 39b. [35.](#) *Tehillim* 62:13. [36.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Seemingly, where is the kindness if He pays the individual according to his work? This question indicates that G-d’s kindness lies in His enabling a [finite] mortal to receive [the infinite reward].” [37.](#) *Sanhedrin* 100b. [38.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “...for they were not granted this capacity.” [39.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Further examination is required to understand the meaning [of ‘one angel’].” [40.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “This requires further examination, for angels elevate even congregational prayers. [How, then, is this possible if they become utterly nullified in the presence of ten Jews?]” [41.](#)

Note of the Rebbe: “We must say that the reason why the ten Jews themselves do not become nullified, etc., nor terrorstricken, etc., is that [the Divine Presence] is not perceived even by their *mazal*. [I.e., it is not perceived even superconsciously, by the heavenly root of their souls.] (For if it *were* perceived, they would no doubt be in a state of trepidation, as in our Sages’ description [*Megillah* 3a] of Daniel’s friends.) Indeed, this [state of unawareness] must exist, for without it free choice would cease, as is to be understood from the disposition of Daniel’s friends.”

As to the benefit of the indwelling of the *Shechinah*: [i.e., if this is totally concealed from the Jew, what possible benefit does he derive from it?] — It grants him assistance, though concealed, in his spiritual service.”

[42.](#) Pp. 97-98. [43.](#) P. 101. [44.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “This is most likely a typographical slip, for (1) even in later generations the study of *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* was not widespread in Russia; (2) most paragraphs contain one law each; (3) it was first printed during the last years of the *Tzemach Tzedek*, outside of Russia; (4) the Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch* was published early in the leadership of the Mittlerer Rebbe, and from that time

onward regular sessions were surely set up for the study of its clearly delineated laws. What possible reason would there be to change this and replace it [by the study of *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*]?" [45](#). Note of the Rebbe: "A paraphrase of *Kohelet* 2:17." [46](#). Note of the Rebbe: "See commentary of *Rashi* on *Yitro*, [*Shmot*] 19:22 [which refers to sacrifices] — and the prayers were ordained in place of the offerings [*Berachot* 26b]." [47](#). Note of the Rebbe: "*Bereishit Rabbah*, sec. 49; commentary of *Rashi* on the verse [referred to above]." [48](#). *Avot* 3:2, citing *Tehillim* 1:1. [49](#). *Kiddushin* 31a. [50](#). Note of the Rebbe: "See *Etz Chayim*, *Shaar HaSheimot*, ch. 7; *Yahel Or*, p. 573ff." [51](#). *Sotah* 5a. [52](#). *Shir HaShirim* 7:6. [53](#). Note of the Rebbe: "Cf. beginning of ch. 7 of *Iggeret HaTeshuvah*." [54](#). Addenda to *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun Vav*. [55](#). Cf. *Zohar* II, 7a. [56](#). *Yeshayahu* 52:2. [57](#). III, 75b. [58](#). Cf. *Yirmeyahu* 13:16. [59](#). Note of the Rebbe: "It could be suggested that the reason the Alter Rebbe does not begin by relating to *Shacharit*, the first prayer of the day, is that an explicit law in the *Shulchan Aruch* (sec. 89:4) forbids one to engage in one's personal affairs before prayer; likewise (sec. 155:1), the morning prayers must be followed by group study of the Torah ('from the House of Prayer [directly] to the House of Study')." [60](#). See the Alter Rebbe's *Hilchot Talmud Torah* 2:2 and sources cited there (in the Kehot edition); see also the Introduction of the *Ramban* to *Shir HaShirim*. [61](#). *Megillah* 28b; *Niddah* 73a. [62](#). See *Taz*, *Yoreh Deah* 246:2. [63](#). *Shabbat* 12a, and *Rashi* there. [64](#). *Avot* 4:13. [65](#). *Yerushalmi*, *Berachot* 4:2. [66](#). *Berachot* 4:2. [67](#). Note of the Rebbe: "At first glance [the question arises], what is the Alter Rebbe letting us know [that is novel]? The answer: He is clearly expressing his dissent from the opinions that this statement is intended to be taken as mere hyperbole. See the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch* 63:5; *Sdei Chemed*, *Klalim*, p. 386; *Pe'at HaSadeh* 8:15 (at length); *Encyclopedia Talmudit*, Vol. XIV, p. 599ff." [68](#). *Yeshayahu* 1:28. [69](#). *Berachot* 8a; *Yerushalmi*, *Megillah* 4:4. [70](#). *Zohar* II, 90b; see also II, 60a, and III, 73a. [71](#). *Semachot* 2:10. But there the text reads, "from the ways of the congregation." See also *Rambam*, *Hilchot Evel* 1:10. [72](#). *Mishlei* 1:33. [73](#). Cf. *Yirmeyahu* 23:6 and 33:16. [74](#). Note of the Rebbe: "The relevance here [of this verse] is perhaps the teaching in *Taanit* 11a, that he who shares the pain of the community will merit to witness the consolation of the community. Note also beginning of *Berachot* 30a."



Epistle 24

In the previous letter the Alter Rebbe explained how the Torah study of a group of at least ten, or a *mitzvah* performed by them collectively, brings about the indwelling of the *Shechinah*. He spoke of how even those who engage in the *avodah* of prayer sometimes spend the time before and after prayers in idle chatter. Indeed, the *Mishnah* calls such a group "a company of scoffers," since they are not studying Torah. The Alter Rebbe therefore urged that regular times be set aside between *Minchah* and *Maariv* for the group study of *Ein Yaakov* and of laws of practical application in the *Shulchan Aruch*.

In the present letter the Alter Rebbe goes on to condemn those who during prayer services engage in mundane conversation — not only on idle matters, but even on matters that are necessary for their livelihood. Such conversation at any other time would of course be permitted. During prayer services, however, it demonstrates that the speaker has no desire to behold the G-dliness that is revealed specifically during that time. This insensitivity is depicted by a parable drawn from the *Zohar*. For years on end, a terrestrial king hides his majestic splendor behind locked doors; those of his subjects who have the discernment to value that splendor, eagerly wait there for years on end until they are granted a glimpse of it; others are so foolish and so brazen that they show no interest.

For the time of prayer is a precious time below, echoing a propitious time Above. Above, as the Alter Rebbe states in ch. 12 of *Tanya*, it is a time of *Mochin deGadlut*, a time of sublime illumination in the upper worlds; below, therefore, it is the time when every individual can respond to the call which the King issues to His subjects.

If one is to receive the revelation which becomes possible at the time of prayer, that time needs to be utilized for meditation on the greatness of G-d. But if this meditation is to be fertile, and give birth to the spiritual emotions of love and awe, it still needs to find its way into the worshiper's heart. This is the message of the following brief teaching of the Alter Rebbe.

There is an expression of our Sages: [1](#) לבו כיון אם — “If one had the proper intention (*kiven libo*), he has fulfilled his obligation.” Now כיון shares a root with the Aramaic כוין (*kavin*), meaning “windows”.[2](#) Accordingly, in the above-quoted teaching of the Sages, the Alter Rebbe read the following message: A man fulfills his obligation during prayer *only if he has made a window in his heart*, so that the revelation that illuminates his mind during prayer will radiate its warmth into his heart.

אהוביי אחיי

My beloved ones, my brethren:

אל נא תרעו, ריעים האהובים ליוצרם ושנואים ליצרם

I beg of you, friends who are beloved unto their Maker and hateful unto their evil inclination: Do no wrong!

Surely one should respect the wishes of his Beloved, and not of his enemy.

ואל יעשה אדם עצמו רשע שעה אחת לפני המקום, אשר בחר בה מכל היום

Let no one make himself wicked before G-d during that one hour (i.e., the hour of prayer) that He has chosen of all day,

להקהל ולעמוד לפניו בשעה זו, שהיא עת רצון לפניו להתגלות, לבוא אל המקדש מעט

so that [people] can congregate and stand³ before Him during that hour. For this is an auspicious time for Him to be revealed and to come into the “miniature sanctuary,” as a synagogue is called,⁴

לפקוד לשכינת כבודו, השוכן אתם בתוך טומאותם

to visit the *Shechinah* of His Glory,⁵ “that dwells with [the Jewish people] in the midst of their impurity,”

Even in the impurity of exile, the Divine Presence abides among the Jewish people. And at the auspicious hour of prayer the Almighty Himself comes, as it were, to visit the *Shechinah* that resides constantly among His people.

ולהמצא לדורשיו ומבקשיו ומייחליו

and to be accessible to those who seek Him and entreat Him and yearn for Him.

והמספר בצרכיו, מראה בעצמו שאינו חפץ להתבונן ולראות בגילוי כבוד מלכותו

At this auspicious time of prayer, he who speaks of his needs, demonstrates that he has no desire to contemplate and to behold the manifestation of [G-d's] majestic glory.

ונעשה מרכבה טמאה לכסיל העליון

Thus he becomes an impure chariot (i.e., a subservient vehicle) to the “Supernal Fool” (i.e., to the *kelipah*),

שנאמר עליו: לא יחפץ כסיל בתבונה כו', כמו שכתבו הזהר והאריז"ל

of whom it is said,⁶ “The fool does not desire understanding...,” as stated in the Zohar⁷ and by R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory⁸

דהיינו, שאינו חפץ להתבונן ולראות ביקר תפארת גדולתו של מלך מלכי המלכים, הקב"ה

This means, he has no desire to contemplate and to behold the glorious splendor of the greatness of the King of kings — the Holy One, blessed be He —

הנגלות למעלה בשעה זו

which becomes revealed at this hour above, for the hour of prayer is a propitious time above.

וגם למטה, אל החפצים להביט אל כבודו וגדלו, המתעטף ומתלבש בתוך תיבות התפלה הסדורה בפי כל

It is also [revealed] below, to those who earnestly desire to gaze upon His glory and greatness, which garbs and vests itself in the words of the liturgy which is known to all,

ומתגלה לכל אחד לפי שכלו ושורש נשמתו

and which becomes revealed to every individual, according to his intellect and according to the root of his soul;

כדכתיב: לפי שכלו יהולל איש

as it is written,⁹ “A man is praised (*yehulal*) according to [the measure of] his intellect,”

יהלל כתיב

As spelled, [the word could be pronounced] *yehalel*.

The verse would thus mean, “A man praises (i.e., prays) according to the measure of his intellect,” i.e., in proportion to his comprehension of G-d’s greatness.

ומלכותא דרקיע כעין מלכותא דארעא

Now the kingdom of heaven is similar to a kingdom on earth.¹⁰

שדרך המלך להיות חביון עוזו בחדרי חדרים, וכמה שומרים על הפתחים

It is customary for a king to have his might concealed¹¹ in [his] innermost chambers, with many guards at the doors,

עד אשר כמה וכמה מצפים ימים ושנים, לראות עוזו וכבודו

(so)¹² that many people wait for days and years [hoping] to behold his might and glory.

וכשעלה ברצונו להתגלות לכל, והעביר קול בכל מלכותו להקהל ולעמוד לפניו, להראותם כבוד מלכותו ויקר תפארת גדולתו

Now when he wishes to be seen by all, and proclaims throughout his kingdom [that his subjects] should assemble and stand before him, so that he can show them his majestic glory and the exalted splendor of his greatness,

מי שעומד לפניו ואינו חושש לראותו, ומתעסק בצרכיו

whoever will stand before him and not care to see him, busying himself at that time with his own needs, —

כמה גרוע וסכל ופתי הוא, ונמשל כבהמות נדמה בעיני כל הבריות

how lowly, foolish and senseless is he; he resembles an animal in the eyes of all.

וגם הוא בזיון המלך, בהראותו לפניו שאינו ספון בעיניו לקבל נחת ושעשועים מהביט אל כבודו ויפיו, יותר מעסק צרכיו

Moreover, it is a dishonor to the king, when he demonstrates before him that to have pleasure and delight from gazing upon his glory and beauty is of no more esteem in his eyes than busying himself with his own needs.

וגם הוא מתחייב בנפשו למלך, על הראות קלונו ובזיונו את המלך לעין כל רואה

Moreover, it is a capital offense towards the king, to exhibit how he disgraces and dishonors the king in the eyes of the public.

ועל זה נאמר: וכסילים מרים קלון

Of this it is written,¹³ “And fools raise the insult.”

כלומר: אף שהוא כסיל, לא יהיה מרים קלון, שיהיה נראה הקלון לעין כל

This means to say, that though he is a fool, he should not “raise the insult,” making [it] apparent to all, for this not only dishonors the king, but also constitutes a capital offense.

* * *

ועל כן קבעו חז"ל בתפלה: כאלו עומד לפני המלך

For this reason our Sages, of blessed memory, ordained that with prayer one should [conduct himself]¹⁴ “as if he is standing before the king.”

Now if he is standing before the King of kings, why do our Sages say “as if”? This means:

על כל פנים יהיה מראה בעצמו כאלו עומד כו' לעין כל רואה בעיני בשר אל מעשיו ודיבוריו

At least he should make himself appear as if he is standing [before the king] in the sight of all who look with physical eyes at his actions and words,

אף שאין לו מחשבה לכסיל

even though a fool has no thought — although he does not have even an intellectual realization that while standing in prayer he truly is standing before the King.

ועל זה הענין נתקן כל התפלות, למתבונן בהם היטב

It was concerning this matter — the realization that one is standing before the King at the time that He appointed to reveal His glory to those who seek Him — that all the prayers were instituted,¹⁵ [as is evident] to whoever meditates deeply upon them.

ומי שאינו מראה כן, מתחייב בנפשו

But he that does not show this [realization] is guilty of a capital offense,

ועליו אמרו בזהר הקדוש, דאנהיג קלנא בתקונא עילאה, ואחזי פרודא, ולית ליה חולקא באלקא דישראל,
רחמנא ליצלן

and of him it was said in the sacred *Zohar*¹⁶ that “he brings disgrace into the Supernal Order, and shows that he is separate [from holiness], and has no share in the G-d of Israel,” heaven forbid.

על כן שליחותיהו דרז"ל קא עבידנא

Therefore, declares the Alter Rebbe, I am hereby acting as an agent of our Sages, of blessed memory,

לגזור גזירה שוה לכל נפש, שלא לשווח שיחה בטלה, משיתחיל השליח ציבור להתפלל התפלה, עד גמר קדיש
בתרא, שחרית מנחה ערבית

to enact a decree¹⁷ to apply equally to everyone: No idle talk is to be spoken from the moment the Reader begins to recite the prayers until the end of the last *Kaddish*, at *Shacharit*, *Minchah*¹⁸ and *Maariv*.¹⁹

והעובר על זה בזדון, ישב על הארץ ויבקש משלושה אנשים שיתירו לו נידוי שלמעלה

And he who disobeys intentionally shall sit on the ground and beg of three people to release him from the supernal excommunication that results from disobeying a Rabbinic decree.

ושב ורפא לו, ולא חל עליו שום נידוי למפרע כל עיקר

“He should repent, resolving to change his ways, and he will be healed,”²⁰ and retroactively, no excommunication whatever will have applied to him.

כי מתחלתו לא חל כי אם על המורדים והפושעים, שאינם חוששים כלל לבקש כפרה מן השמים ומן הבריות,
על העון פלילי הזה

For from the very outset it applied only to those who rebel and are willfully sinful, and who do not care at all to seek atonement (as they ought) from heaven and from man for this grievous sin.

וגם דוקא כשמדברים בזדון, בשאט נפש

Also, [this excommunication applies] only when people speak deliberately and brazenly,

ולא על השוכח, או שנזרקו מפיו כמה תיבות בלא מתכוין, שאינו צריך התרה כלל

but not to a person who forgets, or unwittingly uttered a few words, for he does not require a release [from the excommunication] at all.

ובוחן לבות וכליות אלקים צדיק

“And G-d Who is righteous examines the heart and the kidneys”:²¹ He probes a man’s inner integrity, and is able to discern a deliberate offense from an unwitting one.

הטיבה ה' לטובים, ולישרים בלבותם

The Alter Rebbe concludes with a prayer:²² “Be benevolent, O G-d, unto the good,” i.e., to those who refrain utterly from idle speech, “and unto those who are upright in their hearts”; i.e., also to those whose hearts meant well, but from whose lips a few words inadvertently escaped.

FOOTNOTES ^{1.} *Berachot* 13a. ^{2.} *Daniel* 6:11. ^{3.} Note of the Rebbe: “Cf. the expression of the Sages, that ‘standing refers to prayer’ (*Berachot* 6b).” ^{4.} *Megillah* 29a, commenting on *Yechezkel* 11:16. ^{5.} *Vayikra* 16:16; see also *Tanya*, ch. 45. ^{6.} *Mishlei* 18:2. ^{7.} See *Zohar* I, 179a. ^{8.} See *Ramaz* to *Zohar*, *loc. cit.* ^{9.} *Mishlei* 12:8. ^{10.} *Berachot* 58a. ^{11.} Note of the Rebbe: “*Likkutei Torah* (Discourses on Yom Kippur, at the conclusion of the discourse entitled *Shabbat Shabbaton*) explains the level of Divinity called ‘concealed might.’ This allows us to understand, as it were, its mortal analog.” ^{12.} Parentheses are in the original. ^{13.} *Mishlei* 3:35. ^{14.} *Berachot* 33a. ^{15.} Note of the Rebbe: “The singular form of the verb נתקן [i.e., the Hebrew original of ‘instituted’] should be checked against other [earlier] editions.” ^{16.} I, 131b. ^{17.} See *Semak*, conclusion of sec. 11. ^{18.} *Minchah* has been listed here before *Maariv*, in accordance with the Table of Glosses and Emendations compiled by the Rebbe. ^{19.} Note of the Rebbe: “It could be suggested that [*Minchah* was originally listed last] in order to show that the Alter Rebbe’s message applies to *Shacharit* and *Arvit*, and (even) to *Minchah*. That is to say, that even with regard to *Minchah* — which is a prayer that comes as a continuation of *Shacharit* (for which reason the *Shema* need not be recited again) — the same stringency applies, with regard to speaking during prayers. (This is the case even though it is obvious that there are interruptions between the *Shema* of *Shacharit*, which is also connected to *Minchah*, and the *Minchah* prayer itself.)” ^{20.} *Yeshayahu* 6:10. ^{21.} *Tehillim* 7:10. ^{22.} *Ibid.* 125:4.



Epistle 25

This letter comments on a discourse (in *Tzavaat HaRivash*, sec. 120 in the Kehot editions) in which the Baal Shem Tov explains that though all things emanate from G-d through His attributes of love and awe, these attributes can find themselves in a state of exile.

The Baal Shem Tov goes on to say that in the same way, a worshiper who finds that his endeavors to concentrate are being disturbed by someone speaking should consider: “Why did G-d bring me here, where this talker is disturbing my prayers? After all, everything is Providential.”

Indeed it is, explains the Baal Shem Tov: this man’s talk is a spark of the radiance of the *Shechinah* that has descended and now “abides” in his mouth, in order that the worshiper should exert himself so strenuously that he will be able to ignore the disturbance. (The verb used in the above-quoted version of the teaching is “abides” — שרטה; as the Alter Rebbe will soon explain, the proper term is “vested” — נתלבשה.)

Especially so, the text there goes on to say, if the person speaking is a heathen or a child, then the realization that the *Shechinah* has (as it were) contracted itself to such a degree should surely bring the worshiper to ever-increasing fervor.

It would seem that the opponents of Chassidism seized upon this statement of the Baal Shem Tov: they could not understand how one could possibly say that the *Shechinah* “abided” (or even was “vested”) within a heathen.

The Alter Rebbe explains this in the present letter, beginning with the teaching of the Sages that “Whoever is in a rage resembles an idolater.” A Jew, he explains, must know that everything comes from G-d. When someone strikes him or angers him with words, he should remind himself that at that very moment, a glimmer of the Divine Presence — which provides life to all creatures and to this individual as well — has vested itself within that person.

The Alter Rebbe goes on to prove this from King David’s response when Shimi ben Geira cursed him. King David said: “For G-d told him, ‘Curse!’” Although we do not find it explicitly stated that G-d told Shimi to curse David, still, since G-d’s spirit animated Shimi at the moment that he cursed David, thus providing him with the strength to do so, David considered this as if “G-d told him to curse.” Indeed, as the Alter Rebbe goes on to explain, a glimmer or irradiation of the *Shechinah* vests itself even in *kelipot*.

Throughout this discussion the Alter Rebbe does not actually quote the Baal Shem Tov’s teaching nor the above objection to it. The reason for the latter omission may perhaps be understood in light of the fact that the Alter Rebbe was prepared for *mesirut nefesh*, literally risking his life, not to be sundered from any teaching or even the slightest gesture of the Baal Shem Tov, even if it would only appear to be so in the eyes of the beholder.^{[1](#)}

It is thus reasonable to assume that here as well, the Alter Rebbe chose not to even mention an objection raised against a teaching of the Baal Shem Tov; he merely clarifies the concepts involved, and the objection falls away as a matter of course.

להבין אמרי בינה

“To comprehend the words of understanding,” i.e., the words of Torah,^{[2](#)}

מה שכתוב בספר הנקרא צוואת ריב"ש

stated in the book called *Tzavaat Rivash*³ (“The Testament of the Baal Shem Tov”),

הגם שבאמת אינה צוואתו כלל, ולא ציוה כלל לפני פטירתו

though in fact it is not at all⁴ his will or testament, and he did not ordain anything before his passing;

רק הם לקוטי אמרותיו הטהורות

they (i.e., the teachings in this book) are merely gleanings of his pure sayings

The adjective (“pure”) recalls the phrase in the morning blessings, היא טהורה, that describes the pristine purity of a soul before it descends from the World of *Atzilut*; likewise the verse,⁵ לטהר השמים כעצם (“as pure as the very heavens”).

שלקטו לקוטי בתר לקוטי

that were gathered as⁶ “compilations after compilations,”

ולא ידעו לכיין הלשון על מתכונתו

and [the compilers] did not know how to phrase his teachings exactly.

For the Baal Shem Tov used to speak in Yiddish, and the teachings in *Tzavaat HaRivash* are recorded in Hebrew.

אך המכוון הוא אמת לאמיתו

The connotation, however, of the teachings is absolutely true.

The Alter Rebbe now begins to explain the statement in *Tzavaat HaRivash*, sec. 120.

והוא בהקדים מאמר רז"ל: כל הכועס, כאילו עובד עבודת כוכבים ומזלות

And this [will be understood] by first considering the teaching of our Sages, of blessed memory:⁷ “Whoever is in a rage resembles an idolater.”

והטעם מובן לידועי בינה

The reason [for this] is clear to those who⁸ “know un-derstanding,”

לפי שבעת כעסו, נסתלקה ממנו האמונה

because at the time of his anger, faith in G-d and in His individual Divine Providence has left him.

כי אילו היה מאמין שמאת ה' היתה זאת לו, לא היה בכעס כלל

For were he to believe that what happened to him was G-d's doing, he would not be angry at all.

ואף שבן אדם, שהוא בעל בחירה, מקללו או מכהו או מזיק ממונו

True, it is a person possessed of free choice that is cursing him, or striking him, or causing damage to his property,

ומתחייב בדיני אדם ובדיני שמים על רוע בחירתו

and [therefore] guilty according to the laws of man and the laws of heaven for his evil choice.

The perpetrator for his part cannot plead innocence on the grounds that he is merely an instrument in the hands of Divine Providence.

אף על פי כן, על הניזק כבר נגזר מן השמים

Nevertheless, as regards the person harmed, this [incident] was already decreed in heaven,

והרבה שלוחים למקום

and⁹ “G-d has many agents” through whom He can act.

Hence, even if the offending party had chosen otherwise, the incident would have befallen the victim in any case.

This discussion recalls the teaching of the *Mechilta* cited by *Rashi* on the verse,¹⁰ והאלקים — לידו אנה — “and G-d caused it to happen to him.” For to such a case the *Mechilta* applies the verse,¹¹ “From evildoers there emerges evil.” This means that though it was decreed from above that someone should sustain an injury, G-d brings it about that a particular person should inflict it.

That context, however, speaks of an *unwitting* injury. In the case of a potentially willful offender, if instead of choosing freely to act in an evil manner he chose to do otherwise, the event would still have occurred, for “G-d has many agents,” as quoted above.

At any rate, it is thus clear that the victim has no cause to be angry with the offender, for the true cause of the offense was not him, but a heavenly decree.

The Alter Rebbe now takes this one step further: Not only does the heavenly decree give the offender an undefined potential to do harm, but moreover, the particular thought to do it and the power to do it, all come about from G-d. (At the same time, since man has freedom of choice, he can of course choose to reject such a thought and refrain from doing such a deed.)

Anger thus remains unjustifiable. For the offended party is not angry that the other party made an evil choice; what angers him is the damage done to *him*. His anger thus results from his lack of belief that the true cause for his mishap is not a particular individual's evil choice, but a heavenly decree.

ולא עוד

And not only this, that a heavenly decree gave permission in principle and made it possible that he suffer injury,

אלא אפילו בשעה זו ממש, שמכהו או מקללו

but even at that very moment at which [the offender] strikes or curses him,

מתלבש בו כח ה' ורוח פיו יתברך, המחיהו ומקיימו

there is vested in him (in the offender) a force from G-d and the breath of His mouth, which animates and sustains him;

וכמו שכתוב: כי ה' אמר לו, קלל

as it is written: [12](#) “For G-d told him, ‘Curse!’”

והיכן אמר לשמעני

Now where did He say so to Shimi? Where do we find it written that G-d told him to curse David?

אלא שמחשבה זו, שנפלה לשמעני בלבו ומוחו, ירדה מאת ה'

But this thought that occurred in Shimi's heart and mind to curse David, descended from G-d, Who was thus responsible for such a thought entering Shimi's mind;

ורוח פיו, המחיה כל צבאם

and [13](#) “the breath of His mouth, [which animates] all the hosts [of heaven],”

החיה רוחו של שמעי, בשעה שדיבר דברים אלו לדוד

animated the spirit of Shimi at the time he spoke those words to David.

כי אילו נסתלק רוח פיו יתברך רגע אחד מרוחו של שמעי, לא יכול לדבר מאומה

For if the breath of G-d's mouth had departed from the spirit of Shimi for a single moment, he could not have spoken at all.

* * *

וזהו כי ה' אמר לו בעת ההיא ממש: קלל את דוד

(14 And that is the meaning of the statement, “For G-d told him (at that very moment when Shimi was speaking these words), ‘Curse David!’

I.e., G-d did so by providing Shimi at that time with life and the power of speech.

ומי יאמר לו וגו'

And who shall say to him, [‘Why did you do so?’]”

In the Table of Glosses and Emendations (*Luach He'arot VeTikkunim*) which is appended to standard editions of the *Tanya*, the Rebbe notes that the words “to him” (לו) seem to be unnecessary, inasmuch as the above-quoted verse simply states, without this addition, “And who shall say, ‘Why did you do so?’”

It has been suggested that the Rebbe notes that these words merely “seem” superfluous, rather than stating outright that they are, because at this point the Alter Rebbe is actually referring to another verse: 15 “For the word of a king rules, and who shall say to *Him*, ‘What are You doing?’”

However, rather than adopt this labored assumption, that the Alter Rebbe suddenly changes direction and interpolates one word from another verse, it appears more reasonable to say that the words “to Him” are not intended as a quotation. Rather, since some commentators hold that the conclusion of our verse (“And who shall say to *him*...”) refers to Shimi, the Alter Rebbe here makes it clear that it in fact speaks of G-d. I.e., having first related that G-d “told” Shimi what to do, the verse ends by asking, “Who can possibly say to *Him*, ‘Why did You do so?’”

וכנודע מה שאמר הבעל שם טוב ז"ל על פסוק: לעולם, ה', דברך נצב בשמים

The teaching of the Baal Shem Tov, of blessed memory, on the verse, 16 “Forever, O G-d, Your word stands firm in the heavens,” is well known:

As mentioned above in *Shaar HaYichud VebaEmunah*, ch. 1, the Baal Shem Tov expanded and disseminated the following concept that appears in *Midrash Tehillim*:

שצירוף אותיות שנבראו בהן השמים, שהוא מאמר יהי רקיע כו'

The combinations of the letters with which the heavens were created, i.e., the creative utterance,¹⁷ “Let there be a firmament...,”

הן נצבות ועומדות מלובשות בשמים לעולם, להחיותם ולקיימם

stand and remain vested in the heavens forever, to animate and sustain them.

As the Alter Rebbe explained in greater detail in *Shaar HaYichud VehaEmunah*, chs. 1 and 2, this is also the case with regard to all created beings.

ולא כהפלוסופים שכופרים בהשגחה פרטית

This differs from the view of the philosophers who deny the individual Providence of the Creator over each and every one of His creations.

ומדמין בדמיונם הכוזב את מעשה ה', עושה שמים וארץ, למעשה אנוש ותחבולותיו

Using their false analogy, they liken the work of G-d, the Maker of heaven and earth, to the work of man and his devices.

כי כאשר יצא לצורף כלי, שוב אין הכלי צריך לידי הצורף

For when a metal-smith has completed a vessel, [it] no longer needs the hands of the smith;

שאף שידיו מסולקות הימנו, הוא קיים מעצמו

though his hands are removed from it, it remains intact by itself.

Some philosophers apply this model to the creation of heaven and earth, and imagine that once G-d created them they need Him no more, G-d forbid. These thinkers thus deny *hashgachah pratit*, individually-directed Divine Providence — the Creator's constant and ongoing contact with His created beings.

וטח מראות עיניהם ההבדל הגדול שבין מעשה אנוש ותחבולותיו

But their eyes are bedaubed so that they cannot see the great difference between man's work and schemes,

שהוא יש מיש

which is [the production of] something out of something (*yesh miyesh*),

רק שמשנה הצורה והתמונה

where he merely changes the form and the appearance,

The shapeless piece of silver that a craftsman transforms into a vessel (a) already existed, and (b) was innately malleable. The craftsman has thus innovated nothing, and the vessel once shaped will therefore not be dependent on him.

The philosophers, however, do not see the difference between this,

למעשה שמים וארץ, שהוא יש מאין

and the creation of heaven and earth, which is *creatio ex nihilo* (*yesh me'ayin*), creating something out of nothing.

As the Alter Rebbe will soon point out, something brought into existence out of nothing cannot continue to exist unless the power that creates it remains constantly vested within it.

והוא פלא גדול יותר מקריעת ים סוף, על דרך משל

This — the creation of heaven and earth *ex nihilo* — is an [even] greater wonder than, for example, the splitting of the Red Sea,

אשר הוליך ה' ברוח קדים עזה כל הלילה, ויבקעו המים

which G-d drove back [18](#) “by a strong east wind all that night,... and the waters were divided,” and stood upright like a wall.

ואילו פסק הרוח כרגע, היו המים חוזרים וניגרים במורד, כדרכם וטבעם, ולא קמו כחומה

If the wind had ceased even for a moment, the waters would again have flowed downward, as is their way and nature, and they would not have stood upright like a wall,

In the corresponding passage in *Shaar HaYichud VebaEmunah*, the Alter Rebbe adds the words “without a doubt.”

אף שטבע זה במים, הוא גם כן נברא ומחודש יש מאין

even though this characteristic of water — to flow downward — is also created and innovated *ex nihilo*.

As the Rebbe explains, not only the water itself, but also its characteristic of fluidity, was created *ex nihilo*.

Thus, when the wind caused the water to stand like a stone wall, this fluid nature had only to be replaced by the capability of a solid, so that it could stand erect. Nevertheless, since this quality is uncharacteristic of water, this innovation had to be constantly and continuously brought about by the power that first made it possible. (Indeed, were the

wind to cease, the water would have reverted to its former self.) Thus, even when a *yes*h is merely changed into another *yes*h, the activating force must be constantly present.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to show how the property of fluidity is not intrinsic to water, but must be created within it.

Certain characteristics do not need to be created separately from a particular being, for they are intrinsic to all created beings; for example, all created beings occupy space. Water, however, need not necessarily flow. Other created beings exist quite happily without this property, and when water exists as a solid (as ice) it too possesses the quality of rigidity. The quality of fluidity is thus not intrinsic to water.

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

שהרי חומת אבנים נצבת מעצמה, בלי רוח, רק שטבע המים אינו כן

For a wall of stone stands erect by itself, without [the assistance of] any wind, but the nature of water is not so.

As stated above, the property of fluidity was something that G-d created within the already existing entity of water. Though the wind had only to change one *yes*h to another, replacing the property of fluidity by the property of solidity, this is still considered a wondrous event. And in order for this to have been accomplished, the activating force — in this case, the wind — had to be working constantly.

How much more will this be the case, the Alter Rebbe will soon conclude, with regard to creating a *yes*h out of utter nothingness. And indeed, the Divine Source responsible for the innovation of the entire universe out of nothing, must be consistently vested within it, in order to enable it to endure and not revert to nothingness. Such a corollary should have been imperative even according to the philosophers. They thus err on two grounds — in their above-mentioned reliance on a misleading analogy, and in their failure to realize that the activating force must constantly be invested within the created being.

Thus, to resume the above argument, if for the miraculous splitting of the Red Sea that only involved the changing of one *yes*h to another, the continuous action of G-d was necessary, —

וכל שכן וקל וחומר בבריאת יש מאין, שהוא למעלה מן הטבע, והפלא ופלא יותר מקריעת ים סוף

How much more so, with respect to the creation of an existent being out of nothing, for this transcends nature, and is far more wondrous than the splitting of the Red Sea;

על אחת כמה וכמה שבהסתלקות חס ושלוה כח הבורא יש מאין מן הנברא, ישוב הנברא לאין ואפס ממש

surely if the creative power that creates an existent being out of nothing were (heaven forbid) to be withdrawn from a created being, that being would revert to utter naught and non-existence.

אלא צריך להיות כח הפועל בנפעל תמיד, להחיותו ולקיימו

Rather,¹⁹ the activating force of the Creator, which initially brings every created being into existence, must continuously be present within the thing created, to give it life and continued existence.

ובחינה זו היא דבר ה' ורוח פיו שבעשרה מאמרות, שבהן נברא העולם

This²⁰ [force] is the “word of G-d” and the “breath of His mouth,” that are to be found in the Ten Utterances by which the universe was created.

The Ten Utterances are the source of the “letters of speech” by means of which all of creation is brought into existence. Moreover, as explained in the first chapter of *Shaar HaYichud VebaEmunah*, even those created beings which are not specifically mentioned in the Ten Utterances, likewise derive their vitality from the Ten Utterances by means of various combinations, substitutions and transpositions of these letters.

ואפילו ארץ הלזו הגשמית, ובחינת דומם שבה

And even as regards this physical earth and its inorganic component,

Earth²¹ possesses a potential (*ko'ach hatzomeiach*) that enables vegetation to grow. In the case of created beings that are part of the vegetative realm, growth thus visibly testifies to the presence of an activating force. Created beings that are part of the inanimate or inorganic realm that is represented in the earth, demonstrate no signs of life at all, not even growth.

חיותן וקיומן הוא דבר ה' מעשרה מאמרות, המלוכלש בהן ומקיימן, להיות דומם ויש מאין

their life-force and continued existence is the “word of G-d” that is to be found in the Ten Utterances that is vested in them, maintaining them as inorganic matter and as substantiality *ex nihilo*,

ולא יחזרו לאין ואפס ממש, כשהיו

so that they will not revert to the absolute naught and nothingness they had been prior to their creation.

וזהו שאמר האריז"ל, שגם בדומם כאבנים ועפר ומים, יש בהם בחינת נפש וחיות רוחנית

And this is the meaning of the statement of R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory,²² that there is a kind of soul and spiritual life-force even in inorganic matter such as stones and dust and water, entities that display no signs of life.

This “soul” and spiritual life-force is the “word of G-d,” the potent Divine speech that continuously creates all beings; i.e., the *Shechinah*.

והנה נודע ליודעי חכמה נסתרה

Now it is known to those familiar with the “Hidden Wisdom”²³ (i.e., the Kabbalah)

כי דבר ה' נקרא בשם שכינה בלשון חז"ל, ואימא תתאה ומטרוניתא בלשון הזהר

that the “word of G-d” is referred to as the *Shechinah*, in the terminology of the [Talmudic and Midrashic] Sages, of blessed memory, and as *Imma Tataah* (the “nether mother”) and *Matrunita* (the “Queen”) in the terminology of the *Zohar*,

ובפרט בריש פרשת וארא

especially at the beginning of *Parshat Va'eira*, where an analogy is drawn to G-d's speech from a princess,

לפי ששוכן ומתלבש בנבראים, להחיותם

because [the “word of G-d”] dwells and vests itself in created beings, to give them life.

The word *Shechinah* (שכינה) derives from the root שכן — “to dwell.” The titles of “mother” and “queen” relate to their functions of caring for the lives of their children and subjects, respectively.

ובלשון המקובלים, נקרא בשם מלכות, על שם: דבר מלך שלטון, כי המלך מנהיג מלכותו בדיבורו, ועוד טעמים אחרים ידועים ליודעי חכמה נסתרה

In the terminology of the Kabbalists, [the “word of G-d”] is called *Malchut*, for²⁴ “the word of a king rules” — a king rules his kingdom through his speech; and also for other reasons known to those familiar with the “Hidden Wisdom” (i.e., the Kabbalah).

ומודעת זאת, כי יש בחינת ומדריגת מלכות דאצילות ובחינת מלכות דבריאה וכו'

Now it is known that there is a rank and level of [the *Sefirah* of] *Malchut* of [the World of] *Atzilut*, and a rank of [the *Sefirah* of] *Malchut* of [the World of] *Beriah*, and so on. There are thus many degrees of “G-d's speech.”

ופירוש מלכות דאצילות, הוא דבר ה' המחיה ומהוה נשמות הגדולות, שהן מבחינת אצילות

Malchut of *Atzilut* means the “word of G-d” which animates and brings into being the great souls that are of the rank of *Atzilut*,

כמו נשמת אדם הראשון, שנאמר בו: ויפה באפיו נשמת חיים כו', וכמו נשמות האבות והנביאים, וכיוצא בהן

such as the soul of Adam, of whom it is said,²⁵ “And He blew into his nostrils the soul of life...” (i.e., a soul from the level of *Atzilut*); and such as the souls of the patriarchs and the prophets and the like

שהיו מרכבה לה' ממש, ובטלים ממש במציאות אליו

(²⁶who were truly a “chariot” unto G-d²⁷ and in a state of total self-abnegation in relation to Him;

כמאמר רז"ל: שכינה מדברת מתוך גרונו של משה

as our Sages, of blessed memory, said,²⁸ “The *Shechinah* speaks from the throat of Moses”;

Moses' own personality was so translucent — he had so nullified himself to G-d — that when he prophesied *he* did not *relay* what G-d told *him* to say; rather, the *Shechinah* itself spoke directly through his mouth.

וכן כל הנביאים ובעלי רוח הקודש, היה קול ודבור העליון מתלבש בקולם ודבורם ממש, כמו שכתב האריז"ל

and likewise with all the prophets and those possessed of the Holy Spirit: the Supernal voice and speech vested itself in their actual voice and speech, as R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, wrote).

ומלכות דבריה הוא דבר ה' המחיה ומהוה הנשמות והמלאכים שבעולם הבריאה

Malchut of *Beriah* is the “word of G-d” which animates and brings into being the souls and angels in the World of *Beriah*,

שאין מעלתם כמעלת האצילות וכו'

whose level is not like the level of *Atzilut*, and so on; i.e., *Malchut* of *Yetzirah* is the level of Divine speech that brings into being and animates the souls and angels in the World of *Yetzirah*.

ומלכות דעשיה הוא דבר ה' המחיה ומהוה את עולם הזה בכללו

And *Malchut* of *Asiyah* is the “word of G-d” which animates and creates this world in its entirety,

עד יסוד העפר והמים אשר מתחת לארץ

up to and including the Element of Earth, and²⁹ “the water that is below the earth.”

Now if the creation of all things derives from the *Shechinah*, from the *revelation* of Divine power, how do we account for those things that derive from *kelipot*, entities that “oppose” G-dliness and holiness?

(אלא שבחוץ לארץ, החיות הוא על ידי התלבשות שרים החיצונים, הממונים על שבעים אומות)

(³⁰However, outside the Land of Israel,³¹ the life-force is [bestowed] by [means of “the word of G-d”] being invested within the extraneous patron-angels that are appointed over the seventy nations.

דהיינו, שיורד ניצוץ מדבר ה', הנקרא בשם מלכות דעשיה, ומאיר על השרים של מעלה, בבחינת מקיף מלמעלה

I.e., a [mere] spark from the “word of G-d,” which is called *Malchut* of *Asiyah*, descends and radiates over the supernal patron-angels by encompassing them from above.

אך אינו מתלבש בהם ממש, אלא נמשך להם חיות מהארה זו, שמאיר עליהם מלמעלה בבחינת מקיף

I.e., it does not truly vest itself within them; rather, the life-force issues to them from this radiation which shines over them from above, in an encompassing manner.

ומהשרים נשפע חיות לאומות, ולבהמות חיות ועופות שבארצותיהם

And from the patron-angels, life-force issues to the nations, and to the cattle, beasts and fowl that are in their lands,

ולארץ הגשמית, ולשמים הגשמיים, שהם הגלגלים

and to the physical world, and the physical heavens, i.e., the spheres in which the stars orbit.³²

(אלא ששמים וארץ ובהמות וחיות ועופות טהורים, נשפעים מקליפת נוגה

(³³However, there are distinctions between the various categories of created beings: the heavens and the earth, and the cattle, beasts and fowl that are pure (i.e., kosher), are nurtured by *kelipat nogah*,

והטמאים ונפשות האומות, משאר קליפות)

whereas the impure [creatures] and the souls of the nations are [nurtured] by the other *kelipot*.)

Kelipat nogah represents a finely-balanced tension between potential good (which can also be misused) and potential evil (which can also be sublimated). The other three completely impure *kelipot* are entirely evil, as explained at length in *Tanya*, ch. 6.

והנה שמים וארץ וכל אשר בהם, בחוץ לארץ, כולם כלא ממש חשיבי, לגבי השרים שהם חיותם וקיומם

Now, outside the Land of Israel,³⁴ the heavens and the earth and all they contain are all esteemed as truly nothing, in relation to the patron-angels which are [the conduits for] their life-force and continued existence.

והשרים כלא ממש חשיבי, לגבי החיות הנמשך להם מהניצוץ מדבר ה', המאיר עליהם מלמעלה

The patron-angels themselves are esteemed as truly nothing in relation to the life-force issuing to them from the spark of the “word of G-d” which radiates over them from above, transcending them.

ואף על פי כן, החיות הנמשך לתוכם מהארה זו, הוא בבחינת גלות בתוכם

And even so, the life-force issuing to them from this radiation, is in a state of exile within them.

ולכן נקראים בשם אלקים אחרים, וקרו ליה: אלהא דאלהיא, שגם הם הן בבחינת אלקות

That is why they are called *elohim acherim* (“other gods”), while they call *Him*,³⁵ “G-d of the gods,” since they consider themselves as deities.

ולכן הגוים הנשפעים מהם, הם עובדי עבודה זרה ממש

Therefore, in view of their source, the nations which receive their life-force through [their patron-angels] are truly idolaters —

עד עת קץ, שיבולע המות והסטרא אחרא

[but only] until the time of the “end”, until the time of the imminent Redemption, when death and the *sitra achra* (i.e., the “other side,” the unholy aspect of the universe) will be swallowed up.

ואז אהפוך אל עמים כו', לקרוא כולם בשם ה'

Of that time G-d promises,³⁶ “Then shall I make the nations [pure of speech] so that they will all call upon the Name of G-d.”

The Alter Rebbe now returns to the theme of the Divine spark in exile:

ונקרא גם כן בשם גלות השכינה

This [sustenance of idolaters through the Divine spark] is also called “the exile of the *Shechinah*.”

מאחר שחיות זה, אשר בבחינת גלות בתוכם

For this life-force, which is in a state of exile within them, as previously explained,

הוא מהארה הנמשכת להם מהניצוץ מדבר ה', הנקרא בשם שכינה

stems from the radiation issuing to them from the spark of the “word of G-d,” which is called *Shechinah* in the terminology of the Sages, as mentioned above.

According to the above, however, it would seem that this state of exile has existed since the creation of the world, with all its impure animals, etc. What do we mean, then, when we say that “the *Shechinah* was exiled”? This question is answered in the following parenthetical passage.

(וגלות זה נמשך מחטא עץ הדעת ואילך)

([37](#) And this exile, brought about by the fact that the *kelipot* derive their life-force from a spark of G-d’s creative speech, stems from the sin of the Tree of Knowledge and onwards, for from that time *kelipot* were able to receive a degree of vitality that they did not have until that point.

והוא בחינת אחוריים לבד דקדושה

However, [they receive their vitality] only from the hindmost (i.e., from the lowest and most external) dimension of holiness.

אך כשגלו ישראל לבין האומות, ואחיזת ישראל ושרשם הוא בבחינת פנים העליונים

But when the Jewish people were exiled among the nations — and the Jewish people are attached and rooted in the Supernal Countenance (the *panim*, or *pnimiyus*, i.e., the innermost aspect of Divinity) —

הנה זו היא גלות שלימה

this became a total exile. For then the innermost aspect of Divinity was also drawn down to the patron-angels and the nations, as explained at length in *Iggeret HaTeshuvah*, ch. 6; see there.

ועל זה אמרו רז"ל: גלו לאדום, שכינה עמהם))

Of this our Sages, of blessed memory, said,[38](#) “When [the Jewish people] were exiled to *Edom*, the *Shechinah* accompanied them.”))

* * *

והנה, אף כי ה' אחד ושמו אחד

Now, though³⁹ “G-d is one and His Name is one,”

דהיינו: דבורו ורוח פיו, המכונה הזהר הקדוש בשם שמו, הוא יחיד ומיוחד

i.e., [though] His speech and the “breath of His mouth,” which in the sacred *Zohar*⁴⁰ is referred to as His Name, is singularly and uniquely one,

אף על פי כן ההארה והמשכת החיות הנמשכת מרוח פיו יתברך, מתחלקת לארבע מדרגות שונות, שהן ארבעה עולמות: אצילות, בריאה, יצירה, עשיה

nevertheless, the radiation and efflux of life-force which issues forth from His mouth, divides into four different levels. These are the Four Worlds — *Atzilut*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*.⁴¹

והשינוי הוא מחמת צמצומים ומסכים רבים

The difference is due to (⁴²many) contractions and screens

לצמצם האור והחיות ולהסתירו, שלא יהא מאיר כל כך בעולם הבריאה כמו בעולם האצילות

that veil and obscure the light and the life-force, so that it will not radiate in the World of *Beriah* as much as in the World of *Atzilut*;

ובעולם היצירה הוא על ידי צמצומים ומסכים יותר וכו'

and in the World of *Yetzirah* [the opaqueness is thickened] by means of further contractions and screens; and so on, i.e., how much more so in the World of *Asiyah*.

אבל אין שום שינוי, חס ושלום, בעצמות השכינה, שהיא דבר ה' ורוח פיו

Nevertheless, there is no change whatever, heaven forfend, in the essence of the *Shechinah*, which is the “word of G-d” and the “breath of His mouth.”

וגם בבחינת ההארה והמשכת החיות

Also, as regards the radiation and efflux of life-force that issues from the “word of G-d,”

הנה ההארה שבאצילות בוקעת המסך, ומתלבשת בבריאה, וכן מבריאה ליצירה, ומיצירה לעשיה

the radiation which is in [the World of] *Atzilut* pierces the screen and vests itself in [the World of] *Beriah*. Likewise from [the World of] *Beriah* to [the World of] *Yetzirah*, and from [the World of] *Yetzirah* to [the World of] *Asiyah*.

ולכן אור אין סוף ברוך הוא שבאצילות, הוא גם כן בעשיה, ובעולם הזה החומרי

Hence the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light which is in [the World of] *Atzilut* is also present in [the World of] *Asiyah*, and [even] in this material world,

על ידי התלבשותו במלכות דבריה, יצירה, עשיה, כמבואר הכל בכתבי האריז"ל

by being invested in the [*Sefirah* of] *Malchut* of [the Worlds of] *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, as fully explained in the writings of R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory.⁴³

* * *

והנה נפש האדם, ידוע לכל שהיא כלולה מיו"ד ספירות: חכמה, בינה, דעת וכו'

Now, it is known to all that the soul of man — the soul of the Jew — is compounded of the Ten *Sefirot*: *Chochmah*, *Binah*, *Daat*, and so on, as explained in *Tanya*, ch. 3.

ואף שכולן מרוח פיו יתברך, כדכתיב: ויפח באפיו כו'

Though these [corresponding faculties of the soul] all derive from the breath of [G-d's] mouth, as it is written,⁴⁴ “And He blew into his nostrils [the soul of life],”

The term “He blew” indicates that the divine soul derives from the innermost spirit and vitality of its Creator, as explained in *Tanya*, ch. 2, and *Shaar HaYichud VehoEmunah*, ch. 5.

מכל מקום

nevertheless, each of these ten faculties of the soul is particularly connected with one of the ten Supernal *Sefirot*, as follows:

דרך פרט, חב"ד שבנפשו הן דוגמא לחב"ד שביו"ד ספירות

more specifically, the *ChaBaD* in one's soul, one's intellectual faculties of *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat*, are analogous to the [Divine intellectual emanations of] *ChaBaD* in the Ten *Sefirot*.

המכוונות בשם אבא ואמא

These are referred to as *Abba* and *Imma*.

In the *Zohar*, [the *Sefirah* of] *Chochmah* of [the World of] *Atzilut* is termed *Abba* (“father”), and [the *Sefirah* of] *Binah* of [the World of] *Atzilut* is termed *Imma* (“mother”), while [the *Sefirah* of] *Daat* is a combination of the two, as explained in the teachings of *Chassidut*.

ומדות אהבה ויראה וכו' שבנפשו, הן דוגמא למדות שביו"ד ספירות, הנקראות בשם זעיר אנפין

The [emotive] attributes in one's soul of [the] love and fear [of G-d], and so on, are analogous to the [first six] *middot* (or Divine emotive attributes) in the Ten *Sefirot*, which are [collectively] known as *Z'eir Anpin* (lit., "the Minor Visage").

וכח הדבור שבנפשו, דוגמא לדבור העליון, הנקרא בשם מלכות ושכינה

And the faculty of speech in one's soul is analogous to the Supernal Speech, which is known as [the *Sefirah* of] *Malchut*, or the *Shechinah*.

ולכן, כשמדבר דברי תורה, מעורר דבור העליון, ליחד השכינה

Hence, since a Jew's speech is analogous to Supernal Speech, the *Shechinah*, when speaking words of Torah one arouses the Supernal Speech, the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*, thereby unifying the *Shechinah*, i.e., linking it to the preceding stages of emanation.

ומשום הכי קיימא לן, בקריאת שמע וברכת המזון ודברי תורה, דלא יצא בהרהור, בלא דבור

That is why it is established⁴⁵ that for the Reading of *Shema*, for the Grace after Meals, and for [the study of] words of Torah, one has not discharged his duty by meditation without speech.

* * *

והנה זה לעומת זה

Now,⁴⁶ "[G-d created] this opposite that":

Since the entire dynamic of the holy "side" of the universe has its counterpart in the "other side," the *sitra achra*, the above-mentioned Ten *Sefirot* of holiness (and likewise the ten corresponding faculties of the G-dly soul) each have their unholy counterpart:

יש עשרה כתרי דמסאבותא

there are⁴⁷ "ten crowns of impurity."

ומהן נמשכות נפשות האומות, גם כן כלולות מעשר בחינות אלה ממש

From these issue the souls of the nations, which are also comprised of the very same ten levels.

ומודעת זאת בארץ מה שכתוב בספר הגלגולים על פסוק: אשר שלט האדם באדם, לרע לו

The exposition of *Sefer HaGilgulim*⁴⁸ on the verse,⁴⁹ "That man rules over man, to his detriment," is common knowledge:

שהוא סוד גלות השכינה בתוך הקליפות, להחיותם ולהשליטם עתה בזמן הגלות

it refers to the mystery of the exile of the *Shechinah* in the midst of the *kelipot*, in order to animate them and to empower them to rule in the present time of exile.

“Man rules over man” thus means that the “evil man” (of *kelipah*) rules over the “sacred man” (i.e., the holy “side” of the universe).

אבל הוא לרע לו וכו'

However, this [temporary dominion of evil] is “to his [ultimate] detriment...,” for its underlying intent is that the sparks of holiness that are found within evil, be extracted and elevated.

ולכן האומות שולטין עתה על ישראל

This is why the nations presently dominate the Jewish people.[50](#)

להיות נפשות האומות מהקליפות, אשר השכינה מתלבשת בבחינת גלות בתוכם

For the souls of the nations [derive] from the *kelipot*, in which the *Shechinah* is vested in a state of exile, empowering them to rule.

והנה, אף שזה צריך ביאור רחב, איך ומה, מכל מקום האמת כן הוא

Though extensive exposition is required, as to how and what is the manner in which the *Shechinah* is invested in the exile of the *kelipot*, nevertheless, it is truly so.

אלא שאף על פי כן, אין הקליפות והאומות יונקים ומקבלים חיות אלא מהארה הנמשכת להם מבחינת אחוריים דקדושה

Despite this, the *kelipot* and the nations receive their nurture and life-force only from a reflection extended to them from the hindmost dimension of holiness,

כמאן דשדי בתר כתפיה

“in the manner of one who [unwillingly] throws [something] over his shoulder [to his enemy],” as explained in *Tanya*, ch. 22.

ואף גם זאת, על ידי צמצומים ומסכים רבים ועצומים, עד שנתלבשה הארה זו בחומריות עולם הזה

And even that is by way of numerous and intense contractions and screens, until this radiation becomes vested in the materiality of this world,

ומשפעת לאומות עושר וכבוד וכל תענוגים גשמיים

dispensing wealth and honor and all physical pleasures unto the nations.

מה שאין כן ישראל יונקים מבחינת פנים העליונים, כמו שכתוב: יאר ה' פניו אליך

Jews, however, elicit [their sustenance] from the Supernal Countenance (the *panim*, or *pnimiyus*, i.e., the innermost aspect of Divinity); as it is written,[51](#) “May G-d make His Countenance shine upon you,”

כל אחד ואחד לפי שרש נשמתו, עד רום המעלות

each according to the source of his soul, up to the most elevated of levels.

* * *

ואחר הדברים והאמת האלה, הגלויים וידועים לכל, נחזור לענין ראשון בענין הכעס, שהוא כעובד עבודה זרה

After these words and this truth, which are manifest and known to all, let us return to the original subject, concerning anger — where a person [who is angry] is likened to an idolater.[52](#)

והיינו במילי דעלמא, כי הכל בידי שמים חוץ מיראת שמים

This is so only with regard to mundane matters, for[53](#) “everything is in the hands of heaven except for the fear of heaven.”

Since everything is in G-d’s hands there is no reason to become angry. However, with regard to matters involving the “fear of heaven,” anger does have a place.

ולכן במילי דשמיא, לאפרושי מאיסורא, לא שייך האי טעמא דאמרן

Hence with respect to heavenly matters, to[54](#) “ward [a fellow Jew] from [transgressing] a prohibition,” the reason stated does not apply, for these matters are not in G-d’s hands but in man’s.

וכמו שכתוב: ויקצוף משה

As it is written,[55](#) “And Moses was angry.”

והיינו, משום כי ה' הקרה לפניו מצוה זו, לאפרושי מאיסורא, כדי לזכותו

This was because G-d caused him to encounter this *mitzvah* of “warding [a fellow Jew] from [transgressing] a prohibition,” in order to make him meritorious.

Thus, this situation is obviously quite different from being angry at someone because of harm or offense.

* * *

אך זהו כשיש בידו למחות בקצפו וכעסו על חבירו

But this applies only when one is able to prevent [transgression] by his wrath and anger against his fellow-man; in such a case he is permitted to become angry, as did Moses.

אבל כשאין בידו למחות, כגון נכרי המדבר ומבלבלו בתפלתו

However, when he is unable to change the situation, as in the case of the gentile who talks and disturbs him while he is praying,

אם כן, מה זאת עשה ה' לו

[the question] then [arises]: What is this that G-d has done to him, that a gentile should disrupt his prayers?

אין זאת כי אם שיתגבר, ויתאמץ יותר בתפלתו, בעומק הלב ובכוונה גדולה כל כך

This is so only in order that he prevail and strengthen himself ever more in his prayers, from the depths of his heart, and with such intense concentration

עד שלא ישמע דבורי הנכרי

that he will not hear the gentile's talk.

אך שלמדרגה זו, צריך התעוררות רבה ועצומה

However, for such a level one needs a great and intense arousal.

ועצה היעוצה להתעוררות זו, היא מענין זה עצמו

And the counsel suggested to attain such an arousal, derives from this very subject.

כשישים אל לבו ויתבונן ענין ירידת השכינה כביכול, ותרד פלאים להתלבש ניצוץ מהארתה

One should consider and meditate on the concept of the descent of the *Shechinah*, as it were — how [56](#) “it descended in wondrous fashion,” to have a spark of its radiance invested [within the *kelipot*].

אשר היא בבחינת גלות בתוך הקליפות, דרך כלל, להחיותם

It is generally in a state of exile among the *kelipot*, in order to animate them.

ועתה הפעם, ניצוץ הארתה מתלבש בבחינת גלות דרך פרט

And now, a spark of its radiation vests itself in a particular state of exile,

בדבור נכרי זה, המדבר דברים מבלבלים עבודת ה', היא כוונת התפלה

in the speech of this gentile who utters words that disturb one's divine service, i.e., one's devout concentration during prayer.

וכמו שכתוב לעיל, כי זה לעומת זה וכו'

And, as explained above,⁵⁷ “[G-d created] this opposite that,” each element of the holy “side” of the universe having its unholy counterpart in the “other side,” the *sitra achra*.

ודבור העליון מתלבש בדבור התחתון וכו'

Thus the Supernal speech vests itself in the nether speech, and so on.

I.e., Supernal speech vests itself in a lower degree of speech, ultimately descending through a self-screening chain of descent until it provides life-force even for the *kelipot*.

וזהו ממש: אשר שלט האדם באדם, לרע לו

This indeed is the meaning of the verse,⁵⁸ “*That man rules over man, to his detriment*,” which was explained above in terms of the temporary dominion of the “evil man” (of *kelipah*) over the “sacred man” (the holy “side” of the universe).

When this gentile utilizes the spark which is exiled within himself to hinder a Jew who is trying to pray, the *kelipot* are manifestly ruling over the holy “side” of the universe. The forces of holiness, however, can thereby be invigorated and vitalized, when the worshiper reacts by upgrading his concentration.

This he will be prompted to do when he meditates on the above-described descent of the *Shechinah* into exile. And from this exile he will seek to liberate it.

In the words of the Alter Rebbe:

דהיינו, שעל ידי זה מתעורר האדם להתפלל יותר בכוונה, מעומקא דלבא, עד שלא ישמע דיבוריו

That is to say, that through this [meditation], the individual is aroused to pray with greater devotion, from the depth of his heart, until he will not hear [the gentile's] words.

The above explains the statement of the Baal Shem Tov in *Tzavaat HaRivash*, that the *Shechinah* vests itself in this gentile. For everything in this world houses a spark of holiness, and within this gentile the spark is present in a state of exile, for the reason explained above.

* * *

ומה שכתב המלקט: שרתה

As for the compiler [of *Tzavaat HaRivash*] using the word *shartah*, meaning that the *Shechinah* “dwelt” or “abided” within this gentile,

לא ידע לכוין הלשון בדקדוק

he was unable to focus on the precise term.

כי הבעל שם טוב, זכרונו לברכה, היה אומר דברי תורה בלשון אשכנז, ולא בלשון הקודש

For the Baal Shem Tov, of blessed memory, used to deliver Torah teachings in Yiddish, not in the Holy Tongue.

The compiler, translating these discourses into Hebrew, transmitted their content, not their precise terminology. And in this case he erred.

ורצה לומר: נתלבשה

He really meant to say, *nitlabshah* (“became vested”), for *shartah* (“dwelt” or “abided”) implies that the *Shechinah* was revealed,

והיינו, בבחינת גלות

whereas [*nitlabshah*] means [that the *Shechinah* was vested] in a state of exile.

וזהו: ובפרט אם הוא נכרי

This [distinction] explains [the emphasis in *Tzavaat HaRivash*], “And especially if he is a gentile...,”

Were we to be speaking of a manifest indwelling of the *Shechinah*, how could it be said that the Divine Presence resides to a greater extent within this gentile who is disturbing a Jew at prayer, than within the worshiper? Rather, we are speaking of a self-obscuring investiture of the *Shechinah* within the gentile,

שאז היא בחינת גלות ביותר

for then it is so much more in exile.

ואין לתמוה אם ניצוץ מהארת שכינה, נקרא בשם שכינה

There is no need to wonder at a spark of the radiance of the *Shechinah* being referred to (in *Tzavaat HaRivash*) as *Shechinah*.

דהא אשכחן שאפילו מלאך נברא נקרא בשם ה', בפרשת וירא, לפירוש הרמב"ן

For we find that even a created angel, which is not a spark of the *Shechinah*, is referred to by G-d's Name in *Parshat VaYeira*, in the verse,⁵⁹ “And he said, ‘Lord, do not pass by your servant,’” according to the commentary of R. Moses Nachmanides (the *Ramban*);

וכמו שכתוב: ותקרא שם ה' הדובר אליה וכו', וכהאי גוונא טובא

and as it is likewise written,⁶⁰ “And [Hagar] called the name of G-d Who spoke to her...,” where we are explicitly told that we are speaking of an angel; and many more [passages] like this.

* * *

וכמדומה לי שתפיסתם אינה מצד דקדוק הלשון

It would seem to me, says the Alter Rebbe, alluding to the opponents of Chassidism who had taken issue with the above-discussed passage from *Tzavaat HaRivash*, that their seizing [upon this passage] was not prompted by the particular term used (viz., “dwelling”),

אלא מעיקר ענין התלבשות השכינה בקליפות

but by the very notion that the *Shechinah* can be invested in the *kelipot*.

שאין להם אמונה במה שכתב האריז"ל בספר הגלגולים

For they do not believe what R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, wrote concerning this in *Sefer HaGilgulim* (ch. 2).

שאם ירצו לחלק בין קליפות הרוחניים, לעובדי גילולים גשמיים

Should they seek to distinguish between the spiritual *kelipot* and physical idolaters, contending that the *AriZal* is speaking only of the spiritual *kelipot*, as distinct from a corporeal heathen, —

אין לך גשמי כעפר הארץ

there is nothing more physical than the dust of the earth;

ואף על פי כן, מתלבשת בו מלכות דמלכות דעשיה, ובתוכה מלכות דיצירה כו', וכנ"ל

nevertheless, as is stated in the *Kabbalah*, [the *Sefirah* of] *Malchut* of *Malchut* of [the World of] *Asiyah* vests itself in it, and within that in turn is vested [the *Sefirah* of] *Malchut* of [the World of] *Yetzirah*, and so on, with [the *Sefirah* of] *Malchut* of [the World of] *Beriah* and [the *Sefirah* of] *Malchut* of [the World of] *Atzilut*, as mentioned above.

ואם משום טומאת נפשות הנכרי

And should it be [difficult for them to conceive that the *Shechinah* vests itself in the gentile] because of the impurity of the souls of the gentile, —

הרי נפשותיהם מזיווג זעיר אנפין ונוקבא דקליפות הרוחניים, כמו שכתוב בכתבי האריז"ל

the souls [of the gentiles] derive from the union of the masculine and feminine elements (*zivug zu'n*, the union of *Z'eir Anpin* and *Malchut*) of the spiritual *kelipot*, as stated in the writings of R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory.

נמצא שהרוחניים מקור טומאתם

Thus, the sources of their impurity are the spiritual *kelipot*, in which all agree that the *Shechinah* can vest itself. Why not, then, in the souls of the gentiles?

אך באמת צריך ביאור רחב, איך הוא התלבשות זו

But in truth, the manner of this investiture — both in the spiritual and in the physical realm — requires extensive elucidation.

ואבל לא עלינו תלונתם, כי על כתבי האריז"ל

In fact their complaint should not be addressed to us, the revealers of Chassidism — the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid of Mezritch and the Alter Rebbe himself, but to the writings of R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, in which it is stated that the *Shechinah* does indeed vest itself within *kelipot*.

ואל יחשדני שומע שאני בעיני שהבנתי דברי האריז"ל, להפשיטן מגשמיותן

And let no listener suspect that I imagine that I have understood the words of R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, divesting them from their physical connotation,

כי לא באתי רק לפרש דברי הבעל שם טוב ז"ל ותלמידיו, על פי קבלת האריז"ל

for I have set out only to explain the words of the Baal Shem Tov, of blessed memory, and of his disciples, according to the Kabbalah of R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory.

בשגם שענין זה

This is especially so, since this concept, G-d's presence in even the humblest of places,

אינו מחכמת הקבלה ומהנסתרות לה' אלקינו

is not a teaching of the Kabbalah, nor is it one of [61](#) “the secrets [that] are unto the Lord our G-d,”

כי אם מהנגלות לנו ולבנינו, להאמין אמונה שלימה במקרא מלא שדבר הכתוב: הלא את השמים ואת הארץ אני מלא, נאם ה'

but rather one of [62](#) “the things revealed unto us and unto our children” — to believe in perfect faith in the explicit statement of Scripture, [63](#) “Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?” says G-d.”

שאין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו

And [64](#) “Scripture does not depart from its plain meaning”: G-d does indeed fill all space, both material and spiritual.

וגם היא אמונה פשוטה בסתם כללות ישראל, ומסורה בידם מאבותיהם הקדושים, שהלכו בתמימות עם ה'

Moreover, it is a simple article of faith among Jews in general, handed down to them by their saintly ancestors, who walked artlessly with G-d,

בלי לחקור בשכל אנושי ענין האלקות, אשר הוא למעלה מהשכל עד אין קץ, לידע איך הוא מלא כל הארץ

without searching the concept of Divinity by means of mortal intellect; for it is infinitely beyond the intellect to know (intellectually) how He fills the world.

רק שחדשים מקרוב באו, לחקור בחקירה זו

But new ones have recently come to rationally examine this question,

ואי אפשר לקרב להם אל השכל, אלא דוקא על פי הקדמות לקוחות מכתבי האריז"ל, מופשטות מגשמיותן

and it is impossible to bring it within reach of their reason except by means of premises borrowed from the writings of R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, divested from their physical connotation,

וכפי ששמעתי מרבותי, נשמותיהם עדן

and according to what I heard from my masters, the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezritch, may their souls rest in Eden.

אך אי אפשר לבאר זה היטב במכתב, כי אם מפה לאזן שומעת, ליחידי סגולה ולשרידים אשר ה' קורא

However, it is impossible to explain this clearly in writing, only orally to an ear that hears [and understands], to uniquely qualified individuals, and to [65](#) “the remnants whom G-d calls,”

כדכתיב: ומבקשי ה' יבינו כל

as it is written, [66](#) “And they who seek G-d will understand all.”

ומכלל הן, אתה שומע כו'

And⁶⁷ “from the affirmative you may infer [the negative]” — that those who do not seek G-d are incapable of perceiving the knowledge of Him as revealed in the inner dimension of the Torah, and particularly, in a truly comprehensible manner, in the teachings of Chassidism.

* * *

הנה אתם ראיתם פירוש מאמר אחד מספרים הידועים

You have now seen, writes the Alter Rebbe to the opponents of Chassidism, an explanation of a single passage from [its] well-known books,

לדוגמא ולאות כי גם כל המאמרים התמוהים, יש להם פירוש וביאור היטב ליודעי חכמה נסתרה

as a sample and token that likewise all the problematic passages about which objections have been raised have an explanation and meaningfulness for those familiar with the “Hidden Wisdom” (i.e., the Kabbalah).

אך לא יקוו מעלתם אלי לבאר להם הכל במכתב, כי היא מלאכה כבדה ומרובה, ואי אפשר בשום אופן

However, let my esteemed [readers] not hope that I will explain everything in writing, for that is a hard and extensive labor, and indeed, absolutely impossible.

רק אם תרצו, שלחו מכם אחד ומיוחד שבעדה

But if you so desire, send [here] from amongst you an outstandingly appropriate individual from your community,⁶⁸

ופנים אל פנים אדבר בו, אם ירצה ה'

and, G-d willing, I will talk to him face to face.

וה' יהיה עם פי בהטיפי, ויהיו לרצון אמרי פי

And may G-d be with my mouth as I speak, and⁶⁹ “may the words of my mouth find favor.”

FOOTNOTES ^{1.} *HaTamim*, Issue II, p. 56. ^{2.} “Words of understanding” (*Mishlei* 1:2) has the same meaning as בינה in *Shabbat* 104a, which *Rashi* explains to mean “Torah”. ^{3.} The abbreviation is an acronym of the Heb. for “Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem.” ^{4.} In the standard editions of *Tanya* the word כלל (“at all”) does not appear. It has been added in accordance with an emendation of the *Tzemach Tzedek*, quoted in *Luach HaTikkun* at the end of the Hebrew editions of *Tanya*. ^{5.} *Shmot* 24:6. ^{6.} *Taanit* 6b. ^{7.} *Zohar* I, 27b; III, 179a; *Rambam*, *Hilchot De’ot* 2:3 in the name of the “earliest sages” (הראשונים חכמים); *et*

al. [8](#). For an exposition of why the Alter Rebbe specifically uses the phrase “those who ‘know understanding,’” see *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak* on this passage. [9](#). *Zohar* III, 36b; cf. *Taanit* 18b. [10](#). *Shmot* 21:13. [11](#). *I Shmuel* 24:14. [12](#). *II Shmuel* 16:10. [13](#). *Tehillim* 33:6. [14](#). Parentheses are in the original. [15](#). *Kohelet* 8:4. [16](#). *Tehillim* 119:89. [17](#). *Bereishit* 1:6. [18](#). (18) *Shmot* 14:21. [19](#). Cf. *Kuzari* III, 11. [20](#). The Heb. זֶה has been emended to זו, according to the Table of Corrections (*Luach HaTikkun*) compiled by the Rebbe. [21](#). Note of the Rebbe: “It seems that the above comment understands *eret*z to mean ‘earth’ [in the sense of soil or dust], (as in the verse, ‘Let the soil bring forth...’). To me, however, it appears that *eret*z here is intended as a contrast to ‘heavens’ in the above-quoted phrase, ‘[Your word, O G-d, stands firm in the] heavens,’ and likewise in contrast to ‘the upper and lower worlds’ [in the corresponding passage] (in ch. 1 of *Shaar HaYichud VehaEmunah*; see there). [The Alter Rebbe’s text should thus be translated, ‘And even as regards this physical world...’] The distinction drawn in the above comment between [those categories of created beings which have] the power of growth [and those which have not], etc., is thus not necessary. Moreover, [the Alter Rebbe] immediately goes on to speak explicitly of ‘inorganic matter such as stones and dust....’” [22](#). *Etz Chayim, Shaar* 39, ch. 3; see also *Shaar* 50. [23](#). The two Heb. words for “Hidden Wisdom” (נסתרה חכמה) are commonly abbreviated to their initials, and pronounced as *chen*. [24](#). *Kohelet* 8:4. [25](#). *Bereishit* 2:7. [26](#). Parentheses are in the original text. [27](#). *Bereishit Rabbah*, beginning of sec. 46; et al. [28](#). Cf. *Zohar* III, 234a; et al. [29](#). Cf. *Shmot* 20:4. [30](#). Parentheses are in the original text. [31](#). Following *Luach HaTikkun*, the standard (i.e., censored) printed text of *Tanya* has been emended in this edition from the phrase גילולים העובדי שבארצות (“in the lands of the heathens”) to the original phrase, לארץ שבחוץ (“outside the Land of Israel”). Likewise, in many places in the present letter, גילולים עובדי (“heathens”) has been corrected to אומות (“nations”). [32](#). See *Rambam, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah*, ch. 3. [33](#). Parentheses are in the original text. [34](#). Following *Luach HaTikkun*, the standard (i.e., censored) printed text of *Tanya* has been emended in this edition from the phrase שבארצות גילולים העובדי (“in the lands of the heathens”) to the original phrase, לארץ שבחוץ (“outside the Land of Israel”). Likewise, in many places in the present letter, גילולים עובדי (“heathens”) has been corrected to אומות (“nations”). [35](#). *Menachot* 110a, and see *Chiddushei Aggadot* of the *Maharsha* there. [36](#). *Zephaniah* 3:9. [37](#). Parentheses are in the original text. [38](#). *Megillah* 29b (in the version of *Ein Yaakov*); *Mechilta, Parshat Bo* 12:41, et al. [39](#). *Zechariah* 14:9. [40](#). See *Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun XXII* (66b). [41](#). In the original, the names of the Four Worlds (in descending order) are often telescoped into the acronym אבי”ע, pronounced *ABiYA*. [42](#). Parentheses are in the original text. [43](#). See *Etz Chayim, Shaar* 42, sec. 4; et al. [44](#). *Bereishit* 2:7. [45](#). See the Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch* 62:3 and 185:3; and his *Hilchot Talmud Torah* 2:12. [46](#). *Kohelet* 7:14. [47](#). *Zohar* III, 41b; et al. [48](#). Ch. 2. [49](#). *Kohelet* 8:9. [50](#). The text here (in Hebrew and English) reinstates the original version, which a czarist censor had tampered with so that it read, ישראל על שולטין היו ילוליסג העובדי — “the heathens used to dominate the Jewish people....” A few lines earlier, the word עתה (“in the present”) had likewise been deleted. [51](#). *Bamidbar* 6:25. [52](#). *Zohar* I, 27b; III, 179a; *Rambam, Hilchot De’ot* 2:3 in the name of the “earliest sages” (הראשונים מהכמי); et al. [53](#). *Berachot* 33b. [54](#). *Shabbat* 40b. [55](#). *Bamidbar* 31:14. [56](#). Cf. *Eichah* 1:9. [57](#). *Kohelet* 7:14. [58](#). *Kohelet* 8:9. [59](#). *Bereishit* 18:3. [60](#). *Ibid.* 16:13. [61](#). Cf. *Devarim* 29:28. [62](#). Cf. *Devarim* 29:28. [63](#). *Yirmeyahu* 23:24. [64](#).

Shabbat 63a. [65.](#) Yoel 3:5. [66.](#) Mishlei 28:5. [67.](#) Cf. Sifri, Parshas Eikev 11:19. [68.](#) Cf. Sanhedrin 13b. [69.](#) Tehillim 19:15.

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Epistle 26

The letters that comprise *Iggeret HaKodesh* were written over many years and assembled in their present order by the sons of the Alter Rebbe after his passing, as they explain in their introduction (“Approbation”) to *Tanya* (Vol. I, p. 19ff., in the present series). It is clear from internal evidence, as the Rebbe notes, that they were not arranged chronologically. Epistle XX, for example, was written just before the Alter Rebbe’s passing in the year 5573 (1812), while Epistle XXVII was written after the passing of R. Mendel of Horodok, about the year 5549 (1789).

Instead, the Rebbe suggests, one can sometimes seek thematic connections to explain the sequence of letters. The present letter, for example, manifests the following connection with Epistle XXV, the preceding one:

After the previous letter discussed how the *Shechinah* can sometimes be vested in *kelipot*, the present letter explains that this state of exile brings the Torah, too, to a state of concealment, as *kelipot* obscure its radiance. It is the task of the Jew to remove this concealment by toiling in the study of the Torah.

The above form of divine service in Torah study supplements another form — separating good from evil, the permitted from the prohibited, and the *kasher* from the *pasul*. For the Torah, too, is vested within good and evil, and it is the task of the Jew studying Torah to separate and purify the positive element from each of these dual compounds, and to elevate it to the holy “side” of the universe.

Accordingly, the Alter Rebbe begins the present letter by explaining a statement of *Ra’aya Mehemna* in the *Zohar*, which can give the mistaken impression that the revealed portion of Torah stems from the Tree of Good and Evil, while the esoteric portion of Torah, which in the main will be revealed in the Time to Come (with the arrival of *Mashiach*), derives from the Tree of Life.^{[1](#)}

The Alter Rebbe explains how this is truly not so, for the entire Torah is called the Tree of Life. The intent of *Ra’aya Mehemna* is that the revealed portion of Torah descended and was vested within good and evil, and hence speaks of *kasher* and *pasul*, permitted and prohibited, and the like. With the study of Torah, a Jew separates the good from the evil, and elevates it.

On the verse,² “And the wise shall shine like the radiance of the firmament,” *Ra’aya Mehemna* on *Parshat Nasso*³ comments:

בהאי חבורא דילך, דאיהו ספר הזהר

“With this work of yours, i.e., of R. Shimon bar Yochai, which is the Book of the *Zohar* (lit., ‘the Book of Radiance’)

מן זוהרא דאימא עילאה: תשובה

from the radiance of *Imma Ila’ah*, which is *teshuvah*, —

Imma Ila’ah (lit., “the Supernal Mother”) is another name for the *Sefirah* of *Binah* in the World of *Atzilut*. This *Sefirah* relates to *teshuvah ila’ah*, the higher level of repentance, as explained at the end of ch. 8 of *Iggeret HaTeshuvah*,⁴ quoting the *Zohar* and *Tikkunim*.

באילין לא צריך נסיון

with those [who study this work] no trial is needed.

The *Zohar* previously states that at the time of the final Redemption the Jewish people will be put to the test; those who belong to the “good side” of the universe will withstand it, while those who belong to the “side of evil” will not. As it is written,⁵ “Many will be refined and bleached and chastened, but the wicked will act wickedly; none of the wicked will understand, but the wise will understand.”

The *Zohar* then states (as above) that those who study the Tree of Life, the *Zohar*, which is “from the side of *Binah*” (lit., “understanding”, alluding to the perception of the mystical essence of the Torah), will not be put to the test.

ובגין דעתידין ישראל למטעם מאילנא דחיי, דאיהו האי ספר הזהר, יפקון ביה מן גלותא ברחמי

Because eventually the Jewish people will taste of the Tree of Life, which is this Book of the *Zohar*, they will go out of exile with it, in mercy.

ויתקיים בהון: ה' בדד ינחנו, ואין עמו אל נכר

For them shall be fulfilled the verse,⁶ ‘G-d alone will lead them, and there is no strange god with Him.’

In seeking their Redemption they will not have to resort to the favors of the gentile nations, whose patron angels are known as “strange gods.” Rather, G-d Himself will lead them out of exile and redeem them.

ואילנא דטוב ורע, דאיהו איסור והיתר, טומאה וטהרה, לא שלטא על ישראל יתיר

And the Tree of [Knowledge of] Good and Evil, i.e., prohibition and permission, impurity and purity, will no longer dominate Israel.

דהא פרנסה דלהון לא להוי אלא מסטרא דאילנא דחיי, דלית תמן לא קשיא מסטרא דרע, ולא מחלוקת מרוח הטומאה

For their sustenance will derive only from the side of the Tree of Life, where there is no problematic query, which emanates from the side of evil, and no controversy, which emanates from the spirit of impurity;

דכתיב: ואת רוח הטומאה אעביר מן הארץ

as it is written,⁷ ‘And the spirit of impurity I shall remove from the earth.’

דלא יתפרנסון תלמידי חכמים מעמי הארץ, אלא מסטרא דטוב, דאכלין טהרה, כשר, היתר

Thus, the Torah scholars will not be sustained by illiterate people, but from the side of the good, who eat that which is pure, kosher and permitted;

ולא מערב רב, דאכלין טומאה, פסול, איסור

nor [will they be sustained] by the mixed multitude, who eat that which is impure, ritually unfit, and prohibited.”

ובזמנא דאילנא דטוב ורע שלטא כו'

The *Zohar* continues: “While the Tree of Good and Evil dominates [the world],...

אינון חכמים, דדמיין לשבתות וימים טובים

these Sages, who are likened to the Sabbaths and festivals,⁸

לית לון אלא מה דיהבין לון אינון חולין

have nothing except what is given to them by those who are called ‘unsanctified ones,’

כגוונא דיום השבת, דלית ליה אלא מה דמתקנין ליה ביומא דחול

just like the Sabbath day, which only has what has been prepared for it on a weekday.

ובזמנא דשלטא אילנא דחיי, אתכפייא אילנא דטוב ורע, ולא יהא לעמי הארץ אלא מה דיהבין להון תלמידי חכמים

However, when the Tree of Life will dominate, the Tree of Good and Evil will be suppressed, and the illiterate people will only have what the Torah scholars give them.

ואתכפיין תחותייהו וכאלו לא הוו בעלמא

They will be subjugated to them, as if they did not exist in the world.

והכי איסור והיתר, טומאה וטהרה, לא אתעבר מעמי הארץ

Accordingly, the prohibited and the permitted, the impure and the pure, will not be removed from the illiterate people.

דמסטרייהו, לית בין גלותא לימות המשיח, אלא שעבוד מלכיות בלבד

As regards them, there will be no difference between the era of exile and the days of *Mashiach*, except for [the Jewish people's release from] servitude to the nations.⁹

דאינון לא טעמין מאילנא דחיי, וצריך לון מתניתין באיסור והיתר, טומאה וטהרה

For they will not have tasted of the Tree of Life, and will require the *Mishnayot* [which set out the laws] of prohibition and permission, impurity and purity.”

עד כאן ברעיא מהימנא

Here ends the quotation from *Ra'aya Mehemna*.

* * *

והנה המובן מהשקפה ראשונה לכאורה מלשון זה המאמר לחסירי מדע

Now, at first glance, what the words of this passage imply to those who lack understanding¹⁰

שלימוד איסור והיתר וסדר טהרות, הוא מאילנא דטוב ורע

is that the study of [the laws of] ritual prohibition and permission, and the Order of *Taharot*, where the laws of purity and impurity are found, relates [only] to the Tree of [Knowledge of] Good and Evil.

מלבד שהוא פלא גדול מחמת עצמו

Now this is most surprising in itself, that a particular area within the Torah should be designated as the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, thus relating it to *kelipat nogah*, which is an admixture of good and evil;

וסותר פשטי הכתובים ומדרשי רבותינו ז"ל, שכל התורה הנגלית לנו ולבנינו נקראת: עץ חיים למחזיקים בה, ולא ספר הזהר לבד

moreover, this contradicts the plain meaning of Scripture and the teachings of our Sages, of blessed memory, that the entire Torah that has been revealed to us and to our children, i.e., the dimension of *nigleh*, is called [11](#) “A tree of life to those who hold fast to it,” and not only the Book of the *Zohar*.

ובפרט שהיה גנוז בימיהם

This is especially so, since [the *Zohar*] was [still] concealed in their days;

וגם כל חכמת הקבלה היתה נסתרה בימיהם, ונעלמה מכל תלמידי חכמים, כי אם ליחידי סגולה

indeed, the whole wisdom of the Kabbalah was hidden in their days and concealed from all the Torah scholars, except for a select few,

ואף גם זאת, בהצנע לכת ולא ברבים, כדאיתא בגמרא

and even then, [it was studied] in a concealed manner and not publicly, as stated in the *Gemara*. [12](#)

וכמו שכתב האריז"ל, דדוקא בדורות אלו האחרונים, מותר ומצוה לגלות זאת החכמה, ולא בדורות הראשונים

Thus R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, wrote [13](#) that it is only in these latter generations that “it is permitted and obligatory to reveal this wisdom” — i.e., the Kabbalah, which illuminates the esoteric dimension of the Torah — but not in the earlier generations.

On this entire subject, see the introduction of R. Chayim Vital to *Shaar HaHakdamot*, which also appears as the first addendum to *Kuntres Etz Chayim* by the Rebbe Rashab (in the Kehot edition entitled *Otzar HaChassidim*), as well as the introduction of the Rebbe Rayatz to this *Kuntres*.

וגם רבי שמעון בר יוחאי אמר בזהר הקדוש, שלא ניתן רשות לגלות רק לו ולחביריו לבדם

R. Shimon bar Yochai, too, stated in the sacred *Zohar* [14](#) that permission to reveal [the secrets of the Kabbalah] was only granted to himself and his associates.

ואך גם זאת פליאה נשגבה

Now this, too, is a remarkable wonder.

דלפי זה

For if so, i.e., according to a superficial reading of the above quotation from *Ra'aya Mehemna*, from which it would appear that only the *Zohar* is called the Tree of Life, while the revealed plane of the Torah is considered the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil,

לא היה לימוד איסור והיתר, וכל שכן דיני ממונות, דוחין מצות תפלה

then the study of [the laws of] ritual prohibition and permission, and surely [the study of] civil laws, such as litigation on monetary matters,¹⁵ should not override the obligation of prayer,

שנתקנה על פי סודות הזהר ויחודים עליונים, ליודעים

which is set out according to the secrets of the *Zohar* and on the Supernal Unions (of the various Divine Names and Supernal *Sefirot*), for those who are familiar with them,

כרבי שמעון בר יוחאי וחביריו

such as R. Shimon bar Yochai and his associates.

וזה אינו

But this is not the case. In fact, the study of the laws of what is ritually prohibited or permitted, and even the study of civil law, does override the obligation to pray at fixed times.

כדאיתא בגמרא, דרבי שמעון בן יוחאי וחביריו, וכל מי שתורתו אומנותו, אין מפסיקין לתפלה

As stated in the *Gemara*,¹⁶ R. Shimon bar Yochai and his associates, and likewise any others whose Torah study is their sole occupation, do not interrupt [their Torah study] for prayer.¹⁷

ואפילו כשעוסק בדיני ממונות, כרב יהודה, דכולהו תנויי בנזיקין הוי

[This applies] even when one is occupied with the study of civil law, like Rav Yehudah, all of whose studies were in the Order of *Nezikin*¹⁸ (lit., “damages”);

ואפילו הכי, לא הוי מצלי אלא מתלתין יומין לתלתין יומין, כד מהדר תלמודא, כדאיתא בגמרא

nevertheless, in order not to interrupt his studies, he prayed only every thirty days¹⁹ when reviewing his studies, as stated in the *Gemara*.²⁰

ובירושלמי, פרק קמא דברכות, סבירא ליה לרבי שמעון בר יוחאי דאפילו לקריאת שמע אין מפסיקין, כי אם ממקרא ולא ממשנה, דעדיפי ממקרא, לרבי שמעון בר יוחאי

Also, in the *Talmud Yerushalmi*, in the first chapter of *Berachot*,²¹ R. Shimon bar Yochai is of the opinion that even for the Reading of Shema one interrupts only the study of Scripture, but not of *Mishnah*, the Oral Torah, the study of which is superior to the study of Scripture,²² according to R. Shimon bar Yochai.

ולא חילק בין סדר זרעים ומועד וקדשים, לטהרות ונזיקין

He did not differentiate between [studying] the Orders of *Zera'im*, *Moed* and *Kodashim*, and [studying] the Orders of *Taharot* and *Nezikin*.²³

He thus holds that even when studying the monetary laws in the Order of *Nezikin* one should not interrupt one's studies for the Reading of *Shema*.

(וסותר דעת עצמו ברעיא מהימנא בכמה מקומות, דמשנה אידי שפחה כו')

(²⁴Actually, he [here] contradicts his own opinion, given in a number of instances in *Ra'aya Mehemna*,²⁵ that *Mishnah* (relative to Scripture) is termed a “handmaiden” (Heb.: *shifchah*), and so on;

והמקרא, שהוא תורת משה, ודאי עדיפא מקבלה, דאידי מטרוניתא ברעיא מהימנא שם

and Scripture, the Torah of Moses, is surely superior to the Kabbalah, which is termed a “queen” (Aram.: *matrunita*) in the above-quoted passage in *Ra'aya Mehemna*,

ותורה שבכתב הוא מלכא

while the Written Torah is termed a “king” (Aram.: *malka*).

Thus, according to the last-quoted set of terms from R. Shimon bar Yochai, Scripture is superior even to Kabbalah and surely to *Mishnah*. From the previous passage, however, as cited in the *Talmud Yerushalmi*, it would seem that he maintains that *Mishnah* is superior to Scripture, for one does not interrupt one's study of *Mishnah* in order to read *Shema* at its prescribed time, though one does interrupt one's study of Scripture.

Here the Alter Rebbe interpolates a Kabbalistic definition of the term *malka* (“king”):

((דהיינו יסוד אבא, המלובש בזעיר אנפין, כמו שכתב האריז"ל))

(²⁶This is the *Yesod* of *Abba* vested in *Z'eir Anpin*, as stated by R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory.²⁷))

To resume the discussion of R. Shimon bar Yochai:

וגם פלפול הקושיות ותירוצים, דמסטרא דרע ורוח הטומאה, אשכחן ברבי שמעון בר יוחאי, דעסק ביה טובא

Moreover, we find that R. Shimon bar Yochai dealt considerably (not only with the mere statements of law in the *Mishnayot*, but) also with the argumentation of problems and solutions, which (according to the original quotation from *Ra'aya Mehemna*) derive from the side of evil and from the spirit of impurity.

גם בהיותו במערה

[This he did] even when he was in the cave, where legal adjudication, especially in civil suits, was obviously uncalled for.

ואדרבה, בזכות צער המערה זכה לזה

Indeed, the very fact that he underwent anguish [when forced to hide] in the cave made him worthy of these attainments.

כדאיתא בגמרא, דאמר לרבי פנחס בן יאיר אכל קושיא, כ"ד פירוקי

For, as stated in the *Gemara*,²⁸ he countered every problematic query posed by R. Pinchas ben Yair with twenty-four solutions,

ואמר ליה: אלמלא לא ראיתני בכך כו'

and [R. Shimon] said to him: "If you had not seen me like this," in this sorry state in the cave, ["you would not have found me like this"].

(וגם באמת, על כרחך עיקר עסקיהם במערה היה תורת המשניות, ת"ר סדרי שהיה בימיהם עד רבינו הקדוש

(²⁹In fact, their principal occupation in the cave — the principal occupation of *Rashbi* and his son, R. Eliezer — must have been with the teachings of the *Mishnayot*, i.e., the six hundred Orders extant in those days³⁰ until the time of our holy Master, R. Yehudah HaNasi, who compiled the *Mishnayot* in six Orders.

דאילו ספר הזהר והתיקונים היה יכול לגמור בב' וג' חדשים, כי בודאי לא אמר דבר אחד ב' פעמים)

For he could have completed the *Zohar* and the *Tikkunim*, the *Tikkunei Zohar*, in two or three months; for surely he did not repeat the same subject twice.³¹)

Surely, then, he was occupied almost the entire time with the study of the six hundred Orders of the *Mishnah*.

גם אמרו רבותינו ז"ל: מיום שחרב בית המקדש אין לו להקדוש ברוך הוא אלא ד' אמות של הלכה בלבד

Moreover, our Sages, of blessed memory, have taught³² that "Since the day the Temple was destroyed, the Holy One, blessed be He, has only the four cubits of *Halachah*." The study of Torah law thus takes the place of the Holy Temple.

How, then, can we possibly say, as the above passage from *Ra'aya Mehemna* might superficially indicate, that the study of the laws of ritual permissibility, and the like, is designated as the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and thus related to *kelipat nogah*, which is an admixture of good and evil?

ועוד יש להפליא, הפלא ופלא

There is yet further cause to be exceedingly amazed — at how “those who lack understanding” comprehend this quotation from *Ra'aya Mehemna*.

This statement comes in addition to the two preceding causes for surprise at their misunderstanding of this quotation: (a) that a portion of the Torah could be termed the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil; (b) according to their understanding of the *Ra'aya Mehemna* the study of *issur* and *hetter* does not supersede the obligation to pray at fixed times, even though the prayers were arranged according to the secrets of the *Zohar* and the Supernal Unions; whereas the fact is that for those individuals whose only occupation is the study of Torah, the study of *issur* and *hetter* does indeed take precedence over the *mitzvah* of prayer.

In addition to these two problematic queries, there is now a third:

איך אפשר שלימות המשיח, לא יצטרכו לידע הלכות איסור והיתר, וטומאה וטהרה

How is it possible that in the days of *Mashiach* people will not need to know the laws of ritual prohibition and permission, and of impurity and purity?

כי איך ישחטו הקרבנות, וגם חולין, אם לא ידעו הלכות דרסה וחלדה ושהיה, הפוסלים השחיטה, ופגימת הסכין

For how will they slaughter the sacrifices, and likewise animals for common use, if they will not know the laws of *drassah*,³³ *chaladah*,³⁴ and *shehiyah*,³⁵ any of which disqualifies the slaughtering,³⁶ and [likewise, the laws regarding] a defective knife?

וכי יולד איש בטבעו שיהא שוחט בלי שהיה ודרסה, וגם הסכין תהיה בריאה ועומדת בלי פגימה לעולם

Will there ever be born a man who by his very nature will [invariably] slaughter without *shehiyah* or *drassah*? Will the knife also remain perfect and unblemished forever?

Since these are physical impossibilities, people will obviously have to know the practical laws governing ritual slaughter.

ועוד הרבה הלכות: חלב ודם, ושאר איסורין

There are also many more laws relating to sacrificial offerings and so on, [such as those regarding] fat, blood, and other prohibitions.

וגם טומאת המת יהיו צריכין לידע, כדכתיב: הנער בן מאה שנה ימות

People then will also need to know [the laws regarding] the impurity imparted by a corpse; as it is written,³⁷ “A young man will die at the age of a hundred.”³⁸

And if there will be death in the world, these laws will of course be needed.

וגם טומאת יולדת צריך לידע, דכתיב: הרה ויולדת יחדיו

It will be further necessary to know the laws governing the impurity of a woman who has given birth; as it is written,³⁹ “A pregnant woman, and one who gives birth⁴⁰ together” [will be among those restored to the Holy Land at the time of the Redemption through *Mashiach*].

אם תלד אשה בכל יום מביאה אחת

If a woman will give birth every day, [these successive births] resulting from one marital union,

In Time to Come pregnancy will not last nine months; on the same day that a woman conceives she will give birth. Moreover, additional children will be born on successive days from that same conception.

אף על פי כן, דין איסור טומאתה לא ישתנה

nevertheless, the law with respect to the restrictions resulting from her impurity will not change.

It will thus still be necessary to know the laws regarding the ritual impurity of a woman who has given birth.

The Rebbe writes that the above elucidation — that a woman will give birth on the very day that she conceives — “accords with the explanation by the *AriZal* [of the teaching of the Sages in Tractate *Shabbat* 30b, that ‘In future time a woman will give birth every day’], in *Likkutei HaShas* (cited in the *Miluim* to *Tehillim* by the *Tzemach Tzedek*, ch. 20; also [in *Biurei HaZohar* of the *Tzemach Tzedek*, Vol. II, p. 827 ff.] at the end of s.v. *Ginta*). It differs from the commentary of *Rashi* [on the above teaching] in Tractate *Shabbat* 30b. See also *Chiddushei Aggadot* [of *Maharsha*] there.”

Commenting on the above-quoted phrase (“A pregnant woman, and one who gives birth together”), from which the *Gemara* derives its teaching that “In future time a woman will give birth every day,” *Rashi* explains that on the day a woman conceives a new child she will bear a previously-conceived child. For, as the *Maharsha* explains: It cannot mean that the conception and birth of the same child will take place on the very same day, for then the proof offered there in the *Gemara* regarding a chicken that laid eggs daily would not apply. For even a chicken does not lay the egg on the same day that it was fertilized; as the *Gemara* states in Tractate *Bechorot*, it takes twenty-one days. This means, as *Rashi* explains, that twenty-one days must elapse from the time of fertilization to the time the egg is laid. The *AriZal*, however, understands the *Gemara* in Tractate *Shabbat* to mean that a child will be conceived and born on the same day.

Parenthetically, the *Tzemach Tzedek* in the source quoted above quotes the *Midrash Rabbah* on *Parshat Noach* (beginning of sec. 36), to the effect that before the Flood as well, a woman would conceive and give birth on the very same day.

A further point: The Alter Rebbe added that the above-mentioned successive daily births would result “from one marital union.” This translation assumes that the unvocalized Hebrew text (אחת מביאה) is to be pronounced *mibiah achat*. Others, however, have assumed that it is to be pronounced *meiviah achat*; hence, “if a woman will give birth every day, she brings one [offering].” On this interpretation the Rebbe comments: “What connection does this have to our subject? (Especially, since this law [of impurity] also applies nowadays [i.e., prior to the arrival of *Mashiach*]. My opinion is that the phrase means ‘from one marital union.’ [I.e., further children will be born on subsequent days from that one marital union.]”

The Rebbe concludes: “This also solves the problem raised by the *Maharsha*.” In his *Chiddushei Aggadot*, the *Maharsha* asks: How can there possibly be additional births on subsequent days, when marital relations are forbidden for seven or fourteen days after birth? This question is answered by the above statement, that successive births will result from a single conception. This statement also accords with the reference made in the *Gemara* to a chicken, which lays eggs on different days from the same fertilization.

The Rebbe also refers to the *Gemara* (*Niddah* 27a) which relates that a certain woman’s conception resulted in the birth of two children, three months apart.

ואין להאריך בדבר הפשוט

There is no need to dwell on something so obvious — as the fact that these laws will still apply in the time of *Mashiach*, so that then, too, it will be necessary to know the laws of *issur* and *hetter*, and purity and impurity,

ומפורסם הפכו בכל הש"ס ומדרשים

when the entire *Talmud* and the *Midrashim* make known the reverse [of the misleading impression formed by a superficial reading of our opening quotation from *Ra'aya Mehemna*].

דפריך: הלכתא למשיחא

[For example:] The question is asked,⁴¹ “A law for the time of the Messiah?!”

I.e., why state now a law that will only apply to Messianic times? At that time, however, it will obviously be necessary to know it.

ואליהו בא לפשוט כל הספיקות, ופרשה זו עתיד אליהו לדורשה כו'

Likewise we find that Elijah will come to clarify all doubts;[42](#) and “This passage Elijah will expound in the future”;[43](#) and so on.

ועוד אינו מובן מה שכתוב, דלא יתפרנסון תלמידי חכמים מעמי הארץ כו'

Also not understandable is the statement (in *Ra'aya Mehemna*) that “the Torah scholars will not be sustained by illiterate people, and so on,”

As stated above, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which is the root of *issur* and *hetter*, will not dominate the Jewish people, because “the Torah scholars will not be sustained by illiterate people,” —

ולא מערב רב, דאכלין פסול טמא ואסור, חס ושלום

nor by the mixed multitude, who eat that which is ritually unfit, impure, and prohibited, heaven forbid.

דהא גם בזמן בית שני, לא היו מתפרנסין מעמי הארץ דאכלין פסול ואסור, חס ושלום

Even[44](#) during the time of the Second Temple they were not supported by the illiterate people who ate that which is ritually unfit and prohibited, heaven forbid,

שהרי תלמידי חכמים היו להם שדות וכרמים, כעמי הארץ

for the Torah scholars had fields and vineyards of their own, just like the illiterate people.

ואפילו הכי היו עוסקים בלימוד איסור והיתר, וטומאה וטהרה

Nevertheless, they engaged in the study of [the laws of] *issur* and *hetter*, and of impurity and purity —

כל הזוגות שהיו בימי בית שני

[for example,] all the pairs [of leading Sages] who lived at the time of the Second Temple[45](#) —

והעמידו תלמידים לאלפים ורבבות

and they raised disciples in the legal of the Torah in the thousands and tens of thousands,[46](#)

ולימוד הנסתר בהסתר כו'

while the study of the esoteric [of the Torah] took place in secret, and so on.

We thus see that the fact that Torah scholars need not be sustained by the illiterate is in no way a cause for their not studying (G-d forbid) the laws of *issur* and *heter* and purity and impurity.

* * *

The Alter Rebbe will now point out that a careful reading of the passage from *Ra'aya Mehemna* reveals that it is not the laws themselves nor the study of them that are termed the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Rather, this term is applied to the actual food or other things which are prohibited or permitted, and which derive their life-force from *kelipat nogah* — for this is the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, as will soon be explained.

אך באמת, כשתדקדק בלשון רעיא מהימנא דלעיל

But in truth, if you examine closely the above-quoted text of *Ra'aya Mehemna* —

ואילנא דטוב ורע, דאיהו איסור והיתר כו'

“And the Tree of [Knowledge of] Good and Evil, i.e., prohibition and permission...” —

ולא אמר תורת איסור והיתר, או הלכות איסור והיתר

[you will note that] it does not say “the teachings (i.e., studying the subjects) of prohibition and permission,” nor “the laws of prohibition and permission,” which would suggest that they are (G-d forbid) the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

אלא רצה לומר, דגוף דבר האסור והדבר המותר, הוא מאילנא דטוב ורע

Rather, it means to say that the actual thing which is prohibited, or the thing which is permitted, is of the Tree of Good and Evil,

שהוא קליפת נוגה, כמו שכתוב בעץ חיים

i.e., of *kelipat nogah*, as stated in *Etz Chayim*.[47](#)

וזהו לשון אסור, שהקליפה שורה עליו, ואינו יכול לעלות למעלה, כדבר המותר

This, in fact, is the root of “*assur*” (meaning “forbidden”; lit., “bound”): the *kelipah* hovers over [the forbidden thing] so that it cannot rise aloft to holiness like that which is “*muttar*” (meaning “permitted”; lit., “unbound”);

דהיינו, שאינו קשור ואסור בקליפה

[while “*muttar*”] means that [a permitted object] is not tied and bound (“*assur*”) to the *kelipah* that would anchor it,

ויוכל לעלות על ידי האדם האוכלו, בכוונה לה'

and is [therefore] able to ascend by means of the person eating it with his mind on G-d, e.g., in order to have the strength to serve Him.

וגם בסתם

The same applies when there is no specific intent,

כל אדם העובד ה', שבכח האכילה ההיא לומד ומתפלל לה'

with any person who serves G-d, who studies [Torah] and prays to G-d with the energy derived from this eating,

ונמצא שנעשו אותיות התורה והתפלה העולה לה', מכח הנברר מהמאכל ההוא

so that the letters of Torah and of prayer which ascend to G-d are formed out of the energy distilled from that food.

In other words, the life-force that derives from *kelipat nogah* is thereby elevated to G-d.

וזהו בחול

This is so during the week: In order for the food eaten on weekdays to be elevated, it must be utilized for Torah or prayer.

אבל בשבת, שיש עליה לקליפת נוגה בעצמה, עם החיצוניות שבכל העולמות

But on the Sabbath, the *kelipat nogah* itself is elevated, together with the external aspect of all the worlds, for the Sabbath is characterized by the “elevation of the worlds” (*aliyat haolamot*).[48](#)

לכן מצוה לאכול כל תענוגים בשבת

It is therefore a *mitzvah* to eat all kinds of pleasurable things on the Sabbath, for the sake of *oneg Shabbat* (“enjoying the Sabbath”), irrespective of the fact that it gives one the strength to serve G-d,

ולהרבות בבשר ויין

and to partake of more meat and wine than usual,

אף שבחול נקרא זולל וסובא

even though on a weekday one would be called a glutton and a drunkard.

מה שאין כן בדבר איסור

It is otherwise with a forbidden thing.

שאינו יכול לעלות, לא בשבת ולא בחול, גם כשמתפלל ולומד בכח ההוא

It cannot ascend [to holiness,] neither on the Sabbath nor on a weekday, even if one were to pray and study with that energy, i.e., with the energy derived from eating it⁴⁹—

אם לא שאכל לפיקוח נפש, שהתירו רז"ל, ונעשה היתר גמור

unless one ate in order to save an endangered life, which is permitted by our Sages, of blessed memory, so that [the food] becomes [entirely]⁵⁰ permissible.

אבל הלימוד בתורה, אף הלכות איסור והיתר, טומאה וטהרה

But the study of Torah, even the laws of *issur* and *hetter*, impurity and purity, i.e., not the objects but the laws concerning them,

שהם המשניות וברייתות שבגמרא

those being the *Mishnayot* and the *Beraitot* in the *Gemara* that address these issues,

ופוסקים, המבארים ומבררים דבריהם להלכה למעשה

and the codifiers who explain and clarify their words for practical application,

הן הן גופי תורה שבעל פה

these constitute the body of the *Oral Torah*,

שהיא ספירת מלכות דאצילות, כדאיתא בזהר הקדוש, במקומות אין מספר

which is the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* in [the World of] *Atzilut*, as stated in innumerable places in the sacred *Zohar*.

ובריש תיקונים: מלכות: פה, ותורה שבעל פה קרינן לה

It is likewise written at the beginning of the *Tikkunim*,⁵¹ “*Malchut* (lit., ‘sovereignty’) — that is the Mouth, which we call the Oral Torah.”

ובאצילות, איהו וגרמוהי חד בהון

And in *Atzilut*, “He and His causations (*garmohi*; lit., ‘organs’) are one in them.” I.e., the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light, and the vessels (*kelim*) which emanate from Him, and so too His attributes, are all one with Him — in the *Sefirot*.⁵²

דהיינו, שאור אין סוף ברוך הוא מתייחד באצילות בתכלית היחוד, שהוא ורצונו וחכמתו המלוכשים בדבורו, שנקרא מלכות, הכל אחד

That is, the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light unites itself in *Atzilut* in an absolute unity, so that He, and His will and wisdom — vested in His speech, which is called *Malchut* — are entirely one.

This indivisible level of Divinity can thus not be described in compound terms, as the Tree of Knowledge of [both] Good and Evil. And the laws of the Oral Torah — in the *Mishnayot*, the *Beraitot* and the legal codes — which relate to the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* in the World of *Atzilut*, partake of the same indivisible unity. These laws can thus not be described in terms of the Tree of Knowledge of [both] Good and Evil.

* * *

The above refers to the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* of *Atzilut* only so long as it remains on its home ground, so to speak, i.e., in the World of *Atzilut*. Likewise, the above refers to the Torah laws only so long as they are in their pristine state, i.e., at the sublime level of *Malchut* of *Atzilut*.

However, as the laws become vested within lower realms, they can become subject to a measure of concealment. Likewise, as the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* of *Atzilut* becomes vested in lower Worlds, it too is subject to this state of concealment. It is then called the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, because it is vested within *kelipat nogah*. This vestiture takes place for the sake of one of the ultimate spiritual tasks of man — *beirurim*, i.e., sifting and refining the physicality of this world, in order to elevate the divine sparks from the evil which encumbers them.

This is what the Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain.

ומה שאמר האריז"ל שהמשניות הן במלכות דיצירה

As to the statement of R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, that the *Mishnayot* relate to [the *Sefirah* of] *Malchut* in [the World of] *Yetzirah*, whereas we have just quoted the *Zohar* to the effect that the *Mishnayot* relate to the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* in the World of *Atzilut*,

רצונו לומר: לבוש מלכות דיצירה שנתלבשה בה מלכות דאצילות

he referred to the garment of *Malchut* of *Yetzirah* in which *Malchut* of *Atzilut* is vested; only after *Malchut* of *Atzilut* descends to the World of *Yetzirah* and is vested there, can it be said that *Mishnayot* relate to *Yetzirah*.

ומלכות דיצירה נקרא שפחה לגבי מלכות דאצילות

And *Malchut* of *Yetzirah* is referred to as a handmaiden (*shifchah*), relative to *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, which is vested in it.

This answers an earlier question. The Alter Rebbe had quoted the *Talmud Yerushalmi* (ch. 1 of *Berachot*) to the effect that R. Shimon bar Yochai maintains that for the Reading of *Shema* one interrupts the study of Scripture, though not of *Mishnah*, which is loftier than Scripture. This was contradicted by statements of R. Shimon bar Yochai himself in *Ra'aya Mehemna*, to the effect that *Mishnah* is referred to as the handmaiden while Scripture is referred to as the king.

According to the above, however, there is no contradiction. So long as *Mishnah* is in its primary and fundamental state, it belongs to the level of *Malchut* of *Atzilut*; it is referred to as a handmaiden only after it is vested within *Malchut* of *Yetzirah*. This difference between the way something exists in its essential state and the way it exists as it is vested in a lower state of being, applies to Scripture as well, as will soon be explained.

ומלכות דבריא נקרא אמה

By contrast, *Malchut* of *Beriah* (which is a lower World) is referred to as a maid (*amah*), denoting a level superior to the level of *shifchah*.

ותדע ממה שאמר האריז"ל, דמקרא, דהיינו תורה שבכתב, הוא בעשיה

Proof of this — that there is a significant difference between the way something exists in its essential state (*be'etzem*) and the way it exists as it is vested (*behitlabshut*) in a lower level — may be gained from the statement of R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, that Scripture, i.e., the Written Torah, is in *Asiyah*,

והרי מפורש בזהר ובכתבי האריז"ל, מקומות אין מספר, שהיא תפארת, שהוא זעיר אנפין דאצילות

even though it is explicit in innumerable places in the *Zohar* and the writings of R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, that it is [the *Sefirah* of] *Tiferet*, which is the *Z'eir Anpin* of *Atzilut*.

As such it is even higher than *Malchut* of *Atzilut*; how, then, can it be said that Scripture is in *Asiyah*?

אלא, שמתלבשת בעשיה

Rather, this means that it vests itself in *Asiyah*.

וכן הוא בהדיא בספר הכוונות, שמקרא ומשנה ותלמוד וקבלה, כולם באצילות

Thus it is taught explicitly in *Sefer HaKavanot* — that Scripture, *Mishnah*, *Talmud* and *Kabbalah* are all in *Atzilut*,

אלא שמקרא מתלבש עד עשיה

except that Scripture vests itself as far [“down”] as *Asiyah*,

The Written Torah hinges on its letters, which are inscribed with tangible ink on tangible parchment, and hence related to *Asiyah*, the “World of Action.”

ומשנה עד היצירה

and *Mishnah* [vests itself only] as far [“down”] as *Yetzirah*,

The *Mishnah* consists mainly of laws, such as those determining ritual validity or invalidity. These two states ultimately derive from the corresponding *middot* of *Chesed* and *Gevurah*, the Divine “emotive attributes” of benevolence and severity. Hence these laws are vested in the World of *Yetzirah*, for [53](#) “the six [emotive] *Sefirot* ‘nest’ in *Yetzirah*.”

ותלמוד בבריאה

and *Talmud* is vested as far [“down”] as *Beriah*.

The *Talmud* elucidates the laws. It thus relates to *Beriah*, the “World of Comprehension,” which is illumined by *Binah* (“understanding”), for [54](#) “the Supernal Mother (i.e., *Binah*) ‘nests’ in the [World of the] Throne,” i.e., in *Beriah*. [55](#)

* * *

והנה, כשהמלכות דאצילות מתלבשת בקליפת נוגה, כדי לברר הניצוצות שנפלו בחטא אדם הראשון

Now, when *Malchut* of *Atzilut* is vested in *kelipat nogah* in order to extract and refine the sparks that fell with the sin of Adam,

וגם הרפ"ח ניצוצין שנפלו בשבירת הכלים

as well as the 288 sparks that fell with the “breaking of the vessels,”

The concept of *shevirat hakelim* (the primordial “breaking of the vessels”) and the elevation of the 288 sparks of holiness hidden in the material world is explained at length elsewhere in the literature of *Chassidut*.

אזי גם המלכות דאצילות נקראת בשם עץ הדעת טוב ורע, לגבי זעיר אנפין דאצילות

Malchut of *Atzilut*, too, is then referred to as the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, relative to *Z'eir Anpin* of *Atzilut*

שאינו יורד שם, ונקרא עץ חיים

which does not descend there and which is referred to as the Tree of Life.

והנה התלבשות המלכות בקליפת נוגה, הוא סוד גלות השכינה

And the investiture of [the *Sefirah* of] *Malchut* in *kelipat nogah* is the Kabbalistic principle of the exile of the *Shechinah*,

אשר שלט האדם באדם כו'

whereby⁵⁶ “man rules over man, to his detriment.”

In Epistle 25 (above), the Alter Rebbe quotes the exposition of this verse in *Sefer HaGilgulim*. During the time of exile, the “evil man” (of *kelipah*) rules over the “sacred man” (i.e., the holy “side” of the universe). At this time, the Divine Presence is in a state of exile within the universe. However, this temporary dominion of evil is “to his [ultimate] detriment,” for its underlying intent is that the sparks of holiness that are embedded within evil, be extracted and elevated.

* * *

The Alter Rebbe will now answer another question which he himself had posed earlier.

The *Ra'aya Mehemna* had stated that so long as the bipolar influence of the Tree of Knowledge of [both] Good and Evil is dominant in the world, Torah scholars (who are likened to the *Shabbat* and festivals) are supported only by their unlettered (“weekday”) brethren, whose food is sometimes pure but sometimes not. This is why the scholars engage in the study of the correspondingly bipolar laws of *issur* vs. *hetter* (ritual prohibition vs. permission), and the like.

Concerning this statement the Alter Rebbe asked above: Even though the Sages in Second Temple times tilled their own fields and vineyards, did they not mainly study the very same laws of *issur* and *hetter*, and the like?

In reply, the Alter Rebbe now explains the meaning of this passage from *Ra'aya Mehemna*.

During the present era of exile, when the world is dominated by the influence of the Tree of Knowledge of [both] Good and Evil, the Divine Presence grants life-force to the *chitzonim*. These negative forces belong to the ambivalent realm of *kelipat nogah*, which veils the holy potential embedded in the material things of this world. (Torah scholars are nourished only by the distilled essence of the Divinely-endowed life-force.)

In order to extract and refine the sparks of holiness hidden in this material world during this era of exile, scholars study the laws of prohibition and permission, and the like. Through painstaking debate and deliberation, they isolate and salvage that which is permitted from that which is prohibited, and that which is pure from that which is impure.

Ultimately, their Torah study removes the Divinely-imposed veil, so that a clear adjudication of the law results.

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

וזהו שכתוב ברעיא מהימנא: ובזמנא דאילנא דטוב ורע שלטא כו', אינון כו'

And this is the meaning of the statement in *Ra'aya Mehemna*: “While the Tree of Good and Evil dominates [the world],... these [Sages, who are likened to the Sabbaths and festivals, have nothing except what is given to them by those who are called ‘unsanctified ones,’ ...].”

דהיינו: בזמן גלות השכינה, שמשפעת לחיצונים שהם בקליפת נוגה, שהערב רב יונקים משם

This means that at the time of the exile of the *Shechinah* — which grants life-force to the *chitzonim* that belong in the realm of *kelipat nogah*, from which the “mixed multitude” derive their life-force,^{[57](#)}

ומתמצייתו ניזונין תלמידי חכמים בגלות

and from whose distilled essence the Torah scholars are nourished during the exile, —

ואז, עיקר עבודת האדם, ועיקר עסק התורה והמצות, הוא לברר הניצוצות, כנודע מהאריז"ל

at this time the main spiritual task of man, and the main purpose of being engaged in Torah and the commandments, is to disencumber and elevate the sparks, as is known from the teachings of R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory.

לכן, עיקר ענין הלימוד הוא בעיון ופלפול הלכה, באיסור והיתר, טומאה וטהרה

For this reason, study chiefly involves deliberation and argumentation on the laws of issur and hetter, impurity and purity,

לברר המותר והטהור מהאסור והטמא, על ידי עיון ופלפול הלכה, בחכמה בינה ודעת

in order to disencumber the permitted and the pure from the forbidden and the impure by means of deliberation and argumentation on the law — with wisdom, understanding and knowledge, with all the three intellectual faculties of the soul that clarify the law.

כנודע, דאורייתא מחכמה נפקת, ובחכמה דייקא אתברירו

For as is known,^{[58](#)} the Torah derives from *Chochmah*. Hence, [the sparks of holiness hidden in a legal question] can be extracted and elevated only through *Chochmah*.^{[59](#)}

דהיינו חכמה עילאה דאצילות, המלובשת במלכות דאצילות

Specifically: the Supernal *Chochmah* of *Atzilut* which is vested in *Malchut* of *Atzilut* —

סוד תורה שבעל פה

this being the Kabbalistic principle of the Oral Torah

(בסוד אבא יסד ברתא)

(60 according to the Kabbalistic principle by which 61 “the ‘father’ (i.e., *Chochmah* of *Atzilut*) begat (lit., ‘founded’) the ‘daughter’ (i.e., *Malchut* of *Atzilut*)” —

המלובשת במלכות דיצירה

which, in turn, is vested in *Malchut* of *Yetzirah*.

[סוד] המשניות (וברייתות המלובשות בקליפת נוגה, שכנגד עולם היצירה

[62 This accords with the Kabbalistic principle of] the *Mishnayot* (63 and the *Beraitot* that are vested in the *kelipat nogah*, which corresponds to the World of *Yetzirah*;

ששם מתחיל בחינת הדעת [הרע] שבנוגה)

for there begins the Knowledge [of Good and Evil] [64 or: “[for there begins] the evil”] which is inherent in *nogah*), for the *kelipat nogah* in the World of *Yetzirah* is equally good and evil.

[נוסח אחר: והברייתות המלובשות בקליפת נוגה שכנגד עולם העשיה, ששם מתחיל בחינת הרע שבנוגה]

[65 A variant reading: “and the *Beraitot* that are vested in the *kelipat nogah* which corresponds to the World of *Asiyah*, from where there begins the evil of *nogah*”], for the *kelipat nogah* of *Asiyah* is mostly evil and minimally good.

כנודע מהאריז"ל

The above is known from the teachings of R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory.

* * *

והמשכיל יבין ענין פלא גדול מזה מאד, מה נעשה בשמים ממעל, על ידי עיון ובירור הלכה פסוקה, מן הגמרא
ופוסקים ראשונים ואחרונים

Now, the intelligent will understand something far more remarkable, namely, what happens in heaven above through the deliberation and elucidation of an adjudged ruling — of the *Gemara* and of the earlier and latter codifiers 66 —

מה שהיה בהעלם דבר קודם העיון הלז

which, before this deliberation, had been concealed.

כי על ידי זה, מעלה הלכה זו מהקליפות שהיו מעלימים ומכסים אותה, שלא היתה ידועה כלל, או שלא היתה מובנת היטב בטעמה

For by means of this [clarification] one elevates this ruling from the *kelipot* that were hiding and covering it in such a way that it was not known at all, or that its reasoning was not clearly understood.⁶⁷

שהטעם הוא סוד הספירה חכמה עילאה, שנפלו ממנה ניצוצות בקליפות, בשבירת הכלים

For the reason⁶⁸ [underlying a particular *halachah*] derives mystically from the *Sefirah* of Supernal *Chochmah*, from which sparks fell into the *kelipot* as a result of the primordial “breaking of the vessels.”

והם שם בבחינת גלות, שהקליפות שולטים עליהם, ומעלימים חכמת התורה מעליונים ומתחתונים

[As to these sparks of *Chochmah* which constitute the reasons,] they are there in a state of exile, because the *kelipot* rule over them and hide the wisdom of the Torah from both the higher and lower beings — both from the created beings of the higher worlds, such as angels and souls, and from man situated here in this lowly world.

וזהו שכתוב ברעיא מהימנא, שהקושיא היא מסטרא דרע

This is why it is stated in *Ra'aya Mehemna*, as quoted at the beginning of the present letter, that “a problematic query ... emanates from the side of evil.”

Since it creates difficulty in the comprehension of a Torah concept, it derives from the evil *kelipot* which conceal the *Chochmah* of the Torah.

* * *

והנה העליונים, אין להם כח לברר ולהעלות מהשבירה שבקליפת נוגה

Now, the celestial beings (i.e., the souls and angels in the higher worlds) do not have the power to disencumber and elevate that which is in *kelipat nogah* (i.e., the sparks that are exiled there) as a result of the “breaking of the vessels.”

אלא התחתונים לבד

Only the terrestrial beings, the souls situated in *this* world, [can do this],

לפי שהם מלובשים בגוף חומרי, משכא דחויא, מקליפת נוגה

for they are vested in a material body that is known as the “hide of the serpent,” which derives from *kelipat nogah*.

As explained above, when this concept appeared in ch. 31 of *Tanya* (quoting the *Zohar*⁶⁹), the “serpent” refers to the “three utterly impure *kelipot*,” while the body that derives its vitality from *kelipat nogah* is called the “hide of the serpent.”⁷⁰

והם מתישים כחה, בשבירת התאוות

These [embodied souls] weaken its strength, the strength of this *kelipah*, by crushing the passions,

אתכפיא סטרא אחרא, ויתפרדו כל פועלי און

thereby subjugating the *sitra achra*, so that⁷¹ “all the workers of evil (i.e., the *kelipot*) will be dispersed.”

Thus, only souls in this world are able to extract the holy sparks from the *kelipot* and elevate them. For this reason, they alone are able to elevate the *Chochmah* of Torah which the *kelipot* obscure.

ולכן באים העליונים לשמוע חידושי תורה מהתחתונים

This is why the celestial beings, the souls of the higher worlds, come to hear innovative insights into the Torah from the terrestrial beings,⁷² from the souls here in this world —

מה שמחדשים ומגלים תעלומות החכמה, שהיו כבושים בגולה עד עתה

[to hear] the secrets of wisdom which they innovate and reveal, and which until this time had been in bondage in exile.

וכל איש ישראל יוכל לגלות תעלומות חכמה, (לגלות) ולחדש שכל חדש

Every Jew is able to reveal secrets of wisdom, (⁷³to reveal) and to discover a new insight,

הן בהלכות הן באגדות, הן בנגלה הן בנסתר

whether it be in the laws or in homiletics, in the revealed or in the mystical [planes of the Torah],⁷⁴

כפי בחינת שרש נשמתו

according to the nature of his soul’s root, and its consequent affinity with each of the above categories of the Torah.

ומחוייב בדבר

Indeed, one is obliged to do so — to uncover hitherto-concealed insights into the Torah, and to reveal the secrets of wisdom,

להשלים נשמתו, בהעלאת כל הניצוצות שנפלו לחלקה ולגורלה, כנודע

in order to perfect his soul by elevating all the sparks that have been allotted to it, as is known.⁷⁵

(וכל דברי תורה, ובפרט דבר הלכה, היא ניצוץ מהשכינה, שהיא היא דבר ה')

(⁷⁶Moreover, every Torah teaching, and especially a halachic teaching, is a spark of the *Shechinah*, which is the word of G-d.

כדאיתא בגמרא: דבר ה', זו הלכה

In the words of the *Gemara*,⁷⁷ “The phrase ‘word of G-d’ denotes the *Halachah*.”

סוד מלכות דאצילות, המלבשת לחכמה דאצילות, ומלובשים במלכות דיצירה

This accords with the Kabbalistic principle regarding *Malchut* of *Atzilut* which garbs the *Chochmah* of *Atzilut*, [both of] which are vested in *Malchut* of *Yetzirah*,

וירדו בקליפת נוגה בשבירת הכלים

and with the “breaking of the vessels” they descended into *kelipat nogah*.)

The words of Torah in general, and particularly the halachic “word of G-d,” are thus exiled within the *kelipot* that conceal them. Accordingly, a scholar who brings to light a teaching long hidden in the Torah or who resolves a problematic query and thereby clearly articulates a particular law, releases the pertinent spark of the *Shechinah* from the *kelipot*.

וזהו שכתוב בגמרא: כל העוסק בתורה, אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא, מעלה אני עליו כאלו פדאני ואת בני מבין האומות העולם

Thus the *Gemara* teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, says of whoever engages in the study of the Torah...,⁷⁸ “I account it as if he had redeemed Me and My children from among the nations of the world.”

For Torah study redeems the sparks of the *Shechinah* — the sparks of the “word of G-d” — from their exile within the *kelipot*.

* * *

The above applies nowadays, when the *Shechinah* is exiled in *kelipat nogah*; hence the main function of Torah study is to seek out and elevate the sparks of holiness from the *kelipot*. Hence, too, the current concentration on the laws of *issur* and *hetter*, *kasher* and *passul*, and the like.

אבל בצאת השכינה מקליפת נוגה [מהקליפות]

But when the *Shechinah* will emerge from *kelipat nogah* [79or: from the *kelipot*],

אחר שיושלם בירור הניצוצות, ויופרד הרע מהטוב, ויתפרדו כל פועלי און

after the extraction of the sparks will be completed, and the evil of the *kelipot* will be separated from the good of holiness,80 “and all the workers of evil will be dispersed,”

ולא שלטא אילנא דטוב ורע, בצאת הטוב ממנה

and the Tree of [Knowledge of] Good and Evil (which is of *kelipat nogah* and which prevails during the time of exile) will no longer be dominant, because the good will have departed from it,

Kelipat nogah is influential only by virtue of its minimal component of good; as soon as this is extracted, *kelipat nogah* will have no dominion whatever.

אזי לא יהיה עסק התורה והמצות לברר בירורין

then people will engage in the study of Torah and in the observance of the commandments not in order to extract the sparks, as in the present,

כי אם ליחד יחודים עליונים יותר, להמשיך אורות עליונים יותר, שלמעלה מאצילות

but in order to bring about the consummation of *yichudim* (“unions” or “marriages” of *Sefirot*) more sublime than those which are effected through our present Torah study — in order to call forth more sublime lights, transcending81 *Atzilut*.

כמו שכתב האריז"ל

This is explained in the writings of R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory.

והכל על ידי פנימיות התורה, לקיים המצות בכוונות עליונות, שמכוונות לאורות עליונים

Everything [will be accomplished] by means of the *pnimiyut* of the Torah, the esoteric dimension of the Torah, by the performance of the commandments with lofty mystical devotions directed to [drawing down] sublime “lights” [from the Divine Luminary].

כי שרש המצות הוא למעלה מעלה, באין סוף ברוך הוא

For the root of the commandments is exceedingly high, in the blessed *Ein Sof*, at a level loftier than *Atzilut*.

(ומה שאמרו רז"ל, דמצות בטילות לעתיד לבא

([82](#)As for the statement of our Sages, of blessed memory, that[83](#) “the commandments will be abrogated in the future,”

היינו בתחיית המתים

this refers to the era of the Resurrection of the Dead.

אבל לימות המשיח, קודם תחיית המתים, אין בטלים)

In the days of the Messiah, however, before the Resurrection of the Dead, they will not be abrogated.)[84](#)

At that time, the observance of *mitzvot* will draw down to this world even higher levels of G-dliness than those drawn down by the current observance of *mitzvot*.

ולכן יהיה גם עיקר עסק התורה גם כן בפנימיות המצות, וטעמיהם הנסתרים

This is why Torah study will then be mainly directed to the *pnimiyut* (the innermost, mystical depths) of the commandments, and their hidden reasons.

Specifically: Gaining insights into the dynamics of the above-mentioned *yichudim*, and thereby understanding why the scrupulous performance of the commandments brings about these Supernal “unions” which give birth to renewed diffusions of the Divine light that animates this world.

אבל הנגלות יהיו גלויים וידועים לכל איש ישראל, בידיעה בתחלה, בלי שכחה

The revealed aspects of the Torah, however, will be manifest and known to every Jew, by an innate and unforgotten knowledge.

Review will thus be unnecessary.

ואין צריך לעסוק בהם, אלא לערב רב

Only the mixed multitude (and not the Jews) will have to toil in these [aspects of the Torah],

שלא יזכו למטעם מאילנא דחיי, שהוא פנימיות התורה והמצוה

because they will not have merited to taste from the Tree of Life, i.e., the *pnimiyut* of the Torah and of the commandments.

וצריכים לעסוק [בתורה] במשנה, להתיש כח הסטרא אחרא הדבוק בהם (על ידי עסק התורה)

They will [therefore] need to engage [[85](#)in Torah] in *Mishnah*, in order to weaken ([86](#)by their occupation with Torah) the power of the *sitra achra* that cleaves to them,

שלא תשלוט בהם, להחטיאם

so that it will not dominate them and cause them to sin.

כדכתיב: והחוטא בן מאה שנה יקולל, שיהיו חוטאים מערב רב

Thus it is written,⁸⁷ “And the sinner at the age of a hundred will be cursed.” This refers to the sinners of the mixed multitude.

Thus, even with the arrival of the Messiah there will be sinners among the mixed multitude, since the *sitra achra* cleaves to them. They will therefore require means by which to weaken it, so that they will not sin.

Nor will they need only the revealed aspects of the Torah in order to repel the *sitra achra*.

למעשה יהיו צריכים לפרטי הלכות אסור וטומאה יותר מישראל

In addition, on the practical level, they will need the detailed rulings of prohibition and impurity more than the Jews.

שלא יארע להם פסול וטומאה ואסור

For the latter, nothing will occur that is ritually unfit, impure, or forbidden,

כי לא יאונה כו'

since⁸⁸ “there shall not befall [any sin to the righteous]”⁸⁹ — and in the era of Mashiach, all Jews will be at the level of the “righteous”.

וגם אפשר, וקרוב הדבר, שידעו מפנימיות התורה, כל גופי התורה הנגלית

It is also possible, and indeed probable, that [the Jewish people] will know all the fundamentals of the revealed plane of the Torah from the *pnimiyut* of the Torah,

כמו אברהם אבינו, עליו השלום

as was the case with our father Abraham, peace be to him.

The *Gemara* relates⁹⁰ that Abraham fulfilled the entire Torah even before it was given at Sinai. Now there are passages and commandments to which he could not possibly have related on a physical level.

Inscribed on the tiny parchment scrolls within *tefillin*, for example, are Biblical passages which record the Exodus from Egypt — a land to which his descendants had not yet been exiled. The mode of Abraham’s performance of the commandments was thus spiritual and esoteric, as the Alter Rebbe explains in *Torah Or*⁹¹ and *Likkutei Torah*.⁹²

Abraham thus knew all the revealed aspects of Torah from its esoteric core. In Time to Come all Jews will know the Torah in a similar manner.

ולכן אין צריך לעסוק בהם כלל

They will therefore not need to occupy themselves with them — with the laws defining what is permitted or prohibited, pure or impure — at all.

מה שאין כן בזמן בית שני, היו צריכים לעסוק

At the time of the Second Temple, by contrast, although the scholars did not derive their sustenance from the illiterate, for they had their own fields and vineyards, they needed to be involved in these [laws],

גם כי לא בשביל הלכה למעשה בלבד, אלא שזהו עיקר העבודה

and not only for their practical application, but because this is the main purpose of divine service —

להתיש כח הסטרא אחרא, ולהעלות ניצוצי הקדושה, על ידי התורה והעבודה, כמו שכתוב במקום אחר

to weaken the power of the *sitra achra* and to elevate the sparks of holiness by means of Torah study and worship, as is explained elsewhere.[93](#)

* * *

ואחר הדברים והאמת האלו, יובן היטב בתוספת ביאור הרעיא מהימנא דלעיל

After the above words of truth it will be possible to clearly understand the earlier-quoted passage from *Ra'aya Mehemna*,

במה שאמר: אילנא דטוב ורע כו'

which spoke of “the Tree of Good and Evil, [i.e., prohibition and permission],”

רצונו לומר: קליפת נוגה, שהוא עיקר עולם הזה

meaning *kelipat nogah*, which is the mainstay of this world,[94](#)

כמו שכתוב בעץ חיים

as is written in *Etz Chayim*.

At the moment, until *Mashiach* arrives, the dominant influence in this material world is *kelipat nogah*, the “Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.” After his arrival, however, this dominion will cease, and man’s divine service will be directed not to extracting the

sparks of holiness hidden in the material world, but to bringing about ever higher Supernal unions, as explained above.

ודי למבין

This will suffice for the discerning.

Addendum

In the middle of the above Epistle, the Alter Rebbe stated that if “one ate [forbidden food] in order to save an endangered life,... [the food] becomes [entirely] permissible.”

The Rebbe notes⁹⁵ that this concept is problematic; indeed, many editions of the *Tanya* omit the word “entirely”, which is evidently why it found its way into current editions as a bracketed text.

The Rebbe goes on to distinguish between prohibition (*issur*) and impurity (*tumah*). When something is prohibited, one can sense its inherent evil; for example, forbidden foods clog the mind and heart with spiritual congestion. Thus, even if a pregnant woman scented forbidden food on Yom Kippur and the Torah *permitted* her to eat it (if her life would otherwise be in danger),⁹⁶ eating that food would still becloud her soul.

Moreover, even when the prohibition was not intrinsic to the food, but a thought or a statement invalidated it, as for example when an animal was slaughtered with idolatrous intent,⁹⁷ eating this food leaves its imprint. Thus, for example, the *Midrash*⁹⁸ traces the wayward path of Elisha ben Avuyah (known as “Acher”) to very early beginnings — before his birth his mother had tasted food that was prepared for idolatrous worship.

In light of the above, the Rebbe goes on to note, we can understand why a nursing mother who has eaten forbidden food, even when permitted to do so because her life was endangered, should refrain from nursing her child.⁹⁹ For although eating this food was in fact halachically permitted, the nature of the food and the spiritual blemish which it imparts to her infant remain unchanged.

This is especially so, according to the halachic determination (with regard to one who is ill as well), that a life-threatening situation merely *sets aside* a prohibition; it does not make the prohibited object permissible.¹⁰⁰

As the Rebbe concludes, the above considerations evidently explain why in current editions of *Iggeret HaKodesh* — regarding the food eaten in a life-threatening situation that becomes “[entirely] permissible” — the word “entirely” is bracket-ed, and in many editions never appeared.

FOOTNOTES ^{1.} These Kabbalistic terms are borrowed from *Bereishit* 2:9. ^{2.} *Daniel* 12:3. ^{3.} *Zohar* III, 124b. ^{4.} Vol. III, p. 1089, in the present work. ^{5.} *Daniel* 12:10. ^{6.} *Devarim* 32:12. ^{7.} *Zechariah* 13:2. ^{8.} *Zohar* III, 29a, b. ^{9.} Cf. *Berachot* 34b. ^{10.}

Following early editions of the *Tanya*, the correct Hebrew text here reads *chaseirei* (spelled with a *resh*), meaning “those who lack.” Other editions appear to read *chassidei* (spelled with a *daled*), and have led to some mistranslation. [11.](#) *Mishlei* 3:18. [12.](#) *Chagigah* 11b; 13a. [13.](#) See *Shaar HaGilgulim*, end of Introduction XV; *et al.* [14.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “See beginning of *Idra Rabbah* (*Zohar* III, 127b ff.) and many other places in the *Zohar* where *Rashbi* expresses himself similarly.” [15.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “It could be suggested that civil law is singled out, for in this field the law of the Torah [sometimes] takes into account ‘the custom of local merchants’ or ‘the law of the land’ or a waiver by one of the parties to a transaction; and so on.” [Hence the most “remarkable wonder” would be that the study of such a seemingly mundane level of law should override the seemingly more spiritual occupation of prayer.] [16.](#) *Shabbat* 11a. [17.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Many have asked: ‘If so, how were the Supernal Unions (*yichudim*) usually effected by daily prayer, accomplished [by them]?’ For an answer, see *Torah Or* 38d, 69a, *et al.* [where it is explained that these holy Sages were so self-effacing and so G-d-fearing that their Torah study bore spiritual results which others can only achieve through prayer].” [18.](#) *Berachot* 20a. [19.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Many have asked: ‘If so, how were the Supernal Unions (*yichudim*) usually effected by daily prayer, accomplished [by them]?’ For an answer, see *Torah Or* 38d, 69a, *et al.* [where it is explained that these holy Sages were so self-effacing and so G-d-fearing that their Torah study bore spiritual results which others can only achieve through prayer].” [20.](#) *Rosh HaShanah* 35a. [21.](#) End of Law 2. [22.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “It could be suggested that the Alter Rebbe adds the reason, since the reason too is part of the question, as is soon stated. Note that *Mishnah* is the revealed level of the Torah, while Scripture is related to Kabbalah (see the commentary in *Likkutei Torah* on the *maamar* beginning *Lo Tashbit*). But see *Hilchot Talmud Torah* of the Alter Rebbe, beginning of sec. 2, [from which it would seem that Kabbalah is related to the Oral Torah, not to Scripture].” [23.](#)

Note of the Rebbe: “The Alter Rebbe omits the Order of *Nashim*, etc. (See *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak* on *Tanya*.)”

[Explaining this omission, the father of the Rebbe states there that the Alter Rebbe’s point could not be proved from the fact that the study of *Nashim* (which deals with marriage and divorce, etc.) overrides the Reading of *Shema*. For, as the *Gemara* says regarding the erasing of the Divine Name in the course of the purification of a *sotah* (the woman suspected of adultery), G-d is even willing to allow the Divine Name to be erased, so long as this will restore peace between a husband and his wife. It is thus to be expected that the Reading of *Shema*, whose essence is the affirmation of the unity of the Divine Name, should defer to the study of this particular Order.

Other Kabbalistic reasons are offered there as well.]

[24.](#) These parentheses/brackets are in the original text. [25.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “This requires further examination and research [to find where *Rashbi* actually states this in *Ra’aya Mehemna*]. See *Zohar* I, 27b (and in the Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar* XIV, foot of p. 71 ff.); also *Biurei HaZohar* there [by the Mitteler Rebbe], (as well as by the *Tzemach Tzedek*, Volume II).” [26.](#) These parentheses/brackets are in the original text. [27.](#)

Shaar HaMitzvot, *Parshat Vaetchanan*; et al. [28](#). *Shabbat* 33b. [29](#). These parentheses/brackets are in the original text. [30](#). *Chagigah* 14a and *Rashi* there. [31](#).

The author of *Minchat Elazar* poses the following question (*Divrei Torah* 8:70):

The study of the *Mishnayot* would likewise not have taken more than several months, if they did not debate all the legal problems and solutions involved. We can thus say the same for their study of the *Zohar* and *Tikkunei Zohar*: while several months would suffice for the bare-bone text itself, even thirteen years would not suffice for discussing and plumbing its depths!

The Rebbe answers this by noting that the Alter Rebbe anticipated this question in this very letter.

He prefaces the fact that it took the compiler of the *Gemara*, R. Ashi, a full ten years to study the first and second editions of the *Talmud* which then comprised only six Orders. R. Shimon, who was of far greater stature (see *Eruvin* 54a) and studied the six hundred Orders of the *Mishnah* in much greater depth, propounding twenty-four solutions to every problem, surely was fully occupied in the cave with the study of the *Mishnah*.

With regard to the *Zohar* and *Tikkunei Zohar*, however, since the Alter Rebbe here quoted the *Ra'aya Mehemna* to the effect that they contain “no problematic query, which emanates from the side of evil, and no controversy, which emanates from the spirit of impurity,” there were then no questions nor disputations. Surely, then, this took no more than several months.

[32](#). *Berachot* 8a. [33](#). “Pressing” [on the knife]. [34](#). “Passing [the knife] *under*” (instead of over) the windpipe and gullet. [35](#). “Pausing” and thus interrupting the act of slaughter. [36](#). Note of the Rebbe: “The Alter Rebbe does not mention *hagramah* [i.e., cutting in a slanting direction] or *ikkur* [i.e., severing the pipes by tearing].” [37](#). *Yeshayahu* 65:20. [38](#). Note of the Rebbe: “I.e., there will then be death.” [39](#). *Yirmeyahu* 31:7. [40](#). Note of the Rebbe: “I.e., there will then be birth.” [41](#). *Sanhedrin* 51b. [42](#). See *Eduyot* 8:7 and commentaries there. [43](#). *Menachot* 45a. [44](#). This sentence has been emended above in Hebrew and English according to the gloss of the *Tzemach Tzedek* as cited in *Luach HaTikkun* (Table of Corrections) at the end of Hebrew editions of *Tanya*. [45](#). Note of the Rebbe: “*Chagigah* 2:2.” [46](#). *Rambam*, Introduction to *Yad HaChazakah*. [47](#). *Shaar* 49, ch. 2. [48](#). Note of the Rebbe: “With regard to the above, compare the Alter Rebbe’s own wording (in *Torah Or*, *Parshat Chayei Sarah*) and see the commentary of the *Tzemach Tzedek* (printed as an addendum to the Kehot editions of *Torah Or*).” [49](#). Cf. *Tanya*, ch. 7. [50](#). See the Addendum to this chapter. [51](#). *Tikkunei Zohar*, p. 17a (in the Introduction that begins *Patach Eliyahu*). [52](#). These terms are explained above, at the beginning of Epistle 20 (Vol. IV in the present series, p. 357). [53](#). *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 7; cf. *Tanya*, ch. 39. [54](#). *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 7; cf. *Tanya*, ch. 39. [55](#). Note of the Rebbe: “See also the Note in *Tanya*, ch. 40.” [56](#). *Kohelet* 8:9. [57](#). In the original, *eirev-rav*; cf. *Shmot* 12:38. *Likkutei Haggahot LeSefer HaTanya* emends our text to “nations of the world.” [58](#). *Zohar* II, 85a; et al. [59](#). *Ibid.*, 254b. [60](#). These parentheses are in the original text. [61](#).

Zohar III, 248a. [62.](#) These brackets are in the original text. [63.](#) These parentheses are in the original text. [64.](#) These brackets are in the original text. [65.](#) These brackets are in the original text. [66.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “All of these have to do with the clarification of the *reason* [underlying a law], as is soon stated.” [67.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “...even though it was known. This applies to many halachic rulings in the *Gemara* and especially in the Codes.” [68.](#) Note of the Rebbe [on this addition, which identifies the reason with the sublime *Sefirah* of Supernal *Chochmah*]: “This [addition] explains the magnitude of the exile [when the *reason* is not known], (and of the [consequent] redemption [when it is ascertained]) — even though the law *itself* is known and [hence] not in exile.” [69.](#) *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun XXI* (p. 48b). [70.](#) This is explained at length in the maamar entitled *VaTipakachnah* by the *Tzemach Tzedek*, in *Sefer HaChakirah*, p. 136. [71.](#) *Tehillim* 92:10. [72.](#) Cf. *Zohar* III, 173a. [73.](#) These parentheses are in the original text. [74.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “I.e., in *all* of the above categories, each with its own singular quality.” [75.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “See *Hilchot Talmud Torah* of the Alter Rebbe, ch.1, end of sec. 4 (and sources cited there in the Kehot edition).” [76.](#) These parentheses are in the original text. [77.](#) *Shabbat* 138b. [78.](#) *Berachot* 8a. [79.](#) These brackets are in the original text. [80.](#) *Tehillim* 92:10. [81.](#) The word translated “transcending” does not appear in the printed Hebrew text. It has been inserted here according to the emendation of the Rebbe in *Luach HaTikkun*. [82.](#) These parentheses are in the original text. [83.](#) *Niddah* 61b. [84.](#)

This differentiation between the performance of *mitzvot* before and after the Resurrection, follows the view of *Tosafot* in *Niddah* (*loc. cit.*). There *Tosafot* explains that the fact that burial shrouds may be made of *kilayim*, the forbidden mixture of wool and linen, proves that *mitzvot* will be abrogated after the Resurrection, for otherwise a Jew would arise wearing forbidden garments.

The *Rashba*, cited there in *Chiddushei HaRan*, disagrees, holding that the *mitzvot* are abrogated as far as the individual is concerned only while he is deceased. As the *Rashba* understands the *Gemara*, they will not be abrogated after the Resurrection.

The Rebbe uses this debate to resolve a seeming contradiction between two statements by the Alter Rebbe. In his Note to ch. 36 of *Tanya* (on p. 478 of Vol. II in the present series), the Alter Rebbe writes that “the [time of] receiving the reward is essentially in the seventh millennium.” Since this is *after* the time of the Resurrection, this is a time during which we are still intended to perform *mitzvot*. How, then, does the Alter Rebbe state here that *mitzvot* will be abrogated at the time of the Resurrection?

The distinction: In the Note to ch. 36 the Alter Rebbe follows the view of the *Rashba*, who maintains that at the time of the Resurrection, *mitzvot* will continue to be in effect. (The Alter Rebbe also follows this view in his *maamar* in *Likkutei Torah* on the phrase *VeHayah BaYom Hahu Yitaka BeShofar Gadol*.) Here, however, he follows the view of *Tosafot*.

The Rebbe goes on to say that drawing a distinction (as the Alter Rebbe does above) between the two periods, resolves most of the problematic queries posed by the *MaHaratz Chayot*, whose Glosses on Tractate *Niddah* cite those Talmudic sources which

would seem to indicate that in future time the commandments will *not* be abrogated. For those sources speak of the era of the Messiah, *before* the Resurrection, while the teaching that they will be abrogated applies to the era that *follows* the Resurrection (according to the view of *Tosafot*).

For further examination of this subject, the Rebbe refers the reader to the sources listed in *Sdei Chemed*, *Klalim* 40:218 (Vol. III, p. 561c ff. in the Kehot edition) and in *Divrei Chachamim*, sec. 53 (p. 1962b ff.).

[85.](#) These brackets are in the original text. [86.](#) This phrase, enclosed in parentheses in the printed Hebrew text, does not appear in some manuscripts. [87.](#) *Yeshayahu* 65:20. [88.](#) *Mishlei* 12:21. [89.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "...For only with regard to the present time does *Tosafot* maintain (contrary to the view of *Rashi*) [that the promise of this verse applies] only to edibles (*Chullin* 5b), [for it is particularly shameful for a righteous person to eat forbidden food, even if unwittingly]. This [restriction to the present] may be derived from the underlying reasoning, viz.: In Time to Come the entire world will attain perfection. [At that time, therefore, *no* kind of unwitting sin will befall *any* of the Jewish people, since all will then be righteous]." [90.](#) *Yoma* 28b; *Kiddushin* 82a. [91.](#) *Lech Lecha* 11d. [92.](#) *Shemini* 18c. [93.](#) See *Likkutei Torah*, *BeHaalot'cha* 32d. [94.](#) The last phrase in the Hebrew text has been emended according to the Table of Glosses and Emendations. [95.](#) This Addendum is based on selections from *Likkutei Sichot*, Vol. III, p. 984ff., and footnotes there. [96.](#) *Yoma* 82a; the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim* 617:2. [97.](#) *Chullin* 39b. [98.](#) *Ruth Rabbah* 6:6. [99.](#) *Taz* (*Turei Zahav*) and *Shach* (*Siftei Cohen*) in *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh Deah*, end of sec. 81. [100.](#) Cf. *Rambam*, *Hilchot Shabbat*, beginning of ch. 2.



Epistle 27

Part (a)

The Alter Rebbe wrote this letter of condolence to his chassidim in 1788 after the passing of his colleague and mentor, the saintly R. Mendele of Vitebsk (or Horodok), who had settled in the Holy Land in 1777. It concludes by rousing them to the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* in general, and particularly of maintaining the family of R. Mendel.

The Alter Rebbe is here addressing chassidim who in the past had benefited from their connection with the *tzaddik* both through his advice and blessings on material matters, and through his guidance in matters of the spirit. He comforts them, therefore, with the teaching of the *Zohar* that a *tzaddik* is to be found in this world after his passing to a greater extent than while he was physically alive. His disciples are thus able to receive his guidance in their Torah study and divine service to an even greater degree than before.

Materially, too, the *tzaddik* protects this world after his passing even more effectively than he did during his lifetime.

מה שכתב ליושבי ארצנו הקדושה, תבנה ותכונן במהרה בימינו, אמן

This letter was written [by the Alter Rebbe] to the [chassidic] inhabitants of the Holy Land (May it speedily be rebuilt and reestablished in our own days, Amen!),¹

לנחמם בכפליים לתושיה

to console them with redoubled support²

על פטירת הרב הגאון המפורסם, איש אלקים קדוש, נר ישראל, עמוד הימין, פטיש החזק, מורנו הרב ר' מנחם מענדל, נשמתו עדן

over the passing of the celebrated rabbi and Gaon, holy man of G-d,³ “lamp of Israel, pillar of the right hand, mighty hammer,”⁴ our mentor R. Menachem Mendel (May his soul rest in Eden!).

* * *

אהוביי אחיי ורעיי אשר כנפשי כו'

My beloved, my brethren and friends, who are [as dear] and so forth [to me] as my soul.

Likkutei Haggahot on *Tanya* likens the opening three terms of address to the three Scriptural terms of endearment successively addressed by a king to his beloved daughter in the parable cited by the *Midrash*:⁵ “My beloved” recalls the paternal love expressed by the phrase “my daughter”; “my brethren” recalls the fraternal love expressed by the phrase “my sister”; and “my friends” recalls the filial love expressed by the phrase “my mother.” The further phrase “as my soul” indicates the love that one has for his own life, as in the phrase of the *Zohar*,⁶ “he called her by his own name”; while “and so forth” indicates a love even greater — a bond with the ultimate soul-level of *Yechidah*.

ה' עליהם, יחיו חיים עד העולם

May [the Name of] G-d be upon you,⁷ and may you live forever,

According to the above interpretation of *Likkutei Haggahot*, the Alter Rebbe’s blessing that “the Name of G-d be upon you” is intended to elicit a *transcendent* mode of Divine benevolence, while the blessing “may you live forever” is intended to draw down this transcendent benevolence so that it can be internalized within its finite recipients. (Or, in the terms of *Chassidut*, it is intended “to be *mamshich* the *makkif* into the *pnimi*.”)

וצאצאיהם אתם, זרע אמת

and your children with you, the seed of truth;

ברוכי ה' המה, מעתה ועד עולם

may you be blessed by G-d for evermore.

אחרי דרישת שלומם, כמשפט לאוהבי שמו

Having first duly inquired after the welfare of those who love [G-d's] Name,

באתי לדבר על לב נדכאים, הנאנחים והנאנקים, ולנחמם בכפליים לתושיה

I have come to speak to the heart of the smitten, who are sighing and groaning over the passing of R. Mendele, and to console you with redoubled support

אשר שמעה אזני, ותבן לה

with what my ear has heard from others and with what I have understood myself,⁸

על מאמר רז"ל, דשבק חיים לכל חי

regarding the idiom used by our Sages⁹ to signify the passing of a *tzaddik*, “He has left life for all the living.”

If this simply means that others have remained alive after his passing, what are we to make of the expression “left life”? Did *he* leave them life? Surely, the life they are living is their own.

The Alter Rebbe will explain below that the idiom means quite literally that the *tzaddik* left something of his own life to others. For the true core of a *tzaddik's* life is not fleshly; rather, it comprises the spiritual qualities of faith, awe and love of G-d. When a *tzaddik* departs from this world he leaves over his faith, fear and love to all those who are bound to him, so that they will be able to receive even more than they received from him while he lived his physical life together with them. All three qualities are alluded to as “life” in the verses enumerated below:

כי צדיק באמונתו יחיה

For¹⁰ “a *tzaddik* lives by his faith,”

וביראת ה' לחיים

and by¹¹ “the awe of G-d [which leads] to life,”

וברשפי אש שלהבת אהבתו מחיים

and by [12](#) the flashing and fiery sparks of his love [for G-d, that is even greater] than life,

לכל בהן חיי רוחו [ונשמתו] כל ימי חלדו

investing in them — in his faith and awe and love — the life of his *Ruach* [[13](#)V.L.: and, moreover, of his *Neshamah*] throughout his life.

As the Alter Rebbe will soon say, disciples receive their influence from the soul-level of the *tzaddik* which is called *Ruach*. In addition, as explained in *Likkutei Haggahot*, those disciples who are also [as close as] children receive their influence from the higher soul-level called *Neshamah*.

ויהי בהעלות ה' רוחו

When, at the time of his passing, G-d elevates his *Ruach*

ונשמתו אליו יאסוף

and gathers up his soul unto Himself [14](#)

ויעלה בעילוי אחר עילוי, עד רום המעלות

and he ascends from one elevation to the next, to the very highest of levels,

שבק חיי רוחו

he [then] leaves over the life of his *Ruach*,

פעולתו אשר עבד בה לפניו בישראל

the deeds in which he has formerly labored with Israel, i.e., the faith, fear and love which he drew down to them from his *Ruach*,

On a less literal level, the Hebrew word *lefanim* (here translated “formerly”) can also be understood to mean “to the inwardness”; i.e., the *tzaddik* infused and integrated this faith, fear and love into the innermost core of his disciples, this being—

פעולת צדיק לחיים

“the labor of a *tzaddik* for life,” [15](#)

Or, less literally, “a *tzaddik*’s labor *for the living*,” to provide them with life. At any rate, at the time of his passing, the *tzaddik* bequeaths the fruit of his lifelong labors —

לכל חי, היא נפש כל חי

to every living being, that is, to the soul of every living being who lives a life of Torah and *mitzvot*,

הקשורה בנפשו בחבלי עבותות אהבה רבה ואהבת עולם, בל תמוט לנצח

who is bound to his soul by the thick ropes of a magnanimous love, and an eternal love, that will not be moved forever.

אשר מי האיש החפץ חיים, לדבקה בה' חיים

For any man who eagerly desires life¹⁶ [and who seeks] to cleave to the living G-d,

בעבודתו תדבק נפשו

through his service (i.e., through the divine service of the *tzaddik*) his soul will cleave

והיתה צרורה בצרור החיים את ה'

and will be bound up in the bond of life with G-d,¹⁷

בחיי רוח אפינו

in the life of the *Ruach* (literally, the life-giving “breath”) of our nostrils

אשר אמרנו: בצלו נחיה בגוים

of which we have said, “In its [protective] shadow we shall live among the nations.”¹⁸

This alludes to the *Chayah* of the *tzaddik*, the soul-level which is even loftier than the soul-level called *Neshamah*, and which infuses the followers of the *tzaddik* with a transcendent mode of life-force which enables them to withstand challenges from non-Jewish (i.e., unholy) sources.

אשר שבק לנו, בכל אחד ואחד

[This] he left unto us, in each and every individual,

כפי בחינת התקשרותו באמת, ואהבתו אהבת אמת הטהורה, מקרב איש ולב עמוק

corresponding to the degree of his genuine alliance with the *tzaddik* and his true and pure love of him, from the innermost core of man and from the depths of his heart.¹⁹

To the extent of each individual's bond with the *tzaddik*, so does the *tzaddik* share with him his *Ruach*, and his faith, fear and love of G-d.

כי כמים הפנים וכו'

For²⁰ “as in water, face [answers to face, so is the heart of man to man]”: the individual’s love for the *tzaddik* reflects back to him, eliciting a love of the *tzaddik* for him,

ורוח אייתי רוח ואמשיך רוח

and²¹ “spirit rouses spirit and brings forth spirit” — the spirit of love that one has for the *tzaddik* draws down the *Ruach*, the superior spirit of the *tzaddik*.

ורוחו עומדת בקרבינו ממש

For his *Ruach* remains truly in our midst, *within* those of us who are bound to him,

כי בראותו ילדיו, מעשה ידיו בקרבו, יקדישו שמו יתברך

when he sees his children, i.e., his disciples,²² who embody the work of his hands, sanctifying [G-d’s] blessed Name.

אשר יתגדל ויתקדש, כאשר נלך בדרך ישרה אשר הורנו מדרכיו

For [His Name] is magnified and sanctified when we walk in the straight path that he has shown us of his paths,

ונלכה באורחותיו נצח סלה ועד

and we will walk in his ways forevermore.

With regard to the above sentence, the Rebbe notes that the *Zohar* (Part II, p. 215a; and Part III, end of *Parshat Kedoshim*) distinguishes between a “path” (*derech*) and a “way” (*orach*). “Path” signifies a well-trodden track which the *tzaddik* has cleared for common use, while “way” suggests a trail that is presently being blazed, according to the spiritual needs of the individual’s divine service. The Rebbe refers the reader to *Likkutei Torah, Shir HaShirim* (12b).

The reason that the Alter Rebbe characterizes the *tzaddik*’s life as consisting of faith, fear and love, is that (as explained in the very first Epistle in this series) faith is the underpinning, the “loins” that support the entire body of a man’s divine service, and this finds expression in his fear and love of G-d, his “arms”.

* * *

וזהו שכתוב בזהר הקדוש, דצדיקא דאתפטר אשתכח בכלהו עלמין יתיר מבחיוהי

This, then, is the meaning of the statement in the sacred *Zohar*,²³ that “When a *tzaddik* departs he is to be found in all the worlds more than during his lifetime.”

Surely this should only apply to the higher worlds. How can this be true of this world?
How is he to be found here to a greater extent than while he was alive?

דהיינו שגם בזה העולם המעשה

That is, even in this world of action, in the mundane world of which it is written,

היום לעשותם

“this day — to do them,”²⁴

As the *Gemara* states,²⁵ “*Today* is the time to *do* them; tomorrow is the time to receive their reward.” Man’s primary task in this world is the actual fulfillment of the commandments, while the receipt of rewards or anything akin to rewards belongs to “tomorrow”, to the World to Come.

In any event, even in this “world of action,”

אשתכח יתיר

[the departed *tzaddik*] is found more [than during his lifetime],

כי המעשה גדול גדל והולך, גידולי גידולין

because the action of his disciples continues to produce successive generations of offshoots,

מן אור זרוע לצדיק בשדה אשר ברכו ה'

from the²⁶ “light implanted for the righteous” in²⁷ “the field which G-d has blessed,” i.e., in the Garden of Eden.

As will soon be explained, this refers to the illumination that is drawn down into the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* in the World of *Atzilut*, which is known as “the field which G-d has blessed.” The Torah and *mitzvot* of the *tzaddik* draw down into the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* an additional flow of Divine energy from the six higher *Sefirot* (collectively known as *Z"a* of *Atzilut*). This current arouses within his disciples thoughts of repentance and good deeds, which the Alter Rebbe calls “successive generations of offshoots” — harvests of the second generation.

המאיר לארץ וחוצות

[This light] radiates to the earth and to the outside places, i.e., to the Holy Land and outside the Holy Land,

וגם אנחנו אלה פה היום, כולנו חיים בדרכיו

and also to us, those who are here this day, all of us who live in his ways,

דרך הקדש יקרא לה

“the holy way shall it be called.”²⁸

זאת בעבודת ה', במילי דשמיא

The above, regarding the increased presence of the departed *tzaddik*, relates to the service of G-d, to heavenly i.e., spiritual matters; in these areas his disciples can now receive even more guidance and benefit from him than they did during his lifetime.

ובמילי דעלמא, בפירוש אתמר בזוהר הקדוש, דצדיקא מגינין על עלמא, ובמיתתהון יתיר מבחייהון

As for mundane matters, i.e., the flow of material blessings which *tzaddikim* draw down to this world, it is stated explicitly in the sacred *Zohar*²⁹ that the *tzaddikim* shield the world, and after their death even more than during their life;

ואלמלא צלותא דצדיקא בההוא עלמא, לא אתקיים עלמא רגעא חדא

moreover, were it not for the prayer of the *tzaddikim* in the other world, this world would not endure a single moment.

וכל הקרוב קרוב אל משכן ה' בחייו, קודם לברכה

And whoever is closer to the habitation of G-d^{30a} [through being close to the *tzaddik*] during his lifetime, has precedence to the blessing that comes from and through the *tzaddik*.

Part (b)

ביאור על הנ"ל

An Elucidation of the Above

The Alter Rebbe now provides a deeper understanding of the above letter.

* * *

איתא בזוהר הקדוש, דצדיקא דאתפטר, אשתכח בכלהו עלמין יתיר מבחייהו כו'

It is stated in the sacred *Zohar* that “When a *tzaddik* departs he is to be found in all the worlds more than during his lifetime...”

וצריך להבין

Now this needs to be understood:

תינה בעולמות עליונים, אשתכח יתיר בעלותו שמה

For, granted that he is to be found increasingly in the upper worlds when he ascends there [following his passing];

אבל בעולם הזה, איך אשתכח יתיר

but now is he found more in this world?

ויש לומר על דרך מה שקבלתי על מאמר חז"ל, דשבק חיים לכל חי

This may be explained along the lines of [a teaching] which I received concerning the idiom of our Sages, of blessed memory, that [a departed *tzaddik*] “has left life to all the living.”

As mentioned above, the expression is problematic: surely he has not left anyone life which was not their own. The Alter Rebbe will now explain in what sense it may truly be said that the departed *tzaddik* left his surviving disciples something of his own life.

כנודע, שחיי הצדיק אינם חיים בשרים, כי אם חיים רוחניים, שהם אמונה ויראה ואהבה

As is known, the life of a *tzaddik* is not a fleshly life but a spiritual life, consisting of faith, awe, and love.

These he possesses not only for himself but transmits to his disciples as well.

In Scripture, we find that faith, awe and love, are each termed “life”.

כי באמונה כתיב: וצדיק באמונתו יחיה

Thus of faith it is written,^{[31](#)} “And a *tzaddik* lives by his faith.”

וביראה כתיב: יראת ה' לחיים

Of awe it is written,^{[32](#)} “The awe of G-d [leads] to life.”

ובאהבה כתיב: רודף צדקה וחסד, ימצא חיים

And of love it is written,^{[33](#)} “He who pursues *zedakah* and *Chesed*, will find life,”

וחסד הוא אהבה

and *Chesed* signifies love, for love is its core.

Hence, when the term “life” is used to describe *Chesed*, it applies to love as well. To sum up: Faith in G-d, and the awe and love of Him, are thus all referred to as “life”.

ושלש מדות אלו הם בכל עולם ועולם, עד רום המעלות

Now these three attributes are present in every world, up to the highest of levels,

הכל לפי ערך בחינת מעלות העולמות

all proportionate to the levels of the worlds,

זה על זה, בדרך עילה ועלול, כנודע

one higher than the other, by way of cause and effect, as is known.

At any level, each world serves as an antecedent (a “cause”) to the lesser world (the “effect”) which it brings into being.

והנה, בהיות הצדיק חי על פני האדמה, היו שלש מדות אלו בתוך כלי ולבוש שלהם

Now, while the *tzaddik* was alive on earth, these three attributes were contained in their vessel and garment

בבחינת מקום גשמי, שהיא בחינת נפש הקשורה בגופו

on the plane of physical space, this being the aspect of the *Nefesh* which is bound to his body.

וכל תלמידיו אינם מקבלים רק הארת מדות אלו, וזיון

During his lifetime his disciples all receive only a reflection of these attributes, and a ray from them

המאיר חוץ לכלי זה, על ידי דבוריו ומחשבותיו הקדושים

that radiates beyond this vessel (i.e., the *tzaddik's* body) by means of his holy utterances and thoughts.

The *tzaddik's* utterances and thoughts are able to reveal no more than a minor ray of his attributes.

ולכן אמרו רז"ל, שאין אדם עומד על דעת רבו וכו'

That is why our Sages, of blessed memory, said³⁴ that “one cannot plumb the depth of his master’s teachings [until the passage of forty years].”

אבל לאחר פטירתו, לפי שמתפרדים בחינת הנפש שנשארה בקבר מבחינת הרוח שבגן עדן, שהן שלש מדות הללו

But after [the *tzaddik's*] passing, since the *Nefesh* — which remains in the grave — is separated from the *Ruach*, which comprises these three attributes and [after his passing] is in the Garden of Eden,

The three attributes, now unbounded by the body, are in the Garden of Eden, a spiritual space whose atmosphere surrounds every individual in this world, as the Alter Rebbe will presently explain.

לפיכך יכול כל הקרוב אליו לקבל חלק מבחינת רוחו שבגן עדן

whoever is close to him can receive a part of his *Ruach* which is in the Garden of Eden, i.e., an actual part of the very essence of these attributes, as opposed to a mere reflection of them,

הואיל ואינה בתוך כלי, ולא בבחינת מקום גשמי

because [the *Ruach* of the *tzaddik*] is [now] not within a vessel, nor on the plane of physical space, but in the Garden of Eden, which as will now be explained, is to be found within this world as well.

כנודע מאמר רז"ל על יעקב אבינו, עליו השלום, שנכנס עמו גן עדן

For, as is known, our Sages,³⁵ of blessed memory, said of our father Jacob, peace be to him, that “the Garden of Eden entered with him” when he came to be blessed by his father Isaac.

וכן כתוב בספר עשרה מאמרות, שאויר גן עדן מתפשט סביב כל אדם

Likewise it is stated in *Asarah Maamarot*³⁶ that the atmosphere of the Garden of Eden envelops every individual,

ונרשמים באויר זה, כל מחשבותיו ודבוריו הטובים בתורה ועבודת ה'

and in this atmosphere are recorded all his good thoughts and utterances of Torah and divine worship;

(וכן להיפך, חס ושלום, נרשמים באויר המתפשט מגיהנם סביב כל אדם)

(³⁷and likewise to the contrary, heaven forfend: [negative thoughts and utterances] are recorded in the atmosphere from *Gehenna* which envelops every individual [when he engages in them].

To summarize: After the *tzaddik's* passing, his power and his faith, his awe and his love, are not limited by his bodily vessel and by the physical world in general, but are in the Garden of Eden, which is to be found in this world as well.

הלכך נקל מאד לתלמידיו לקבל חלקם מבחינת רוח רבם העצמיות, שהם אמונתו ויראתו ואהבתו אשר עבד בהם את ה'

It is therefore very easy for his disciples to receive their part of the essential aspects of their master's *Ruach*, i.e., his faith, his awe and his love with which he served G-d,

ולא זיוום בלבד המאיר חוץ לכלי

and not merely a glimmer thereof which radiates beyond the vessel, and which reached them through his thoughts and words when the *tzaddik* was still alive.

לפי שבחינת רוחו העצמית מתעלה, בעילוי אחר עילוי

For the essential aspect of his *Ruach* — his essential faith, awe and love that relate to himself and not to his disciples — is raised, elevation beyond elevation,

להכלל בבחינת נשמתו שבגן עדן העליון, שבעולמות העליונים

to become absorbed in his *Neshamah* which is in the Higher Garden of Eden, in the supreme worlds.

ונודע שכל דבר שבקדושה אינו נעקר לגמרי מכל וכל ממקומו ומדרגתו הראשונה, וגם לאחר שנתעלה למעלה למעלה

Now it is known³⁸ that no holy entity is ever totally and utterly uprooted from its original place and level, even after it has reached the highest point.

Rather, some trace of it always remains in its original lowly location. Moreover, as noted above, the Lower Garden of Eden is to be found even in the lowly World of *Asiyah*.

ובחינה זו הראשונה, שנשארה למטה בגן עדן התחתון, במקומו ומדרגתו הראשונה

Thus it is this original aspect deriving from the *Ruach* of the *tzaddik*, remaining below in the Lower Garden of Eden in its original place and level,

היא המתפשטת בתלמידיו

which extends itself among his disciples,

For this aspect has detached itself from the essential aspect of the *Ruach* of the *tzaddik*; its entire purpose is to be vested within his disciples.

כל אחד לפי בחינת התקשרותו וקרבתו אליו, בחייו ובמותו, באהבה רבה

each one according to the level of his bond and closeness to [the *tzaddik*], during his lifetime and after his passing, out of an abounding love.

כי המשכת כל רוחניות אינה אלא על ידי אהבה רבה

For anything spiritual is elicited only by means of an abounding love.

And when this degree of love is present, the three attributes of faith, fear and love are then drawn down.

כמו שכתוב בזהר הקדוש, דרוח דרעותא דלבא אמשׁיך רוח מלעילא

Thus it is stated in the sacred *Zohar*³⁹ that the spirit (*Ruach*) of the inner heart's desire, elicits a spirit from above —

So, too, the disciple's heartfelt love for his master draws down these three attributes —

רק אם יכון לקראת אלקיו, בהכנה רבה ויגיעה עצומה

but only if he will prepare himself towards his G-d⁴⁰ with a great preparation and intense effort,

As explained by an unnamed elder chassid quoted in *Likkutei Haggahot*, “great preparation” refers to the preparation of the soul; “intense effort” refers to the toil of the body.

לקבל שלש מדות הללו כדרך שהורהו רבו, וכמאמר רז"ל: יגעת ומצאת, תאמין

so that he will receive these attributes in the way that his master taught him. [To paraphrase] the words of our Sages, of blessed memory,⁴¹ “If you have labored and [claim to have] found, believe it.”

As explained by the Rebbe Rayatz,⁴² “Only if he will prepare himself towards his G-d with a great preparation and intense effort,” means that every man's task is to vest this faith, awe and love within his physical everyday life in his observance of Torah and *mitzvot*.

It would also seem from the continuation of his explanation, that the meaning of “If you have labored..., believe it,” is that the individual then gains a great deal more than what he actually labored for, very much like an unexpected find. Through his toil, “successive generations of offshoots” are bound up with their source within the “essential aspect of [the master's] *Ruach* (i.e., his essential faith, awe and love that relate to himself and not to his disciples) [which] is raised, elevation beyond elevation, to become absorbed in his *Neshamah* which is in the Higher Garden of Eden, in the supreme worlds.” The disciples

of the *tzaddik* thus benefit not only from his *Ruach* insofar as it remained in the Lower Garden of Eden, but also from his essential *Ruach* that was incorporated within his *Neshamah* that is found in the Higher Garden of Eden. Surely, this is a gain that far outstrips the individual's effort. This level of energy, as the Rebbe Rayatz concludes, is not integrated internally within his disciples, but merely encompasses them in a transcendent manner. Nevertheless, it is so powerful that it enables even their "successive generations of offshoots" to produce unending generations of further offshoots.

The Rebbe Rayatz also states there that by toiling in the path that was handed down by their master, disciples cause his spiritual life of faith, awe and love to descend into the practicalities of their own divine service, Torah study and observance of the *mitzvot*. Through these labors, moreover, even the further disciples who are his "successive generations of offshoots" become connected with their source in the constantly ascending *Ruach* and *Neshamah* of the *tzaddik* who is in the Higher Garden of Eden.

* * *

והנה יש עוד בחינת הארה לתלמידיו

Now, there is another kind of illumination [from the *tzaddik*] to his disciples.

רק שאינה מתלבשת בתוך מוחם ממש, כראשונה

However, it does not vest itself truly in their minds⁴³ — as is the case with the first [kind of illumination] that derives from the *Ruach* of the *tzaddik*, whereby his faith, fear and love are intellectually integrated and internalized within his disciples,

רק מאירה עליהם מלמעלה

but radiates over them from above, encompassing and transcending them, for its very loftiness inhibits it from descending and being integrated within them.

והיא מעליית רוחו ונשמתו למקור חוצבו

It stems from the ascent of [the *tzaddik's*] *Ruach* and *Neshamah* to the source from which it was hewn,

דהיינו, לחקל תפוחין קדישין

that is, to *Chakal Tapuchin Kaddishin* (lit., "the orchard of the holy apples"), i.e., to the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* in the World of *Atzilut*, the Divine source of souls.

ועל ידי זה נעשה שם יחוד

This [ascent] effects a union there, between the spiritually feminine *Sefirah* of *Malchut* and the spiritually masculine levels of Divine efflux that transcend it,

על ידי העלאת מיין נוקבין, מכל מעשיו ותורתו ועבודתו אשר עבד כל ימי חייו

by means of the elevation of *mayin nukvin* (lit., “feminine waters”; i.e., by means of the mortally-initiated spiritual arousal) constituted by all of [the *tzaddik*’s] actions, his Torah, and the divine service in which he engaged all the days of his life.

For, as will be explained below in Epistle 28, all of man’s lifelong labors and attainments are revealed from their former state of concealment and shine forth at the time of his passing.

ונזרעו בחקל תפוחין קדישין, אורות עליונים מאד

And in the *Chakal Tapuchin Kaddishin*, the soul’s source, are implanted exceedingly sublime lights,

לעומת תחתונים, אשר הם תורתו ועבודתו

corresponding to and resulting from the nether [illuminations], which are [the *tzaddik*’s] Torah and worship.

His divine service thus implants lofty illuminations above, which are revealed and descend below at the time of his passing.

והארת אורות עליונים אלו מאירה על כל תלמידיו, שנעשו עובדי ה' על ידי תורתו

The illumination of these supernal lights radiates over all his disciples who became servants of G-d through his Torah and worship.

והארה זו, שעליהם מלמעלה, מכנסת בלבם הרהורי תשובה ומעשים טובים

And this illumination, which [radiates] over them from above, despite this transcendence is so powerful that it instills in their hearts thoughts of repentance and good deeds.

וכל המעשים טובים הנולדים מהארה זו, שמאירה מאורות הזרועים בשדה הנ"ל, נקרא גידולי גידולין

All the good deeds born of this illumination which radiates from the lights implanted in the above-mentioned orchard, are called “successive generations of offshoots.”

Since the illuminations themselves grew directly out of the lights implanted by the *tzaddik*, the good deeds which these illuminations in turn inspire are its offshoots of the second generation.

והארה זו היא בהעלם והסתר גדול, כמו שמש המאיר לכוכבים מתחת לארץ

This radiation is greatly hidden and concealed, just like the sun radiating to the stars from below the earth.

כדאיתא בזוהר על משה רבינו, עליו השלום

Thus it is stated in the *Zohar*⁴⁴ in reference to Moses our Master, peace be unto him,

שאחר פטירתו מתפשטת הארתו, בכל דרא ודרא, לששים רבוא נשמות

that after his passing his radiation extends in every generation to the six hundred thousand souls, all other souls being sparks of these general souls, as explained in *Tanya*, ch. 37,

כמו שמש המאיר מתחת לארץ, לששים רבוא כוכבים

like the sun which radiates to the six hundred thousand stars from below the earth.

As with Moses, so too with the *tzaddikim* who are his successors: by means of his Torah and spiritual service, every *tzaddik* illumines successive generations of offshoots — his direct disciples and in turn their disciples, and so on — when they follow his teachings in matters of Torah and spiritual service.

Addendum

The Alter Rebbe spoke above of those who benefit from the gifts that a *tzaddik* continues to bequeath after his passing, from his Ruach that remained in the Lower Garden of Eden. There he does not say “all his disciples,” but only “among his disciples.” Moreover, he adds that the extent of the spiritual bequest received by each chassid varies “according to the level of his bond and closeness to [the *tzaddik*], during his lifetime and after his passing, out of an abounding love.”

This is so because there the Alter Rebbe is speaking of their receiving from him the sublime spiritual attributes of faith, awe and love. Hence, since (as the Alter Rebbe concludes there) “anything spiritual is elicited only by means of an abounding love,” it follows that a bequest of such stature is drawn down only to those disciples whose bond to him was particularly close.

Here, however, at the close of the epistle, the Alter Rebbe speaks of the degree of illumination which radiates “over them from above,” encompassing and transcending them. This degree, which “instills in their hearts thoughts of repentance and good *deeds*,” radiates “*over all* his disciples,” upon all those who may be considered his disciples because they “became servants of G-d through his Torah and worship.”

It could be argued that the former kind of benefaction, that which is dependent upon being bound with great love, refers specifically to those who were the *tzaddik*’s disciples during his lifetime; it is they who are close to him both “during his lifetime and after his passing.” By contrast, the kind of benefaction which is transcendent, as opposed to integrated within them, also applies to those who became the *tzaddik*’s disciples after his passing, in the sense that they drew closer to G-d as a result of his teachings. These

disciples are the successive generations of his offshoots in the same way that the radiation of Moshe Rabbeinu continues after his passing to illuminate generation after generation.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#)

The Rebbe notes in his *Luach HaTikkun* that this letter was in fact written to chassidim in the Diaspora. The introductory statement that it was written “to the inhabitants of the Holy Land” is a copyist’s error, “since the conclusion of this letter (published in *Ginzei Nistarot — Or Rav*, ch. 6) urges his readers not to diminish, ‘Heaven forbid, the sacred monies that they sanctify to G-d annually...for our masters in the Holy Land.’ He continues, moreover, that the money should be ready to be sent promptly to the Holy Land.”

In a later addendum the Rebbe concludes: “The difficulty with all the above is readily understandable, for this introductory statement is found in all the editions and was seen by the Rebbeim over the generations, beginning with the author’s children and the *Tzemach Tzedek*.”

It would therefore seem that both things are true: The appropriate section (that which is printed here, minus the line about ‘the bearer of this letter,’ from which we also understand that this letter was edited for publication) was sent to the Holy Land, while the letter in its entirety was sent to the ‘heartbroken...of our country.’ For in any event it is reasonable to assume that the Alter Rebbe wrote a letter of consolation to the ‘heartbroken...of the Holy Land.’”

[2.](#) Cf. *Iyov* 11:6. [3.](#) Cf. *II Melachim* 4:9. [4.](#) Cf. *Berachot* 28b. [5.](#) *Shmot Rabbah*, end of *Parshat Pekudei*. [6.](#) I, 154b. [7.](#) Following the conventions of classical Hebrew, the original letter addresses its readers indirectly in the polite third person; here, for clarity’s sake, this has been rendered in the second person. [8.](#) Cf. *Ezekiel* 9:4. [9.](#) Often used in halachic responsa. Addendum of the Rebbe: “Likewise in *Rambam, Hilchot Yibum*, end of ch. 4, in the text of a get *chalitzah* and a *ketubbah yevamin*, [the deceased is referred to as having] ‘left life to our Rabbis and to all of Israel.’” [10.](#) *Chavakuk* 2:4. [11.](#) *Mishlei* 19:23. [12.](#) Cf. *Shir HaShirim* 8:6, where the connection with “life” is implied by the context. [13.](#) Brackets are in the original text. [14.](#) *Iyov* 34:14. [15.](#) *Mishlei* 10:16. [16.](#) Cf. *Tehillim* 34:13. [17.](#) Cf. *I Shmuel* 25:29. [18.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Quoting *Eichah* 4:20.” [19.](#) Cf. *Tehillim* 64:7. [20.](#) *Mishlei* 27:19. [21.](#) *Zohar* II, 166b, *et al.* [22.](#) *Sifrei* (quoted in *Rashi*) on *Devarim* 6:7. [23.](#) III, 71b. [24.](#) *Devarim* 7:11. [25.](#) *Eruvin* 22a. [26.](#) *Tehillim* 97:11. [27.](#) Cf. *Bereishit* 27:27. [28.](#) Cf. *Yeshayahu* 35:8. [29.](#) Cf. *Bamidbar* 17:28. [30.](#) Cf. *Bamidbar* 17:28. [31.](#) *Chavakuk* 2:4. [32.](#) *Mishlei* 19:23. [33.](#) *Mishlei* 21:21. [34.](#) *Avodah Zarah* 5b; *Rashi* on *Devarim* 29:6. [35.](#) *Bereishit Rabbah* 65:22; *Zohar* III, 84a. [36.](#) *Maamar Chikur Din* 2:12. [37.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [38.](#) *Pardes, Shaar* 14, sec. 1; *Etz Chayim, Shaar* 34, sec. 3; *et al.* [39.](#) Cf. *Zohar* II, 162b, *et al.* [40.](#) Cf. *Amos* 4:12. [41.](#) Cf. *Megillah* 6b. [42.](#) The *maamar* entitled *Pizar Natan LaEvyonim* 5692. [43.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “For what binds a student with his master is the intellect with which he meditates upon his master’s teachings, intellect and understanding.” [44.](#) [Emended here from “in the *Tikkunim*.”] Note of the Rebbe in *He’arot VeTikkunim*: “To date I have

found the entire subject in *Zohar* III, 273a; see also there, p. 216b. In the *Tikkunim* (in *Tikkun* 69, p. 112a and 104a, and in *Tikkun* 70, p. 138a), I have found only part of what is explained here. Possibly the copyist here in *Iggeret HaKodesh* confused this with the phrase ‘in the *Tikkunim*’ in *Tanya*, ch. 44.”



Epistle 28

In the previous Epistle, written to console the chassidic brotherhood after the passing of the saintly R. Mendele Vitebsker, the Alter Rebbe quotes from the *Zohar* to the effect that a *tzaddik* is even more accessible in this world after his passing than while he was still alive. Moreover, after his passing his chassidim continue to receive from him both spiritual benefactions which enhance their Torah study and divine service, and protection in material matters.

Following that Epistle the original editors¹ placed the present discourse, which the Alter Rebbe wrote by way of consolation to his illustrious colleague, relative-by-marriage, and dear friend, R. Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, following the tragic passing of his son. Here the Alter Rebbe explains how the passing of a *tzaddik* “effects salvations in the midst of the earth,” atoning even for intentional sins.

מה שכתב למחותנו, הרב הגאון המפורסם, איש אלקים קדוש ה', נר ישראל, עמוד הימני, פטיש החזק

This letter was written [by the Alter Rebbe] to his relative-by-marriage — the famous rabbi and Gaon, the G-dly man, the holy man of G-d,² Lamp of Israel, pillar of the right hand, mighty hammer³ —

מורנו הרב לוי יצחק, נשמתו עדן, אב בית דין דקהלה קדושה בארדיטשוב

our master, R. Levi Yitzchak (may his soul rest in Eden), head of the Rabbinical Court of the holy community of Berditchev,

לנחמו על פטירת בנו, הרב החסיד מורנו ורבנו הרב מאיר, נשמתו עדן

to console him on the passing⁴ of his son, the pious rabbi, R. Meir (may his soul rest in Eden).

* * *

למה נסמכה פרשת מרים לפרשת פרה

“Why was the passage concerning the passing of Miriam⁵ adjoined to the passage concerning the Red Heifer⁶?

לומר לך: מה פרה מכפרת וכו'

— To teach you that just as the Heifer effects atonement, [so, too, does the passing of the righteous].”

Commenting on this quotation from the *Gemara*,⁷ *Tosafot*⁸ explains that the Red Heifer atones for the sin of the Golden Calf, and in the same way the passing of the righteous effects atonement.

וצריך להבין למה נסמכה דוקא לפרה אדומה

Now it needs to be understood why [the passage concerning the passing of Miriam] was adjoined specifically to [the passage concerning] the Red Heifer

הנעשה חוץ לשלש מחנות, אלא דחטאת קרייה רחמנא

(which was prepared *outside* the three camps,⁹ and as such was not a sacrifice proper, except that the Torah calls it¹⁰ a sin-offering),¹¹

ולא נסמכה לפרשת חטאת, הנעשה בפנים על גבי המזבח, כפרה ממש

and it was not adjoined to the passage concerning the sin-offering that was prepared within, on the altar, [and as such effects] actual atonement.

Alternatively, the Hebrew text could be understood to mean “on the actual *altar* of atonement,” or (preferably) that the *sin-offering* was “actual atonement,” unlike the Red Heifer which was primarily a rite of purification.

To revert to the question concerning the juxtaposition of the two passages, the Alter Rebbe explains that an offering connoted an “arousal from below,” from the soul of the animal that derives from *kelipat nogah*. This, in turn, elicited a reciprocal “arousal from Above,” drawing down a finite order of Divine light that can permeate the finite world and be integrated and ingested within it. (This characteristic explains why offerings are referred to as the “*food* of the altar.”) Being finite, this contracted order of Divine light was only able to effect atonement of unwitting sins, those that derive from undue domination by the animal soul which derives from *kelipat nogah*.

The Red Heifer, by contrast, produces the “*sanctifying purification waters*” (*Kiddush mei chatat*); i.e., it draws down an illumination from the most supremely sanctified levels of Divinity (*Kodesh HaElyon*) that utterly transcend this world. This intense illumination can transform the darkness of *Tohu* into the light of *Tikkun*, and secure purification for even the harshest degree of impurity (*Avi Avot HaTumah*), which is far lower than *kelipat nogah*.

In the same way, the passing of a *tzaddik* draws down a Divine illumination that transcends the world, deriving as it does from that element within the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy which is called the *Tikkun* of *Notzer*. The name of this *Tikkun*, which comprises the same letters as *Ratzon*, brings about an *et ratzon*, “an auspicious time,” and secures atonement for the sins of the generation, even those that are committed willfully and that derive from the three completely impure *kelipot*.

In this regard, the passing of a *tzaddik* is thus more akin to the Red Heifer than to a sin-offering.

אמנם נודע מזהר הקדוש והאריז"ל, סוד הקרבנות שעל גבי המזבח

Now, [12](#) the mystical principle of the sacrifices offered on the altar is known from the sacred *Zohar* [13](#) and from R. Isaac Luria, [14](#) of blessed memory:

הן בחינת העלאה מיין נוקבין, מנפש הבהמית שבנוגה

They are an instance of the elevation of *mayin nukvin* (lit., “feminine waters”; i.e., a mortally-initiated spiritual arousal) deriving from the animal soul, [which receives its life-force from] *kelipat nogah*,

אל שרשן ומקורן

[this elevation ascending] to their root and source,

הן בחינת ד' חיות שבמרכבה, הנושאות את הכסא

i.e., the forms of the four Animals of the Celestial Chariot which bear the Throne, [15](#) as described in *Ezekiel*, ch. 1:

פני שור ופני נשר וכו'

the Face of the Ox, and the Face of the Eagle, and so on.

The former level of Divinity is the source of the souls of all animals, the latter is the source of the souls of all birds, these being the two categories of creatures from which offerings are brought. (The other two categories, the Face of the Lion and the Face of Man, are alluded to in the closing phrase, “and so on.”)

Offerings thus constitute an elevation and an “arousal from below” from a willing recipient toward the level of Divinity (here called the four Animals of the Chariot) which is the Source of all things within the finite world and which hence has a connection with it.

ועל ידי זה, נמשכים ויורדים מיין דוכרין מבחינת אדם שעל הכסא, הנקרא מלכא וזעיר אנפין

As a result, reciprocating this arousal, the *mayin duchrin* (the “male waters” from the benefactor Above) are elicited and descend from the level of Divinity called (in *Ezekiel*) “the Man upon the Throne,” Who is [also] referred to as *Malka* (“King”) and *Z’eir Anpin* (i.e., the bracket of six “masculine” attributes preceding the recipient or “feminine” *Sefirah* of *Malchut*).

The resultant illumination flows down to the world and becomes vested and integrated within it. Hence, as mentioned above, offerings are termed “*food* for the altar,” for they draw down a level of Divine light which can be spiritually ingested.

אכן בשריפת הפרה אדומה, הנה על ידי השלכת עץ ארז ואזוב וכו'

As for the burning of the Red Heifer, however, it is on account of the throwing in of the cedar wood and the hyssop, and so on, the function of both of which is *hamshachah*, i.e., drawing down sanctity from Above,^{[16](#)}

ונתינת מים חיים אל האפר

and [moreover] the placing of running water into the ashes,

נקרא בשם קידוש מי חטאת במשנה

that in the *Mishnah*^{[17](#)} [this process] is called the “sanctification (*Kiddush*) of the purifying waters.”

והיא בחינת קדש העליון, הנקרא בשם טל דבדולחא

This relates — not only etymologically — to *Kodesh HaElyon* (“the supreme sanctity”), referred to as *Tala DiBedulcha* (lit., “the Dew of Bdeilium”; cf. the Torah’s descriptions of the manna^{[18](#)}).

Unlike the heavenly benefactions that are termed “rain”, for rain results from an “arousal from below” (as it is written,^{[19](#)} “And a vapor rose from the ground and watered...”), the above-described “dew” is a spontaneous “arousal from Above” that transcends dependence on any antecedent “arousal from below.”

כמו שכתוב בזהר הקדוש, שהיא בחינת חכמה עילאה ומוחא סתימאה דאריך אנפין

As stated in the sacred *Zohar*,^{[20](#)} this [*Tala DiBedulcha*] is an expression of the Supreme *Chochmah* and the *Mocha Setimaah* of *Arich Anpin*; i.e., it is the level of *Chochmah* within *Keter* which entirely transcends the world.

ועלה איתמר בדוכתי טובא בזהר הקדוש: בחכמה איתברירו

Of this [level of *Chochmah* and *Mocha Setimaah*] it is said in many places in the sacred *Zohar* that “through *Chochmah* they are refined” and rectified;^{[21](#)}

ואתהפכא חשוכא לנהורא, דהיינו: עולם התיקון

and then, when by means of the “sanctification of the purifying waters” Divine light is drawn down from this level, darkness is converted to light, that is, [to] the World of *Tikkun*,

שנתברר ונתתקן על ידי מוחא סתימאה דאריך אנפין

which becomes refined and rectified by means of the *Mocha Setimaah* of *Arich Anpin*;

מעולם התהו ושבירת הכלים שנפלו בבריאה, יצירה ועשיה וכו'

[i.e., the World of *Tikkun* is refined and rectified] from the World of *Tohu* and the Breaking of the Vessels [whose sparks] fell into [the Worlds of] *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, and so on,

כנודע

as is known.

The spiritual task of the Jew is to extract, refine and elevate these sparks.

ולזאת מטהרת טומאת המת

This is why [the Red Heifer] purifies one from defilement [contracted by contact] with a corpse,

אף שהוא אבי אבות וכו', ולמטה מטה מנוגה

even though this [corpse] is the ultimate degree [of impurity], and far, far lower than *Nogah*.

For the “sanctification of the purifying waters” is drawn down from the supreme *Chochmah* and the *Mocha Setimaah* of *Arich Anpin*, an illumination that transcends the world so utterly that it is able to transform the world's darkness into light.

* * *

The Alter Rebbe will now explain how this relates to the passing of a *tzaddik*, for this likewise draws down a degree of illumination that utterly transcends the world, transforming its darkness into light and bringing about atonement for the sins of the generation.

והנה מודעת זאת, דאבא יונק ממזל השמיני

Now, it is known²² that *Abba* (lit., “father”, a Kabbalistic name for the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah*) draws its sustenance from the eighth *mazal*.

I.e., the eighth in the Torah’s enumeration of the Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy,²³ which correspond to the thirteen “tufts” of the celestial “beard”, the individual hairs of which are conduits for the emanation of a tenuous flow of life-force.

הוא תקון נוצר חסד

This is the tuft of *Notzer Chesed* that appears in the above listing: *Notzer Chesed la’alafim* (“He guards *Chesed* for thousands [of generations]”).

נוצר: אותיות רצון

[The Hebrew word] *Notzer* (“guards”) is composed of the same letters as [the Hebrew word] *Ratzon* (“Divine favor”).

והיא עת רצון, המתגלה ומאיר בבחינת גילוי, מלמעלה למטה, בעת פטירת צדיקי עליון

This is the *et ratzon* (“the time of Divine favor,” i.e., “the auspicious time”) that becomes revealed and radiates in a manifest way, from above downwards, at the time of the passing of *tzaddikim* of stature,

עובדי ה' באהבה, במסירת נפשם לה' בחייהם, ערבית ושחרית, בקריאת שמע

who serve G-d out of love, surrendering their soul to G-d during their lifetime every evening and morning when reading the *Shema*.

שעל ידי זה היו מעלין מיין נוקבין לאבא ואימא בקריאת שמע, כידוע

For thereby they would elevate *mayin nukvin* (lit., “feminine waters”; i.e., they would initiate a spiritual arousal expressing their desire to receive a flow of Divine energy) to *Abba* and *Imma* (i.e., to *Chochmah* and *Binah*) during the Reading of *Shema*, as is known.

(וכן בתלמוד תורה, דמחכמה נפקא)

(²⁴The same applies to their study of the Torah, which derives from *Chochmah*; this, too, results in an elevation of *mayin nukvin* toward *Chochmah*.)

ועל ידי זה היו נמשכים ויורדים בחינת מיין דוכרין מתיקון ונוצר חסד

Thereby, the *mayin duchrin* (lit., the “masculine waters” which thereupon flow from above) were elicited and drawn down from the tuft of *Notzer Chesed*, since it is from this Divine attribute that *Chochmah* draws its sustenance, as stated above.

והם הם המאירים בבחינת גילוי בפטירתם

And, indeed, it is these [illuminations] that radiate in a manifest way at the time of the passing [of *tzaddikim*].

The illuminations that are drawn down through the self-sacrifice of *tzaddikim* during their lifelong recitation of the *Shema* and their Torah study, become revealed at the time of their passing.

כנודע, שכל עמל האדם, שעמלה נפשו בחייו, למעלה, בבחינת העלם והסתר

For as is known, all the effort of man, in which his soul toiled during his lifetime, [and which remains] above, in a hidden and obscured state,

מתגלה ומאיר בבחינת גילוי, מלמעלה למטה, בעת פטירתו

is revealed and radiates in a manifest way, from above downwards, at the time of his passing.

Thus all the unseen spiritual effects of the *tzaddik's* Reading of *Shema* and of his Torah study, are revealed in the world below at the time of his passing.

והנה, על ידי גילוי הארת תיקון ונוצר חסד בפטירתו

Now, by the illumination from the tuft of *Notzer Chesed* that is revealed at the time of the passing [of *tzaddikim*],

מאיר חסד ה' מעולם ועד עולם על יראיו

the *Chesed* of G-d radiates from world to world — from the World of Concealment down to the World of Revelation — over those who fear Him,^{[25](#)}

ופועל ישועות בקרב הארץ, לכפר על עון הדור

and effects salvations in the midst of the earth,^{[26](#)} to atone for the sin of the generation,

אף גם על הזדונות, שהן מג' קליפות הטמאות, שלמטה מנוגה

even for the deliberate sins which are of the three impure *kelipot* which are inferior to *nogah*, for *kelipat nogah* can give rise only to unwitting sins, whose atonement is secured through sacrificial offerings.

לפי שמזל דנוצר: ממוחין סתימין דאריך אנפין, מקור הבירורים

For the *mazal* of *Notzer Chesed* is of the *Mochin Setimin* of *Arich Anpin*, i.e., the *Chochmah* of *Keter*, which is the source of the task of *beirurim*, the refinement of the material world by extracting and uplifting the Divine sparks within it.

ואתהפכא חשוכא דשבירת הכלים, לנהורא דעולם התיקון

The darkness incurred by the Breaking of the Vessels is thereby converted into the light of the World of *Tikkun*.

This light is therefore able to atone even for the deliberate sins that derive from the three impure *kelipot* — the lowest level that resulted from the Breaking of the Vessels.

מה שאין כן בקרבנות שעל גבי המזבח

This is not the case, though, with the sacrifices that are [offered] upon the altar.

שאינן מכפרים אלא על השגגות, שהן מהתגברות נפש הבהמית שמנוגה

They atone only for inadvertent sins which come about because of the strengthening of the animal soul [whose life-force derives] from *nogah*,

כמו שכתוב בלקוטי תורה, פרשת ויקרא

as is stated in *Likkutei Torah* of the *AriZal*, *Parshat Vayikra*.

ולכן נסמכה לפרשת פרה דוקא

This, then, is why [the passage concerning Miriam] was adjoined expressly to the passage concerning the Red Heifer:

מה פרה וכו'

— [To teach you that] just as the Heifer [effects atonement, so, too, does the passing of the righteous].”

ובילקוט, פרשת שמיני, הגיה: מי חטאת וכו'

The *Yalkut*, *Parshat Shemini*, [for “the Heifer”] reads “the waters of purification....”

This is more in keeping with the explanation provided above, for the Red Heifer’s atonement and its impact on the three impure *kelipot* is not a result of burning the Heifer, which is spiritually symbolic of elevation, but a result of the “sanctification of the purifying waters,” an act which draws down benefactions from above, just as water flows downward from above — from Supernal Holiness and *Chochmah* of *Keter*, the source of refinement and purification.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “See the ‘Approbation of the ... sons ... of the ... author’ which appears at the beginning of *Tanya*, [and which states that they were responsible for arranging the manuscript letters of *Iggeret HaKodesh* for publication].” [2.](#) Cf. *II Melachim* 4:9. [3.](#) Cf. the metaphors used by the Sages in *Berachot* 28b to denote

resounding scholarship. [4.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “In the year 5566 [1806].” [5.](#) *Bamidbar* 20:1ff. [6.](#) *Ibid.*, ch. 19. [7.](#) *Moed Katan* 28a. [8.](#) *S.v. Mah parah*. See also *Rashi* on the beginning of *Parshat Chukat*. [9.](#) Cf. *Rashi* on *Bamidbar* 19:3, based on *Yoma* 68a. [10.](#) Cf. *Rashi* on verse 9, based on *Avodah Zarah* 23b and *Chullin* 11a. [11.](#) Text and parentheses here follow a gloss of the Rebbe in *He’arot VeTikkunim*, concerning a variant ms. reading which omitted the six Hebrew words here translated as “the three camps, except that the Torah calls it a sin-offering.” There the Rebbe refers the reader to the “Important Notification” (*Modaah Rabbah*) at the beginning of the edition of 5660 [1900], which states that *Iggeret HaKodesh* was carefully proofread against various mss. for that edition, which was not the case with earlier printings. [12.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Concerning the text which follows, see at length in *Likkutei Torah*, beginning of *Parshat Chukat*.” [13.](#) I, 64b. [14.](#) *Likkutei Torah* of the *AriZal*, *Parshat Vayikra*. [15.](#) *Bechaye*, *Parshat Terumah* 25:10, *et al.* [16.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “So it is explained here. But see *Likkutei Torah*, *Chukat*, *loc. cit.*, especially the conclusion of the passage beginning *Tosefet Biur* on the *maamar* beginning *VeYikchu Eilecha* (p. 61b), [where the Alter Rebbe explains that the cedar wood and the hyssop relate to the *avodah* of elevation, whereas only the addition of the waters is an *avodah* of drawing Divine energy downward].” [17.](#) *Parah*, ch. 6. [18.](#) *Bamidbar* 11:7 and *Shmot* 16:13. [19.](#) *Bereishit* 2:6. [20.](#) Cf. *Zohar* III, 128b. [21.](#) Gloss of the Rebbe to *Likkutei Biurim LeTanya* by Rabbi Yehoshua Korf: “See *Torah Or*, *Parshat Bereishit*, the discourse beginning *VaYomer ... Hein HaAdam*; *ibid.*, *Megillat Esther*, the discourse beginning *U’vevoah*; in the supplements there, the discourse beginning *LeHavin Inyan Chalav U’Dvash*, sec. 2. See also *Zohar* II, 254b; *Etz Chayim*, *Shaar* 18, sec. 5; *Mavo She’arim*, *Shaar* 5, 1:2; *Sefer HaMitzvot* by the *Tzemach Tzedek*, *Issur Avodat Baal-Mum*; *et al.*; — where these contradictions are resolved.” [22.](#) *Etz Chayim*, *Shaar* 16, ch. 6; *et al.* [23.](#) *Shmot* 34:6-7. [24.](#) Text and parentheses here follow a gloss of the Rebbe in *Luach HaTikkun*. [25.](#) Cf. *Tehillim* 103:17. [26.](#) Cf. *op. cit.* 74:12.



Epistle 29

The focus of the present letter is the distinctive value of studying the *halachot*, the laws of the Torah. The Sages deem these laws to be the "crown of Torah," because the Supernal Will is most fully revealed within the laws of the Oral Torah, inasmuch as they clearly spell out G-d's will with regard to the performance of the *mitzvot*.

In fact, as the Alter Rebbe explains, the Supernal Will as expressed in the *mitzvot* derives from an even higher level of Divinity than does the *Chochmah* ("wisdom") of the Torah. Indeed, it is this Divine Will that furnishes the "garments" which enable the soul to absorb the Divine radiance that is manifest in the Garden of Eden.

אשת חיל עטרת בעלה כו'

"A woman of valor is the crown of her husband..."

This verse in the Book of *Mishlei*¹ is a metaphor for the Torah. The Torah is also likened to a wife in another verse:² "See to live your life with the woman whom you love," which our Sages, of blessed memory, explain³ to mean the Torah.

Here, too, "a woman of valor" refers to the Torah. More specifically, within the Torah itself the Oral Torah is the "wife" and the Written Torah is the "husband". The "woman of valor," which the Alter Rebbe will later explain refers to the *halachot* of Torah, serves as the "crown" to her husband, the Written Torah.

איתא בגמ' פ"ד דמגילה ודאשתמש בתגא חלף כו' זה המשתמש במי ששונה הלכות כתרה של תורה כו'

The *Gemara*, in ch. 4 of *Megillah*,⁴ [commenting on the teaching of our Sages in *Avot*⁵ that] "He who makes use of the crown, passes away [from this world]," states: "This applies to him who makes use of one who studies *halachot*, which are the crown of the Torah..."

Unlike the text of the *Bach*, which omits "the crown of the Torah," the Alter Rebbe here accepts the standard printed version as quoted above.

תנא דבי אליהו כל השונה הלכות מובטח לו כו'

The *Gemara* in *Megillah* goes on to say: "It was taught in the Academy of Elijah that 'Whoever studies *halachot* is assured [of a share in *Olam Haba* - the World to Come].'"

At the conclusion of Tractate *Niddah*⁶ the text reads, "Whoever studies *halachot* daily" *Rashi* explains there that the term *halachot* refers to *Mishnah*, *Beraita*, and *Halachah L'Moshe MiSinai*. In Epistle XXIII (above), the Alter Rebbe (based on *Rashi* elsewhere⁷) defines *halachot* as "clearly adjudicated laws of practical application."

וצריך להבין למה נקראו ההלכות בשם תגא וכתרה של תורה

Now it needs to be understood why the *halachot* are referred to as a "crown" or "the crown of the Torah."

וגם למה השונה הלכות דוקא מובטח לו כו' ולא שאר ד"ת

Furthermore, why is it that he who studies specifically *halachot* is assured [of a share in the World to Come], and not other Torah subjects, such as Scriptures, *Midrash* and the like?

וכן להבין מארו"ל בפ"א דמנחות אפי' לא שנה אדם אלא פרק אחד שחרית כו' יצא י"ח

One also needs to understand the teaching of our Sages, of blessed memory, in ch. 11 of *Menachot*,⁸ that "even if one studied only a single chapter in the morning [and a single chapter in the evening], he has fulfilled his obligation to study Torah."

The *Gemara* states there that the individual has fulfilled the commandment that⁹ "this book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth." According to a second opinion cited later in the *Gemara*, that this verse does not constitute an obligation, it is to be understood that according to this opinion it is still obligatory to study Torah at all times; however, if one is unable to do so, he can fulfill his obligation by studying a chapter in the morning and a chapter in the evening.

ולמה אינו יוצא י"ח בשאר ד"ת

Why is one's duty not fulfilled by other Torah subjects?

The expression "one chapter" indicates that the study is of *Mishnah*, the Oral Torah. Why can one not fulfill his obligation with the study of Scripture, *Midrash* and the like?

* * *

אך מודעת זאת מ"ש האריז"ל שכל אדם מישראל צריך לבא בגלגולים רבים עד שיקיים כל תרי"ג מצות התורה במחשבה דיבור ומעשה

However, it is well known that R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, stated¹⁰ that [the soul of] every¹¹ Jew needs to be reincarnated many times, until he will fulfill all 613 commandments of the Torah in thought, speech and action, i.e., using all three soul-garments with which one performs the commandments.

להשלים לבושי נפשו ולתקנם שלא יהא לבושא דחסרא כו'

This is in order to complete the garments of his soul and to correct them, so that no garment will be incomplete.

As explained in *Tanya*, ch. 4, the divine soul has three garments - the thought, speech and action of the 613 commandments of the Torah. If the performance of one of these commandments is lacking, the soul's garments are incomplete. It is thus necessary for each soul to perform all of the commandments.

לבד מצות התלויות במלך שהוא מוציא כל ישראל כי הוא כללות כולם כו'

Excepted¹² are the commandments incumbent upon a king,¹³ because he discharges the obligation of all of Israel, as he is a corporate collective of them all.¹⁴

All Jews are incorporated within the king. When he performs those commandments that depend upon him, it is therefore considered as if all the Jewish people had performed

them. As to the other commandments, however, if in one incarnation an individual did not perform them all, he must be reincarnated so that he will be able to do so.

Why must one have the garments of all 613 commandments?

והטעם הוא כדי להלביש כל תרי"ג בחי' וכחות שבנפשו

The reason is, in order to garb all the 613 aspects and powers of one's soul,

These 613 "organs" of the soul (see *Tanya*, ch. 4) must all be clothed in the garments of the *mitzvot*.

אחת מהנה לא נעדרה כו'

so that not one of them - of these 613 aspects and powers of the soul - will be lacking.

וביאור ענין הכרח וצורך לבושים אלו מבואר בזהר ומובן לכל משכיל

An explanation for the indispensability of these garments is given in the *Zohar*,^{[15](#)} and is understandable by every thinking person.

כי להיות שנפש רוח ונשמה שבאדם הן בחי' נבראים וא"א לשום נברא להשיג שום השגה בבורא ויוצר הכל
א"ס ב"ה

For the *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, and *Neshamah* in man, are created entities, and hence inherently limited, and it is impossible for any created being to attain any apprehension of the blessed Creator and Former of all, Who is infinite.

This, of course, is true with respect to Divinity as it totally transcends all worlds.

וגם אחרי אשר האיר ה' מאורו ית' והאציל בבחי' השתלשלות מדרגות רבות מדרגה אחר מדרגה

Moreover, even after G-d has radiated [a glimmer] of His blessed light, and has caused an emanation in the form of an evolution of numerous [descending] degrees, level beyond level,

בבחי' צמצומים עצומים ולבושים רבים ועצומים

by way of intense contractions and numerous, immense garments that obscure G-dliness -

הידועים לי"ח

these are familiar to those adept in the Esoteric Wisdom,^{[16](#)}

ונקראים באד"ר בשם שערות

and in the *Idra Rabba*¹⁷ these [contracted degrees of divine illumination] are referred to as "hairs".

Because the life-force present in hair is so tenuous that it does not even convey sensation, the subtle glimmers of Divine energy that filter through the above-described contractions are referred to metaphorically as "hairs".

וכדכתיב בדניאל ושער רישיה כעמר נקא כו'

And as is written in *Daniel*,¹⁸ "And the hair of His head is like white wool..." from which we see that certain degrees of spiritual down flow are referred to by the term "hair"

—

אעפ"כ לא יכלה הנפש או הרוח ונשמה למסבל האור

nevertheless, even after the screening effected by these mighty contractions, neither the *Nefesh* nor the *Ruach* and *Neshamah* can endure the light.

כי טוב ומתוק האור וכו'

For the light is good and sweet... – so intensely so, in fact, that no created being can receive it without expiring, as will soon be explained.

כמ"ש לחזות בנועם ה' לשון נעימות ועריבות ומתיקות ותענוג עצום לאין קץ

As it is written,¹⁹ "to behold the pleasantness (*no'am*) of G-d." [The term *no'am*] denotes pleasantness, agreeableness, and sweetness, and an infinitely intense delight,

כמ"ש אז תתענג על ה'

as it is written,²⁰ "Then you will delight yourself in G-d,"

והשביע בצחצחות כו'

and²¹ "He will sate your soul with a pleasurable thirst (*tzachtzachot*)...."²²

לשון צחה צמא

[The word *tzachtzachot*] is related to²³ *tzichei tzama* "parched with thirst"; it denotes a thirst that cannot be slaked, for the pleasure involved is endless,

כמ"ש בזהר

as stated in the *Zohar*.²⁴

ואין בכחה לקבל הנעימות ועריבות הצחצחות שלא תצא מנרתקה ותתבטל ממציאותה כנר באבוקה

It is not in [the soul's] power to absorb the pleasantness and agreeableness of the [above] pleasurable thirst without leaving its husk, i.e., its limitation, and becoming wholly nullified, just like a candle-flame [becomes entirely nullified] in a torch.

Just as the light of a candle loses its identity as an independent luminary once it is confronted by the intense diffusion of a fiery torch, so, too, the soul would cease to exist as an independent entity if it were to absorb the radiation emanating from the intense light and sweetness of G-dliness,

אם לא שמבחי' אור זה עצמו תשתלשל ותמשך ממנו איזו הארה מועטת בדרך השתלשלות מדריגה אחר
מדרגה בצמצומים רבים

were it not that from this very light there will evolve and issue forth some minute radiation, by way of an evolution of level after level, with multitudinous contractions,

עד שיברא ממנה לבוש אחד נברא מעין מהות אור זה להלביש הנפש רוח ונשמה

until a single garment is created of [this contracted light], a creation akin to the nature of this light, with which to garb the *Nefesh, Ruach, and Neshamah*.

ודרך לבוש זה שהוא מעין אור זה תוכל ליהנות מזיו אור זה ולהשיגו ולא תתבטל ממצאותה

By way of this garment, which is akin to this light, [the soul] can derive enjoyment from the ray of this light, and apprehend it, without becoming wholly nullified out of existence.

Since this garment derives from this light, it not only withstands its intensity itself, but also enables the soul to receive the light. Being a created entity, this garment can be "worn" by the soul. And what is this garment? - It is the garment of *mitzvot*.

וכמשל הרואה בשמש דרך עששית זכה ומאירה וכו'

This is analogous to someone looking at the sun through a fine and lucid speculum.

וכמ"ש ויבא משה בתוך הענן ויעל כו'

Thus it is written, [25](#) "And Moses entered the midst of the cloud, and he ascended [the mountain]";

שנתלבש בענן ועלה וראה דרך הענן וכו'

that is, he vested himself in the cloud and ascended, and saw by way of the cloud.... i.e., the cloud served as a garment by means of which Moses was able to receive the revelations on Sinai.

כמ"ש בזה"ב דר"י ורכ"ט

Thus it is explained in the *Zohar*, Volume II, pp. 210 and 229.

והנה אור זה הגנוז לצדיקים לע"ל הנק' בשם נועם ה' וצחצחות להתענג עלה'

Now this light, hidden away for the righteous for the Time to Come, is termed (as above) the "pleasantness of G-d," and the "pleasurable thirst" of "delighting in G-d,

וד' מאות עלמין דכסופין דמתענגי בהון צדיקייא כו' כמ"ש ארבע מאות שקל כסף כו'

" and also²⁶ "the 400 Worlds of Longing in which the *tzaddikim* delight..." as it is written,²⁷ "400 *shekalim* of silver (*keseif*)..."

The Aramaic phrase translated "Worlds of Longing" is *almin dekisufin*. The root of the second word (*keseif*) means not only "silver" but also "longing" (as in the phrase²⁸ *nichsof nichsafta*). Hence the Kabbalah relates the above reference to "400 *shekalim* of *keseif*" to the 400 Worlds of Longing whose spiritual delights are reserved for *tzaddikim*.

הנה יש בו מעלות ומדרגות רבות מאד גבוה מעל גבוה

This [light] comprises very many rungs and levels, one superior to the other.

אך הארה מועטת היורדת מדרגה אחר מדרגה לברוא לבוש זה היא מבחי' מדרגה האחרונה שבאור זה

But the minute radiation, which descends level after level to create this garment that garbs the soul, belongs to the lowest level of this light.

ונקראת בשם מדרגה החיצונה ואחוריים דרך משל

Metaphorically speaking, it is referred to as the external level, or *achorayim*,

כמ"ש בזהר דר"ח ע"ב (עיין בס' מק"מ) ור"י ע"ב ומה דאשתאר כו'

as stated in the *Zohar*, p. 208b (²⁹ cf. the commentary entitled *Mikdash Melech*³⁰) and 210b: "And that which is left...", meaning that the light which is the source of the garment is of the most external or hindmost level.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain that the external level of this radiance, from which these garments derive, is called the Supernal Will. Will, as is soon to be explained, is the external aspect (i.e., a consequence) of pleasure, or delight.

והנה כמו שבנשמת האדם יש בה כח התענוג שמתענגת ממה שיש לה ענג ממנו כמו מהשכלת שכל חדש וכה"ג

Now, in the soul of man there is a faculty for pleasure: [the soul] takes pleasure in what it finds pleasurable,³¹ as in the conception of a new insight, or the like.

ובח' חיצוניות ואחוריים של כח ובח' התענוג שבה היא בח' כח הרצון שבה שהוא רוצה מה שהוא רוצה
דהיינו דבר שאינו צער שהצער היפך התענוג

The external and hindmost aspect of [the soul's] power and state of delight is its faculty of will, willing that which it wills, i.e.,³² something that is not painful, for pain is the opposite of delight.

A person desires something because it gives him pleasure. Thus, pleasure is the "inner" (or motivating) aspect of desire, which is considered "external" (i.e., consequent) to it.

וככה עד"מ באור א"ס ב"ה ג"כ כביכול

Metaphorically speaking, it is the same with the [infinite] *EinSof*-light, as it were:

הרצון העליון ב"ה היא בח' חיצוניות ואחוריים לבח' ענג העליון ונועם ה' וצחצחות ועלמין דכסופין הנ"ל

The Supernal Will is the external and hindmost aspect [i.e., the resultant *chitzoniyut* and *achorayim*] of the above-mentioned Supernal Delight, the "pleasantness of G-d," the "pleasurable thirst," and the "Worlds of Longing."

Thus, when we state that the garment for the soul derives from the *achorayim* and *chitzoniyut* of the Supernal Delight, this means that it derives from the Supernal Will.

הגם שהם מיוחדים בתכלית היחוד שהוא ית' ורצונו אחד

Though these - [the Supernal Delight and the Supernal Will] -are fused in absolute unity, for [G-d] and His Will are one,

ולא כרצון האדם ח"ו לא מיניה ולא מקצתיה

and not (heaven forfend) like the will of man, neither wholly nor partially,

ואין דמיון ביניהם כלל

there being no similarity whatever between them,

Man's will is not wholly one with the person himself; it is one of the soul-faculties that he possesses. By contrast, G-d and His Will are one. How, then, can we differentiate Above between Pleasure and Will, saying that G-d's Pleasure is internal and His Will is external?

אעפ"כ דברה תורה כלשון בני"א לשכך האזן מה שיכולה לשמוע במשל ומליצה מנשמת האדם הכלולה מכח התענוג והרצון והחכמה והבינה וכו'

nevertheless,³³ "the Torah speaks in human idiom" in order³⁴ "to modulate for the ear what it is able to hear," with allegory and metaphor relating to the soul of man, which compounds the faculty of delight, will, wisdom, understanding, and so on.

just as in man pleasure is described as "internal" and will as "external", so too do we describe the corresponding attributes Above.

וכנראה בחוש שכשאדם משכיל איזה שכל חדש נפלא אזי באותה רגע עכ"פ נולד לו תענוג נפלא בשכלו

This is empirically evident, for when a person conceives some wonderful new insight, then at that moment, at least, a wondrous delight is born³⁵ in his mind.

מכלל שהתענוג הוא למעלה מעלה מבחי' השכל והחכמה רק שמלובש בבחי' שכל וחכמה

Thus it follows that the capacity for pleasure surpasses by far the faculty of intellect and wisdom; it merely is vested in the faculty of intellect and wisdom.

וכשהאדם מרגיש השכל וחכמה דהיינו שמשיגה ומבינה היטב אזי מרגיש ג"כ בחי' התענוג המלובש בחכמה

Thus when a man *feels* [a subject of] intellect and wisdom, that is, he apprehends and understands it well, he then also senses the faculty of pleasure which is vested in the [subject of] wisdom.

ולכן נקראת בחי' בינה בשם עוה"ב בזוה"ק

That is why in the sacred *Zohar*,³⁶ the faculty of *Binah* is referred to as "the World to Come."

שהיא בחי' התגלות החכמה עם התענוג המלובש בה שמשיגים הצדיקים בג"ע ומשכילים בפנימיות התורה

For it is the state of manifestation of *Chochmah*, together with the delight vested in it, which the righteous in the Garden of Eden apprehend, and conceive [new insights] in the *pnimiyut* [i.e., the innermost, mystical dimension] of the Torah.

דאורייתא מחכמה נפקא ואורייתא וקב"ה כולא חד:

For³⁷ the Torah derives from *Chochmah*, and³⁸ the Torah and the Holy One, blessed be He, are entirely one.³⁹

Thus, through gaining a perception of *pnimiyut* in the manner in which the soul apprehends it in the Garden of Eden, where it apprehends the essence of G-dliness - and "this delight itself (as the Rebbe adds) is utterly inward, as explained above"- the soul gains an apprehension of G-d's infinite light. And in order for it to be able to absorb this degree of illumination, it must be equipped with the protective and receptive garments of the *mitzvot*, as previously explained.

* * *

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain that in addition to this function of *mitzvot* as garments for the soul, they also serve to unite the sublime spiritual level of *Keter*, with

the physical objects with which the commandments are performed. As such, they resemble pillars that connect the highest part of a house with the lowest.

והנה רצון העליון ב"ה מכונה ונקרא בפי חכמי האמת בשם כתר עליון ובו תר"ך עמודי אור וכו'

Now the Supernal Will is termed and referred to by the Kabbalists⁴⁰ as *Keter Elyon* ["the Supreme Crown"]. In it there are 620 pillars of light,⁴¹ 620 being the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew word *Keter*.

פי' דרך משל כמו שיש עמודים בבית חומה גדול נצבים בארץ וראשם מחובר בתקרה

That is, by way of analogy, just as in a large brick house⁴² there are pillars standing in the ground and their apex is connected with the ceiling, thereby connecting the lowest part of the house with the highest,

ככה ממש עד"מ כתר עליון ב"ה הוא למעלה מבחי' מדרגת החכמה

precisely so, metaphorically speaking, the Supernal *Keter* transcends the level of *Chochmah*, which is the first and highest of the inner *Sefirot*.

והוא מלשון כותרת שהוא מכתיר ומקיף על המוחין שבראש שהם בחי' חב"ד

[The word *Keter*] is related to *koteret* "[capital]",⁴³ for it surrounds and encompasses over the brains in the head, i.e., the faculties of *ChaBaD* – the faculties of *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat*.

ורצון זה נתלבש בתרי"ג מצות התורה וז' מצות דרבנן שרובם ככולם הן מצות מעשיות

This [Supernal] Will is vested in the 613 commandments of the Torah and the seven precepts of the Sages, practically all of which are operative commandments. I.e., their performance involves physical action, which represents the lower or corporeal aspect of the lowest of the four spiritual "worlds", the World of *Asiyah* ("the World of Action").

וגם התלויות בדבור

And even those commandments [such as verbalized Torah study] that depend upon speech, nevertheless, even though speech is more spiritual than physical action, they too belong to the category of practical action,

הא קיי"ל דעקימת שפתיו הוי מעשה

for we have an accepted halachic principle that⁴⁴ "the movement of one's lips [in speech] is regarded as an act."

וגם התלויות במחשבה או בלב

And even those commandments relating to thought or to the heart, such as the commandments regarding the love and awe of G-d, are also considered as physical acts.

הרי המצוה ניתנה לאדם הגשמי שבעוה"ז דוקא

For the commandments⁴⁵ were given only to physical man in this [physical] world,

שהוא בעל בחירה להטות לבבו לטוב וכו'. משא"כ הנשמה בלא גוף א"צ לצוה ע"ז

because he has the choice to turn his heart to good, and so on.⁴⁶ The soul without a body, however, need not be commanded about this.

ונמצא שהמצות הן עד"מ כמו העמודים נצבים מרום המעלות הוא רצון העליון ב"ה עד הארץ הלזו החומרית

Thus it follows that the commandments, metaphorically speaking, are like pillars that stand [and connect] from the highest of levels, viz., the Supernal Will, to this material world.

והן עד"מ כמו העמודים חלולין שמקיפין ומלבישין נשמת האדם או רוחו או נפשו כשמקיים המצות

Metaphorically speaking, they are like hollow pillars that encompass and garb [with the garment of *mitzvot*] man's *Neshamah*, or *Ruach*, or *Nefesh*, when he fulfills the commandments.

ודרך עמודים אלו עולין הנר"ן שלו עד רום המעלות לצרור בצרור החיים את ה'. פי' להיות צרורות ומלוכשות באור הכתר הוא רצון העליון ב"ה

By way of these pillars [of the *mitzvot*], his *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah* [abbreviated *naran*] ascend to the highest of levels, to be bound up⁴⁷ "in the bond of life with G-d," that is, to be bound up and vested in the light of *Keter*, which is the Supernal Will, the highest level of all the worlds.

וע"י לבוש זה יוכלו לחזות בנועם ה' וצחצחות שלמעלה ממעלת הכתר והן פנימיות עד"מ

And by means of this garment they are able to behold the "pleasantness of G-d" and the "pleasurable thirst" which transcend the level of *Keter* and, metaphorically speaking, are its *pnimiyut*. I.e., the "pleasantness of G-d" and the "pleasurable thirst" are the inner core of the light of *Keter*, which transcends all worlds.

(והגם שנתבאר במ"א שהמצות הן פנימיות רצון העליון ב"ה

⁴⁸(Though it is explained elsewhere that the commandments are the *pnimiyut* i.e., the innermost element] of the Supernal Will, while here it is explained that they are merely the external aspect of *Keter*, i.e., the external aspect of the Supernal Will,

הנה מודעת זאת לי"ח ריבוי בחי' ומדרגות שיש בכל בחי' ומדרגה ממדרגות הקדושה

those adept in the Hidden Wisdom [i.e., Kabbalah] are well acquainted with the multitude of aspects and levels within every aspect and level among the various levels of holiness.

כמה בחי' פנים לפנים וכמה בחי' אחריים לאחוריים לאין קץ וכו')

There are numerous aspects of "face to face," meaning (since *panim* is related to *pnimiyut*) that relative to a particular spiritual level, another level is even more "internal", or nearer to the Essence], and there are numerous aspects of "externality to externality," meaning the reverse, without end....)

Thus, relative to the internal level of the Supernal Will spoken about here, *mitzvot* are only termed "external", whereas in another context, when compared to a lower level, they are deemed the "internal" aspect of the Supernal Will.

* * *

The Alter Rebbe above called the commandments the 620 pillars of light of *Keter*. How does this agree with his previous statement, that the 613 garments of the *mitzvot* correspond to the 613 soul-powers?

The Alter Rebbe now answers that the seven commandments of the Sages (which bring the total to 620) are not self-sufficient *mitzvot*, but are branches of the Scriptural commandments from which they respectively derive. The soul thus has 613 garments that derive from the 613 commandments, the Rabbinic *mitzvot* included. These garments garb the 613 powers of the soul.

והנה ז' מצות דרבנן אינן נחשבות מצות בפני עצמן שהרי כבר נאמר לא תוסיף

Now, the seven precepts of the Sages are not counted as commandments in themselves, for it has been said,⁴⁹ "You shall not add [to the commandments]."

אלא הן יוצאות ונמשכות ממצות התורה וכלולות בהן במספר תרי"ג להלביש תרי"ג בחי' וכחות שבגוף האדם

Rather, they derive and issue from the commandments of the Torah, and are included in them in the sum of 613 [commandments], which garb the 613 aspects and powers in the *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, and *Neshamah* of man.

It was previously stated that the *mitzvot* are like 613 hollow pillars that encompass and garb the *Neshamah*, or *Ruach*, or *Nefesh* of the individual who performs the commandments. It is through these pillars that the soul rises to the greatest of heights, and is bound up in the radiance of *Keter*. Additionally, it is through the garment of the *mitzvot* that the soul is able to behold "the pleasantness of G-d" and to experience the "pleasurable thirst" that transcend even the *pnimiyut* of *Keter*.

וז"ש בזה"ק פ' פקודי (דרכ"ט ע"ב) דאינון עובדין טבין דעביד בר נש משכי מנהורא דזיווא עילאה לבושא כו' וחמי כו' בנועם ה' וכו'

This is the meaning of the statement in the sacred *Zohar*, *Parshat Pekudei* (p. 229b), that "the good deeds (i.e., the *mitzvot*) which man does, elicit a garment from the light of the Supernal Splendor... (i.e., from the level of *Keter*), and they behold ...the 'pleasantness of G-d...', and also, as the *Zohar* concludes, they experience the "pleasurable thirst" (i.e., the *pnimiyut* of *Keter*).

והגם דהתם מיירי בג"ע התחתון שהלבושים שם הם ממצות מעשיות ממש

Though there [the *Zohar*] speaks of the Lower Garden of Eden, where the garments derive from the truly practical commandments, so that they result not from the Supernal Will, as above, but from the merit of physical action,

אבל בג"ע העליון הלבושים הם מרעותא וכוונה דלבא באורייתא וצלותא כמ"ש בזהר שם (דר"י)

while in the Upper Garden of Eden the garments derive from the love and devotion of the heart with respect to Torah and prayer, as stated in the *Zohar ad loc.* (p. 210).

The *Zohar* states that once the soul possesses, while in the Lower Garden of Eden, the garments of the *mitzvot* that derive from physical actions, it then rises to the upper Garden of Eden.

הרי הכוונה היא כוונת עסקו בתורה לשמה מאהבת ה'

However, this devotion [from whence these garments derive] refers to the devotion of one's occupation with Torah for its own sake, out of one's love for G-d.

ומצות ת"ת היא ג"כ מכלל מצות מעשיות

The commandment to study Torah also belongs to the class of practical commandments,

דעקימת שפתיו הוי מעשה והרהור לאו כדבור דמי ואינו יוצא י"ח בהרהור לבדו

for⁵⁰ "the movement of one's lips [in speech] is regarded as an act," and⁵¹ "meditation does not count as speech"; thus one does not discharge his duty by meditation alone.⁵²

וכן בתפלה

The same applies to prayer⁵³; here, too, one must actually articulate the words.

Since both Torah study and prayer require action, even the garments that are created by devout Torah and prayer are considered to be derived from the tangible and active aspect of *mitzvot*; they, too, are garments that derive from the light of *Keter*].

ומה גם כי מעלת הכוונה על הדבור ומעשה אינה מצד עצמה כו'

And certainly so, considering that the superiority of devotion (*kavanah*) over speech and action in as much as devotion can create garments for the soul in the Upper Garden of Eden] is not due to its own merits..., as in the loving service of G-d,

אלא מצד הארת רצון העליון כו'

but because of the radiation from the Supernal Will...,

When a *mitzvah* is performed, the radiation of the Supernal Will is more manifest in its more spiritual aspect - in its devout and loving intent - than in its tangible and physical aspect.

כמ"ש בלק"א ח"א פל"ה באריכות ע"ש

as explained at length in *Likkutei Amarim*, Part I, ch. 38; see there.

The Alter Rebbe explains there that the illumination from the Supernal Will that shines within the *devotion* that accompanies an action, is likened to a "soul", relative to the illumination that shines in the action itself, which is likened to a "body" or garment for the soul.

The difference is thus only in the degree of contraction or emanation of this radiation. From the above it is clear that even the garments for the soul that are created from the devotion and feeling that accompany Torah and prayer, also result only from the radiation of the Supernal Will, which is the Supernal *Keter*.

* * *

The Alter Rebbe now focuses on the distinctive quality inherent in the *halachot* of the Oral Torah. It is these *halachot* that reveal the Supernal Will, by defining what it actually requires of us in the performance of the *mitzvot*, in order thereby to draw down this lofty level of Divinity.

והנה מודעת זאת כי הנה רצון העליון ב"ה המלוכב בתרי"ג מצות שבתורה שבכתב הוא מופלא ומכוסה טמיר ונעלם ואינו מתגלה אלא בתורה שבע"פ

Now, as is known, the Supernal Will as vested in the 613 commandments of the Written Torah, is hidden and covered, secreted and concealed. It is manifest only in the Oral Torah.^{[54](#)}

כמו מצות תפילין עד"מ שנאמר בתושב"כ וקשרתם לאות על ירך והיו לטוטפות בין עיניך

For example, the precept of *tefillin*: In the Written Torah it is stated,^{[55](#)} "And you shall bind them for a sign on your hand, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes."

והוא מאמר סתום ונעלם שלא פירש הכתוב איך ומה לקשור ומהו טוטפות והיכן הוא בין עיניך ועל ירך

This is an indistinct and obscure statement, for Scripture did not explain how and what to bind, nor what frontlets are, nor where is "between your eyes" or "on your hand,"

עד שפירשה תורה שבע"פ שצריך לקשור בית אחד על היד וד' בתים על הראש ובתוכם ד' פרשיות

until the Oral Torah explicates⁵⁶ that one needs to bind a single box on the hand, and four boxes on the head, containing four Scriptural passages.

והבתים יהיו מעור מעובד ומרובעים דוקא ומקושרים ברצועות של עור שחורות דוקא

Moreover, the boxes are to be made of prepared leather, and necessarily square, and to be tied by means of leather straps which need to be black,⁵⁷

וכל שאר פרטי הלכות עשיית התפילין שנאמרו בע"פ

with all the other detailed rulings governing the making of *tefillin*, that were stated orally, i.e., that are found in the Oral Torah.

ועל ידך היא הזרוע דוקא ולא כף היד ובין עיניך זה קדקוד ולא המצה

Also, "on your hand" refers only to the arm, and not to the palm of the hand;⁵⁸ and "between your eyes" refers to the scalp, and not to the forehead.⁵⁹

It is thus only the detailed *halachot* of the Oral Torah that enable us to perform this *mitzvah* in keeping with the Supernal Will.

וכן כל מצות שבתורה בין מ"ע בין מצות ל"ת אינן גלויות וידועות ומפורשות אלא ע"י תורה שבע"פ

Likewise all the commandments of the Torah, whether they be positive precepts or prohibitory precepts, are not revealed and known and made explicit except through the Oral Torah.

כמצות ל"ת שנאמר בשבת לא תעשה מלאכה ולא פי' מה היא מלאכה

For instance, the prohibitory precept that has been stated with respect to the Sabbath, "You shall do no work":⁶⁰[the Written Torah] does not specify what constitutes work.

ובתורה שבע"פ נתפרש שהן ל"ט מלאכות הידועות ולא טלטול אבנים וקורות כבידות

In the Oral Torah, however, it is explicated⁶¹ to refer to the well-known 39 forms of work, and not (only) to the carrying of stones or heavy beams, which is only Rabbinically prohibited.⁶²

Though carrying rocks and beams is more tiring than some of the 39 prohibited forms of work, it does not fall into any of the categories of work that the Torah prohibits on *Shabbat*.

According to the alternative reading of our text ("and not only to the carrying of stones or heavy beams"), this work is prohibited by the Torah. Thus the *Ramban* on *Parshat Emor*⁶³ states that the term *Shabbaton* ("a day of rest") that is used with regard to *Yom Tov*- and the same applies with regard to the commandment *tishbot* ("you shall rest") of *Shabbat* - refers also to those activities that do not formally fall within the 39 defined categories of prohibited work, but are nevertheless prohibited by the Torah since they rob a person of his rest and tranquillity.

In the first of his comments on this subject, the *Maggid Mishneh* argues that the *Rambam*⁶⁴ also holds that "you shall rest" forbids even strenuous work that does not fall within any of the 39 categories governed by the prohibition, "Do not do any work." (Though the *Lechem Mishneh* refutes this argument, this remains the view of the *Maggid Mishneh*.)

Others hold⁶⁵ that both readings are valid. Each corresponds to one side of a debate in the *Yerushalmi*⁶⁶ as to whether or not the Torah prohibits certain forms of work during the Sabbatical year (and by extension, during *Shabbat* as well) because it is a time of rest, even when there is no additional specific prohibition.

וכיוצא בהן הן כל המצוות בין מ"ע בין מל"ת הן סתומות ולא מפורשות וגלויות וידועות אלא ע"י תורה שבע"פ

And as it is with these - [with the above examples of *tefillin* and *Shabbat*] - so it is with all the commandments, whether they be positive precepts or prohibitory precepts: they are indistinct, and are explicated and revealed and known only through the Oral Torah.

ומשום הכי כתיב על תושבע"פ אל תטוש תורת אמך כמ"ש בזהר

This is why Scripture says⁶⁷ of the Oral Torah, "And you shall not cast off the teaching of your mother," as stated in the *Zohar*.⁶⁸

משום שעד"מ כמו שכל אברי הולד כלולים בטיפת האב בהעלם גדול והאם מוציאתו לידי גילוי בלידתה ולד שלם ברמ"ח אברים ושס"ה גידים

Metaphorically speaking, just as all the organs of a child are comprised, very latently, in the sperm of the father, and the mother brings this out into a state of manifestation when giving birth to a child complete with 248 organs and 365 sinews,

This is an instance of the⁶⁹ "superior measure of *Binah* that was granted to woman," the power to make latent gifts manifest and corporeal].

ככה ממש כל רמ"ח מ"ע ושס"ה מל"ת באים מההעלם אל הגילוי בתושבע"פ

exactly so, do the 248 positive precepts and the 365 prohibitory precepts emerge from obscurity to manifestation through the Oral Torah, which is therefore called the "teachings of your *mother*."

וריש' דקרא שמע בני מוסר אביך קאי אתורה שבכתב דנפקא מחכמה עילאה הנק' בשם אב

Whereas the beginning of the verse, "Heed, my son, the admonitions of your father," alludes to the Written Torah, which derives from the Supernal *Chochmah* which is called "father".

וז"ש אשת חיל עטרת בעלה כי התורה שבע"פ הנק' אשת חיל המולידה ומעמדת חיילות הרבה

This, then, is the meaning of the verse [quoted at the outset of the present Epistle], "A woman of valor is the crown of her husband." For the Oral Torah is termed a "woman of valor" who gives birth to, and raises many legions.

כמ"ש ועלמות אין מספר אל תקרי עלמות אלא עולמות אלו הלכות דלית לון חושבנא כמ"ש בתיקונים

As it is written, [70](#) "and *alamot* ('maidens') without number": Do not read *alamot* but *olamot* ('worlds')," [71](#) [these innumerable worlds] alluding to the *halachot* that are without number, as stated in the *Tikkunim*. [72](#)

וכולן הן בחי' גילוי רצון העליון ב"ה הנעלם בתושב"כ

All of these [*halachot*] are manifestations of the Supernal Will which is hidden in the Written Torah.

The Oral Torah is thus called a "woman of valor," for it gives birth to multitudinous legions of laws.

The Alter Rebbe will now answer one of his opening questions: Why is it that specifically *halachot* are referred to as the "crown of the Torah"? Also, why is the individual who studies specifically *halachot* every day assured of a share in the World to Come?

ורצון העליון ב"ה הוא למעלה מעלה ממעלת חכמה עילאה וכמו כתר ועטרה שעל המוחין שבראש

The Supernal Will which belongs to the *Sefirah* of *Keter*, lit., "crown" is exceedingly more sublime than the level of the Supernal *Chochmah*, just as a crown or wreath is higher than the brains in the head.

לכן נקראו ההלכות בשם תגא וכתרה של תורה

This is why the *halachot* are referred to as a "crown" and the "crown of the Torah," for they reveal the Supernal Will, which is at the level of *Keter*.

והשונה הלכות מובטח לו שהוא בן עוה"ב

Likewise, "Whoever studies [specifically] *halachot* is assured of a share in the World to Come,"

by investing his *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah* in the Supernal Will,

כנ"ל

as stated above - that the garments for the soul in the World to Come are the *mitzvot*; these embody the Supernal Will, which is clarified and delineated by the *halachot*.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) 12:4. [2.](#) *Kohelet* 9:9. [3.](#) Cf. *Kiddushin* 30b. [4.](#) 28b. [5.](#) 1:13. [6.](#) 73a. [7.](#) See *Taz*, *Yoreh Deah* 246:2. [8.](#) 99b. [9.](#) *Yehoshua* 1:8. [10.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "*Sefer HaGilgulim*, ch. 4; *Shaar HaGilgulim*, *Hakdamah* 11:16. The brevity of the *Hakdamah* to *Shaar HaMitzvot* precludes any possible contradiction. See also *Shelah*, beginning of *Torah SheBichtav*, p. 264b ff." [11.](#)

Note of the Rebbe: "Note that in the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, *Hilchot Talmud Torah* 1:4, this subject is cited with a number of differences:

"(a) Here, in *Iggeret HaKodesh*: 'until he will fulfill'; in the *Shulchan Aruch*: 'until he fulfills'; preferring actual present performance to future certainty.

The difference may be significant when nonperformance is due to circumstances beyond one's control. See also *Shelah*, *ibid*.

"(b) Here, in *Iggeret HaKodesh*, after '*mitzvot*' the Alter Rebbe adds 'of the Torah,' perhaps by way of reinforcing the necessity for reincarnation; in the *Shulchan Aruch* this is a less relevant consideration.

Moreover, and more importantly, the added phrase distinguishes these *mitzvot* from the 'seven commandments of the Sages' about to be discussed.

"(c) Here, in *Iggeret HaKodesh*, the order is 'thought, speech and action'; in the *Shulchan Aruch* the order is 'action, speech and thought.' The same principle is perhaps common to both: 'Not only this but also the next' (see *Tosafot* at the beginning of *Yevamot*).

In the *Shulchan Aruch*, therefore, where action is all- important, the Alter Rebbe tells us that even if a particular *mitzvah* was fulfilled in action, yet for the sake of its fulfillment in speech, and so on, the individual still needs to be reincarnated.

Iggeret HaKodesh, however, [embodies the Torah's innermost dimension, viz., *Chassidut*, and thus] is the soul of Torah. Here, therefore, following the same principle of precedence, the Alter Rebbe tells us that even if a particular *mitzvah* was performed in thought, nevertheless, for the sake of its performance in speech, and so on, the individual still needs to be reincarnated.

"(d) In the *Shulchan Aruch*, which is unequivocal law, the Alter Rebbe adds the explanation: 'And speech and thought means the study of their laws; as our Sages taught (*Menachot* 110) on the verse, 'This is the law of the sin-offering ...,' that 'whoever studies the laws of the sin-offering [is considered to have actually offered the sin-offering].' This may also explain why instead of 'man' (as stated here) the Alter Rebbe there uses the term 'soul.'"

[12.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "An explanation is required as to why in the *Shulchan Aruch* - which, as mentioned above, should surely have the clearest statement of the law - the Alter Rebbe does not mention this exception concerning the commandments incumbent upon a king." [13.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "*Torah Or*, p. 53c, by contrast, expresses this as follows: 'For every Jew must perform all 613 commandments, except for the commandments of the king, for the king discharges all Jews. All the *mitzvot* must be performed by every individual, and he must be reincarnated or in a state of *ibur* [lit., "pregnancy", a state wherein the soul of one person attaches itself to the soul of another].' Similarly in *Likkutei Torah, Yom HaKippurim*, p. 69a: '...and even the mitzvot of the priests or the High Priest, through *ibur* or reincarnation.'" [14.](#)

Note of the Rebbe: "(So, too, in *Torah Or, loc cit.*) The Alter Rebbe does not mention the High Priest (Nor does *Mishnat Chassidim, Masechet Chiyuv HaNeshamot*, beginning of ch. 2.) *Likkutei Torah* states explicitly that 'every individual is obliged to fulfill ... and even the commandments of priests and the High Priest.' *Sefer HaGilgulim*, ch. 4, by contrast, groups together 'the commandments ... for the priests ... levites ... kings .. judges and the like.'

"It could perhaps be suggested that the Alter Rebbe's above characterization of a Jewish king as 'a corporate collective of them all' alludes to the state of *ibur* spoken of in *Sefer HaGilgulim, loc. cit.* Such an allusion would serve well to explain why the Alter Rebbe chose to explain the function of the king by this phrase ('as he is a corporate collective of them all') rather than by the phrase used by *Mishnat Chassidim* ('because of his stature')."

[15.](#) II, 210b; *ibid.* 229. [16.](#) In the original, *Chochma Nisteres* "the Kabbalah", commonly abbreviated in Hebrew to the acronym "*chein*". [17.](#) *Zohar* III, 128b ff. [18.](#) 7:9. [19.](#) *Tehillim* 27:4. [20.](#) *Yeshayahu* 58:14. [21.](#) *Loc. cit.*, verse 11. [22.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "See *Torah Or, Megillat Esther*, p 98b; *Or HaTorah, Parshat Tetzaveh*, p. 1606; *Pardes, Shaar HaTzachtzachot*." [23.](#) *Yeshayahu* 5:13. [24.](#) II, 210b. [25.](#) *Shmot* 24:18. [26.](#) Cf. *Zohar* I, 123b. [27.](#) *Bereishit* 23:15. [28.](#) *Ibid.* 31:30. [29.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [30.](#) To the *Zohar, loc. cit.* [31.](#)

Note of the Rebbe: "The Alter Rebbe is not informing us of the obvious, as might appear at first glance, but is making a significant statement which must appear here, where he is explaining that will is the external aspect [i.e., the consequence] of pleasure - in order to distinguish this sequence from the alternative sequence discussed in *Hemshech* 5666, p 65ff., [where will is seen as the *source* of pleasure]

The conclusion there, on p. 73ff., is as here, [that pleasure is indeed the source of will, and not the contrary].".

[32.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "The addition of this phrase too is explained by the previous footnote." [33.](#) *Rambam, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 1:9. [34.](#) Cf. *Rashi* on *Shmot* 19:18, based on *Mechilta* and *Tanchuma ad loc.* [35.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "The *feeling* of pleasure, by contrast, comes (as is explained below) *in the World to Come*. And so long as this feeling is lacking, the individual concerned cannot be said to have `received the pleasantness.'" [36.](#) II, 158a. [37.](#) *Zohar* II, 85a. [38.](#) *Op. cit.* I, 24a, *et al.* [39.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "[The above-described perception enjoyed by the *tzaddikim*] is similar to the delight that is born and is derived when a concept is first conceived and understood - and this is the above-mentioned `pleasantness of G-d...". [40.](#) Lit., "the scholars of truth." [41.](#) *Pardes, Shaar* 8, ch. 3. [42.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "The analog to this requires clarification." [43.](#) *I Melachim* 7:16, *et al.* [44.](#) *Sanhedrin* 65a. [45.](#) Lit., "the commandment." [46.](#) The phrase "and so on" is a euphemism for "or to evil." [47.](#) *I Shmuel* 25:29. [48.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [49.](#) *Devarim* 13:1. [50.](#) *Sanhedrin* 65a. [51.](#) *Berachot* 20b. [52.](#) The Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch, Hilchot Talmud Torah* 2:12; see also *Eruvin* 54b. [53.](#) The Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch* 62:3 and 185:3. [54.](#) In an intricate Kabbalistic analysis (in the Glosses on the *Tanya* published in *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak*), R. Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, father of the Rebbe, relates the above four expressions ("hidden and covered, secreted and concealed") to the correspondence between the 613 *mitzvot* of the Written Torah and the four letters of the Divine Name *Havayah*. In summary: The Name *Havayah* is merely written, but not given manifest articulation; it finds expression only through its variant pronunciation of *Ad-nai*, which, however, contracts it and conceals its Essence. In the Written Torah, the Supreme Will underlying the *mitzvot* is likewise hidden; it becomes revealed ("pronounced") only insofar as it is contracted in the Oral Torah, which corresponds to the Name *Ad-nai*. [55.](#) *Devarim* 6:8. [56.](#) See *Menachot* 34b ff., *et al.* [57.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "See *Rambam, Hilchot Tefillin* 3:14, as well as other codifiers." [58.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "...as it means in other places." [59.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "...as was [the position of] the headband [of the High Priest]." [60.](#) Text emended according to *Shmot* 20:10 and *Devarim* 16:8. [61.](#) See *Shabbat* 73a, *et al.* [62.](#) *Rambam, Hilchot Shabbat* 24:12. [63.](#) *Shmot* 23:24. [64.](#) *Hilchot Shabbat* 21:1. [65.](#) *Likkutei Haggahot LeSefer HaTanya* on this Epistle, p. 84. [66.](#) *Sanhedrin* 7:5. [67.](#) *Mishlei* 1:8. [68.](#) In the Hashmatot to *Zohar* II, 276b, the phrase "your mother" is related to the Oral Torah, whereas in *Kanfei Yonah* 1:4 the Written Torah is called the "admonitions of your father" and the Oral Torah is called the "teachings of your mother." [69.](#) *Niddah* 45b. [70.](#) *Shir HaShirim* 6:8. [71.](#) See *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 6:12; *Avodah Zarah* 35b. [72.](#) P. 14b (in the Introduction which begins *Patach Eliyahu*)



Epistle 30

This is a reasoned message of encouragement in which the Alter Rebbe urges his chassidim not to reduce their fixed annual commitment to charity for the Holy Land, even though their circumstances may have altered. He reminds them once again (as above in Epistle XXI), that what counts is not only the *total of one's contributions* over a particular period, but also the *multiplicity of benevolent action*. The potent repercussions of this oft-repeated activity resound all the way up to the World of Atzilut, where they impregnate the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* — the mother, so to speak, of all created worlds.

מודעת זאת מה שאמרו רז"ל: כל הרגיל לבא לבית הכנסת, ויום אחד לא בא, הקדוש ברוך הוא שואל עליו, שנאמר: מי בכם ירא ה' וכו'

It is well known that our Sages, of blessed memory, said that ¹ whoever is accustomed to come to the synagogue, and one day did not come, the Holy One, blessed be He, inquires after him; for it is written, ² “Who among you fears G-d, [who listens to the voice of His (prophetic) servant; who walked in the darkness, and for whom no light shone]?”

The *Gemara* understands this verse as referring to a person who went to “a place of darkness”; his path on this occasion did not lead to the performance of a *mitzvah*, and this was why he did not attend synagogue. In contrast, the commentaries on the *Tanach* understand the quoted phrase as referring to a person who finds himself *in* a situation of darkness and travail. And even such an individual should not refrain from attending, but should (as the verse concludes) “trust in the Divine Name, and rely on His G-d.”

In this spirit, the present letter argues that even in a difficult situation, at a time of “darkness”, a Jew should not think of reducing his accustomed charitable contributions; rather, he should “trust in the Divine Name, and rely on His G-d.”

To return now to the opening teaching — that whoever is accustomed to come to the synagogue, and one day did not come, G-d inquires after him. This does not apply only to the communal prayer of which the *Gemara* speaks; rather:

וכן בכל המצות, ובפרט מצות הצדקה, ששקולה כנגד כל המצות

The same applies to all the commandments, and especially to the precept of charity, which is ³ “balanced against all the commandments.” Thus, if the above teaching applies to prayer, it surely applies to charity: If a person retreats from his customary charitability, “G-d inquires after him.”

הגם שהיא בלי נדר, חס ושלום

Though [one's regular giving] is not bound by a vow, heaven forbid, for one should of course see to it that an accustomed *mitzvah* should not become subject to the legal force of a vow, ⁴

אף על פי כן, כל החיל אשר נגע יראת ה' בלבם, לא יאתה לנפשם האלקית לתת מגרעות בקדש

nevertheless, it is not becoming to the divine soul of all the men of valor whose hearts the fear of G-d has touched,⁵ that they should reduce that which is holy, for by restricting their charitable contributions they reduce the downflow of Divine energy from the sublime source which is called *Kodesh* (lit., “holy”) into the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*,

מאשר כבר הורגלו מדי שנה להפריש ממאודם

relative to what they were accustomed to set aside, annually, from their wealth,⁶

להחיות רוח שפלים ונדכאים, דלית להון מגרמיהון

to revive the spirit of the humble and downcast who have nothing of their own, viz., the impoverished settlers of the Holy Land —

היא בחינת סוכת דוד הנופלת וכו'

which [during the time of exile] is referred to as⁷ “the fallen *sukkah* of David...,” as also is its supernal source, the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* in the World of *Atzilut*,⁸

לקומם ולרומם וכו'

to raise and exalt [it]...

למהוי אחד באחד וכו'

“so that oneness be united with Oneness.”⁹

In the context of souls in this world, this means that *tzedakah* unites one Jew with his fellow. In the supernal context of *Sefirot*, it refers to the desired connection between (a) the “lower level of unity” (*Yichuda Tataah*) which comes into being when the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* becomes a source of creation to lower worlds, and (b) the “higher level of unity” (*Yichuda Ilaah*) involving the six higher emotive *Sefirot*, which transcend direct contact with the created worlds. This is the union of *Kudsha Brich Hu* and His *Shechinah*, which is also called *Malchut* of *Atzilut*.

והכל לפי רוב המעשה וכו'

And¹⁰ “everything is [judged] according to the multiplicity of action....”

As discussed above in Epistle XXI, it is preferable to divide a sum set aside for *tzedakah* into many individual acts of giving. Maimonides explains¹¹ that this refines the soul. *Chassidut* adds that each act of giving effects a union (*yichud*) in the worlds above.

Accordingly, the Alter Rebbe had explained in the above Epistle that one’s annual contribution for the needy of *Eretz Yisrael* should be given weekly or at least monthly. It could therefore be that here he is warning against reducing one’s contribution one year

and compensating for it the following year, because in this way the present year would be lacking the “multiplicity of action.” (It is clear that the Alter Rebbe is not speaking here of a situation in which a person simply thinks of not giving because of his difficult circumstances, because he has already said in Epistle XVI that even if one needs to borrow for food, he should still give *tzedakah*.)

ולפי החשבון

and according to the account (*cheshbon*).

As the Alter Rebbe will soon point out, the level of Divinity from which one elicits “G-d’s greatness” is determined by the magnitude of the total amount — whether it is in hundreds or thousands, or whatever. (Multiples of a hundred, for example, relate to the level known as *Keter*.) Reducing one’s regular gift thus proportionately reduces both his “great amount” and its cosmic effect.

כמאמר רז”ל: כל פרוטה ופרוטה מצטרפת לחשבון גדול וכו’

Thus our Sages, of blessed memory, said,¹² “All the individual coins [given to charity] add up to a great amount (*cheshbon gadol*),”

על דרך מאמר רז”ל: אימתי גדול הו’, כשהוא בעיר אלקינו וכו’

and as taught by our Sages, of blessed memory,¹³ “When is ‘*Havayah* great’? — When He is ‘in the city of our G-d’ *Malchut*, at which]¹⁴

I.e., G-d’s greatness is revealed when the Divine Name *Havayah* is vested in the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*, and illuminates it. *Malchut*, the realm of speech, is known as “the city of our G-d,” for just as a city is composed of many dwellings which in turn are composed of many bricks, so too is the realm of speech built up of many letters and combinations of letters. In *Sefer Yetzirah*,¹⁵ letters are termed “stones”, for they are the basic bricks which join to form the ongoing Divine creative utterances which are the source of all worlds and all created beings.¹⁶ They thus reveal the greatness of G-d’s glory.

The Alter Rebbe now continues to speak of the “city of our G-d,” which is the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*:

היא בחינת ומקום החשבון

This is the spiritual state and the place of reckoning (*cheshbon*),¹⁷

For reckoning is possible only with entities which are finite and divisible, and *Malchut* is the source of all finite and divisible created beings.

כמו שכתוב: עיניך ברכות בחשבון

as it is written,¹⁸ “Your eyes are wells in *Cheshbon*.”

Since a well (or a pool) is a receptor for water that flows down into it, “well” serves as a term for *Malchut*, i.e., the “feminine” *Sefirah* which receives the downflow of Divine life-force from the higher *Sefirot*. The word “Cheshbon” is a Biblical place name, but on the non-literal level of *derush* it is here understood in its dictionary meaning of “reckoning”. The allusion to this verse thus reinforces the identity of the concept of “reckoning” with the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*.

The Alter Rebbe now returns to clarify the meaning of his earlier statement that giving a “great amount” (*cheshbon gadol*) of *tzedakah* manifests the “greatness of *Havayah*” in the “city of our G-d.”

והמכוון, כנודע, כי באתערותא דלתתא, המשכת חיים חן וחסד במעשה הצדקה, ברצון הטוב וסבר פנים טובות, אתערותא דלעילא

As is known, the meaning [of the above statement] is that as a result of an arousal from [man] below — the provision of [the means for] life, grace and kindness by an act of charity with goodwill and a friendly countenance — there is elicited an arousal from above,

יאר ה' פניו, הוא הארת והמשכת חן וחסד ורצון עליון

[so that]¹⁹ “G-d will make His Countenance shine forth,” with a radiation and downflow of grace, kindness and Supreme favor

מחיי החיים, אין סוף ברוך הוא, אשר לגדולתו אין חקר והשגה כלל

from the Fountainhead of Life, the blessed *Ein Sof*,²⁰ “Whose greatness is unfathomable” and utterly incomprehensible (and thus not manifest),

אל בחינת מלכותך מלכות כל עולמים, עלמא דאתגליא

to the level [of Divinity, viz., *Malchut*, at which]²¹ “Your kingdom is the kingdom of all worlds,” [i.e.,] the “World of Manifestation.”

המחיה כל הברואים שבכל ההיכלות עליונים ותחתונים, שהן בבחינת מספר וחשבון

This [*Sefirah* of *Malchut*] animates all the created beings that are in all the upper and lower *Heichalot*, which are all subject to counting and reckoning (*cheshbon*),

כמו שכתוב: אלף אלפים ישמשוניה

as it is written,²² “A thousand thousands (i.e., a finite number of angels) minister unto Him.”

To revert now to our above key phrase, *cheshbon gadol* (“a great reckoning”): Giving *tzedakah* with goodwill and a friendly countenance marries the infinite power of *gadol Havayah* (“G-d is great”) with the finite framework of *cheshbon* (“reckoning”) — the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*, which is the source of all finite created beings.

וזהו חשבון גדול, שעל ידי רוב מעשה הצדקה, שלום

This, then, is the meaning of the “great amount,” for numerous acts of charity bring about peace, as it is written,²³ “And [the reward for] the act of *tzedakah* will be peace,” as explained above in Epistle 12.

כי פירוש שלום, הוא דבר המחבר ומתווך ב' קצוות הפכיים

For “peace” implies the joining and conciliation of two opposite extremes.

שהן קצה השמים לעילא, בחינת ולגדולתו אין חקר

[In our context] these are the extremity of the superior heaven, alluded to in the phrase, “And His greatness is unfathomable,” referring to G-d’s incomprehensible infinitude,

וקצה השמים לתתא

and the extremity of the inferior heaven, referring to *Malchut*, the lowest of the Ten *Sefirot*,

המתלבש בבריאה יצירה עשיה, בחינת גבול ומספר

which becomes vested in [the Worlds of] *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, [i.e.,] in a category of finitude and number.

ודי למבין

This will suffice for the discerning.

FOOTNOTES ¹. Cf. *Berachot* 6b. ². *Yeshayahu* 50:10. ³. *Bava Batra* 9b; *Yerushalmi*, *Peah* 1:5. ⁴. *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh Deah*, sec. 203. ⁵. Cf. *I Samuel* 10:26. ⁶. *Berachot* 9:5. ⁷. *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 93. ⁸. Cf. Epistles IV and XXI, above. ⁹. From the passage beginning *Kegavna*, in *Zohar* II, 135a; cf. *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 133. ¹⁰. *Avot* 3:15. ¹¹. In his commentary *ad loc.* ¹². *Bava Batra* 9b. ¹³. *Zohar* II, 225a, commenting on *Tehillim* 48:2. ¹⁴. *Loc. cit.*, verse 13. ¹⁵. 4:12. ¹⁶. Cf. *Shaar HaYichud VehaEmunah* (in Vol. III of the present series), chs. 1 and 2. ¹⁷. Cf. *Zohar* III, 220b. ¹⁸. *Shir HaShirim* 7:5. ¹⁹. *Bamidbar* 6:25. ²⁰. *Tehillim* 145:3. ²¹. *Loc. cit.*, verse 13. ²². *Daniel* 7:10. ²³. *Yeshayahu* 10:17.

Epistle 31

Interdependence and brotherly love among Jews strike far deeper than the visible interpersonal plane. Indeed, if they are lacking, the pain is felt by the *Shechinah* itself, the Divine Presence. For the Divine Presence is the *heart* of the Jewish people, who themselves constitute the organs. A deep-seated organic disorder that affects the circulatory system, affects the entire body, including even the heart itself.

נודע בשערים

Well known at the gates¹

The previous Epistle opened with the phrase, “It is well known...,” because it cited a widely-known statement from the *Talmud*. Here, however, the Alter Rebbe opens with a more esoteric quotation from the *Zohar*, which is well known only in more scholarly circles, among those who sit at the city gates, for this was where judges and scholars traditionally used to congregate.

מה שכתוב בתיקונים, דשכינתא איהי מרעא בגלותא, כביכול

is the statement in the *Tikkunim*² that the “*Shechinah* is ailing in the exile,” as it were.

פירוש, על דרך משל: כמו חולי הגוף, המבדיל בין קדש וכו'

This [anthropomorphism] draws a comparison with a physical ailment, distinguishing, [of course,] between the holy [and the mundane];³ i.e., bearing in mind the utter disparity between a physical ailment and the state metaphorically described as an “ailment” of the *Shechinah*.

שסיבת החולי והבריאות היא התפשטות והילוך החיות מהלב אל כל האברים

The cause of illness or health lies in the distribution and flow of the life-force from the heart to all the organs,

המלוכשת בדם הנפש היוצא מהלב אל כל האברים

[this life-force] being vested in the blood of life which flows from the heart to all the organs;

וסובב סובב הולך הרוח חיים והדם

and the spirit of life and the blood⁴ circulates all around

תוך תוך כל האברים, על ידי הגידים המובלעים בהם

into all the limbs, through the veins⁵ that are embedded in them,

וחוזר אל הלב

and returns to the heart.

ואם סיבוב והילוך הרוח חיים הלז הוא כהלכתו תמיד, כסדרו המסודר לו מחיי החיים, ברוך הוא

Now, if the circulation and flow of this spirit of life is always as it should be, in its proper order as arranged for it by the Fountainhead of Life,

אזי האדם בריא בתכלית

then the individual is perfectly healthy.

כי כל האברים מקושרים יחד, ומקבלים חיותם הראוי להם מהלב, על ידי סיבוב הלז

For all the limbs are bound together and receive their appropriate vitality from the heart through this circulation.

אך אם יש איזה קלקול באיזהו מקומן, המונע ומעכב או ממעט סיבוב והילוך הדם עם הרוח חיים המלוכב בו

But should there be any disorder in any place, restraining, hindering or reducing the circulation and flow of the blood with the spirit of life vested in it,

אזי נפסק או מתמעט הקשר הלז, המקשר כל האברים אל הלב על ידי סיבוב הלז

then this bond — which connects all the limbs with the heart by means of this circulation — is severed (which would extinguish life), or diminished,

ואזי נופל האדם למשכב וחולי, ה' ישמרנו

in which case the individual will fall ill and sick (May G-d protect us!).

The interconnection of all the organs with the heart, thus also impacts on the heart itself.

וככה ממש, על דרך משל, הנה כל נשמות ישראל נקראים בחינת אברי דשכינתא

Precisely so, metaphorically speaking, all the souls of Israel are regarded as the organs of the *Shechinah*,⁶

הנקראת בשם לב, כמו שכתוב: צור לבבי, וכמו שכתוב: ושכנתי בתוכם

which is called the “heart”, as it is written,⁷ “The Rock, My Heart”;⁸ and as it is written,⁹ “And I will dwell within them.”

פירוש

The meaning (of this comparison between the *Shechinah* and the heart that supplies all the organs with blood) is:

כי לשון שכינה הוא, שאור הוי' שוכן בעולמות בריאה יצירה עשיה, להחיותם

The¹⁰ term *Shechinah*, deriving as it does from the verb לשכון (“to rest” or “to dwell”), denotes that the light of G-d abides in the Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, in order to endow them with life.

והמשכת חיות זו היא על ידי התלבשות תחלה בנשמות ישראל

This life-force is drawn forth by means of a prior investment in the souls of Israel.

לפי שכל הנבראים, אין ערוך להם אל הבורא יתברך

[This is so] because none of the created beings stand in any comparable relation to the Creator;

דכולא קמיה כלא ממש חשיבין

for¹¹ “all that are before Him are esteemed as truly naught.”

ואי אפשר להם לקבל חיות מאורו ושפעו יתברך

Thus it is impossible for them to receive life-force from His light and effluence,

להיות נבראים מאין ליש, וחיים וקיימים

to become created beings *ex nihilo* into substantiality, and to be living and subsisting,

כי אם על ידי הנשמות

except by means of the souls.

The Divine light is first drawn down into the Jewish souls, and thereafter into the rest of creation.

The blessings which we recite follow the same order: “...our G-d, King of the universe.” It is by His first becoming “our G-d,” whereby the Divine life-force flows into the Jewish people, that He then becomes “King of the universe.”

שעלו במחשבה

[For it is the Jewish souls] that rose in His thought, i.e., their source is in His thought,

וקדמו לבריאת עולמות, שעל ידי בחינת הדבור

and thus preceded the creation of the worlds, which came about through [Divine] Speech.

Mortal thought is internal and personal, inasmuch as it serves the individual himself, whereas speech is external, its purpose being to communicate with others. So, too, Jewish souls derive from the internal aspect of G-dliness, while the rest of creation derives from the external aspect. And in order that the Divine life-force be drawn down into the worlds, which represent an external level of creation, it must first be drawn into Jewish souls, the internal level of creation.

כמאמר רז"ל: במי נמלך הקב"ה וכו'

Thus our Sages, of blessed memory, said:¹² “With whom did the Holy One, blessed be He, take counsel [concerning the creation of the worlds? — With Jewish souls],”

כנודע במקום אחר

as is known from elsewhere.

Jewish souls are thus so superior to the created worlds that G-d took counsel with them about the very creation of the worlds.

* * *

The above discussion relates only to the drawing down of Divine vitality from the *Shechinah* into the created worlds, which parallels the emanation of the spirit of life from the heart and its diffusion throughout the entire body.

The Alter Rebbe will now go on to explain the second aspect of this analogy — how the spirit of life returns to the heart from the other organs. In the analogue likewise, the G-dly life-force within the worlds pulsates in an ongoing dual dynamic called *ratzo vashov* (“advance and retreat”): the G-dly life-force is first drawn downward, from the *Shechinah* to the worlds, and then it returns to its source, as a result of the Torah study and the spiritual service of created beings.

ונודע בשערים

And it is well known at the gates¹³

כי כל המשכת החיות וההשפעה מעליונים לתחתונים מהם

that every downflow of [Divine] life-force and [all] effluence from the upper worlds to the worlds which are lower than them,

הן כמו שכתוב בספר יצירה: נעוץ תחלתן בסופן, וסופן בתחלתן

are as stated in the *Sefer Yetzirah*: [14](#) “Their beginning (i.e., the beginning of the uppermost levels of creation) is wedged in their culmination (i.e., in the nethermost part of the lowest level of creation), and their culmination is wedged in their beginning.”

ובכתבי האריז"ל, מכונה בשם אור ישר ואור חוזר

In the writings of R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, this [dual direction] is referred to as *Or Yashar* (“direct light”) and *Or Chozar* (“reflected light”), i.e., light reflected upwards from the lower level back to the upper;

וכמו שכתוב: והחיות רצוא ושוב

as it is also written, [15](#) “And the *Chayot* were advancing and retreating,” first proceeding away from their Source and then retreating to it.

The above verse refers to the holy *Chayot* (“creatures”) of the Divine Chariot. The Kabbalah explains that this is an allusion to the Divine life-force of all worlds and created beings: it first emanates from its Source and then returns to it. I.e., not only is the Divine life-force drawn from the *Shechinah* down into creation, but it also returns from created beings back to its original Source.

אשר על כן, על פי הדברים והאמת האלה, אשר אי אפשר לבאר היטב במכתב

Thus, according to these words and this truth, which is impossible to explain properly in writing,

נקראת השכינה בשם לב, והנשמות בשם אברים

the *Shechinah* is referred to as the “heart”, and the souls as “organs”.

להורות לנו, כי כאשר כל הנשמות דבוקות ומקושרות יחד

This teaches us that when all the souls are attached and bound together,

אזי סיבוב והילוך החיות וההשפעה סובב סובב

the circulation and flow of the life-force and of the effluence from the *Shechinah* to the worlds and from the worlds back to the *Shechinah* is continuous,

ונעוץ סופן בתחלתן, לקשר ולחבר כולן להו"י אחד, ולדבקה בו יתברך

and “their culmination is wedged in their beginning,” thus binding and joining them all — all the souls, and through them all the worlds — to the One G-d, so that they will cleave to Him.

וכמו שכתוב: אתם נצבים היום כולכם לפני הוי' אלקיכם

Thus it is written,¹⁶ “You are standing firm this day, all of you, before the L-rd your G-d (*Havayah Elokeichem*).”

כולכם דייקא, ולפני דייקא

The verse specifies “all of you,” i.e., a situation in which all Jews stand united together. Moreover, it specifies “before”, implying that this togetherness enables all Jews to relate to Divinity at the level at which the Name *Havayah* precedes and transcends its subsequent self-imposed descent to become *Elokeichem*, the life-force that empowers souls.

This can take place only when there is a sense of unity between all the levels which the above verse goes on to enumerate:

ראשיכם כו' מחוטב עציך כו'

“Your heads...” (i.e, those with the loftiest souls), “from the hewer of your wood...” (i.e., those of more modest spiritual stature).

The Alter Rebbe elaborates on this unity between unequals in *Likkutei Torah*, at the beginning of *Parshat Nitzavim*.

ובזה יובן מאמר רז"ל, כי חורבן בית שני ונפילת ישראל בגלות

This will clarify the teaching of our Sages,¹⁷ of blessed memory, that the destruction of the Second Temple and the fall of Israel into exile,

והסתלקות השכינה וירידתה לאדום, בבחינת גלות, כביכול

and the withdrawal of the *Shechinah* and its descent to Edom, into a state of exile, as it were, for when the Jews are exiled, so too is the *Shechinah*,¹⁸

הכל היה בעון שנאת חנם ופירוד לבבות, רחמנא ליצולן

— all this was because of the sin of groundless hatred [between one Jew and another] and dissension between their hearts (May the Merciful One save us!).

ולכן נקראת חולה, על דרך משל

And this is why [the *Shechinah*] is referred to metaphorically as ailing (in times of exile, as quoted above).

ומה שכתוב: סומך נופלים ורופא חולים, לשון רבים

As for [19](#) the phrases [in the *Amidah*], “He supports those who are fallen and heals those who are sick,” in plural form — although reference is being made to the *Shechinah*,

הם כל האברים וכו'

this alludes to all the organs....

The plural form includes the souls which are the “organs of the *Shechinah*,” inasmuch as they are animated by it; they, too, are in ailing health, and they, too, are supported and healed.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “See *Metzudat David* on *Mishlei* 31:23.” [2.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “*Tikkunei Zohar* 25; see there at length.” [3.](#) From the *Havdalah* (*Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 234), paraphrasing *Vayikra* 10:10. [4.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “I.e., ‘and the spirit of life which is *vested* within [the blood]...,’ as is soon explained.” [5.](#) The phrase in the current editions (“and the veins”) is emended here according to the *Luach HaTikkun* of the Rebbe. [6.](#) *Zohar* III, 17a. [7.](#) *Tehillim* 73:26. [8.](#) Translated according to *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 5:2. [9.](#) *Shmot* 25:8. [10.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “See *Tanya*, ch. 41; *et al.*” [11.](#) *Zohar* I, 11b. [12.](#) See *Ruth Rabbah*, sec. 2; *Bereishit Rabbah* 8:7. [13.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “See *Metzudat David* on *Mishlei* 31:23.” [14.](#) 1:7. [15.](#) *Yechezkel* 1:14. [16.](#) *Devarim* 29:9. [17.](#) *Yoma* 9b. [18.](#) *Megillah* 29b (as quoted in *Ein Yaakov*); cf. *Tanya*, ch. 17. [19.](#) The phrase in the current editions (“As it is written...”) is emended here to “As for...,” according to the *Luach HaTikkun* of the Rebbe. The closing statement of the Epistle is thus presented in the classic Rabbinic style of question and answer, whereby a possible difficulty is anticipated and solved.

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Epistle 32

Just as the Alter Rebbe opened the first Epistle in this series [1](#) with a blessing — occasioned by the good news that most of the chassidic congregations had completed their annual study of the *Talmud* — so, too, this final Epistle begins with a blessing.

Evidently, this blessing too was occasioned by good news — that the Alter Rebbe’s chassidim had organized the collection of charity for the Holy Land faithfully and efficiently, with a lively *gabbai tzedakah* appointed in each town or congregation to rouse his brethren to action. The Alter Rebbe therefore extends his blessings both to the donors

and to the *gabbaim*, explaining meanwhile in mystical terms why generosity is at its best when it is spontaneously aroused by one's own spiritual endeavors.

The Rebbe indicates in a letter, that the first and final Epistles of *Iggeret HaKodesh* are also connected, in that both of them laud the service of prayer when it is undertaken with proper intent.

The first speaks of “devout concentration during prayer from the depths of the heart...to the extent of pressing out the soul.” As explained there, this fortifies the mind that meditates upon G-d's greatness, while fanning man's love and awe of G-d. This final Epistle speaks of “an arousal of the love of G-d when reading the *Shema*, cleaving to Him and surrendering one's soul at *Echad*, and [loving G-d] ‘with all [his] wealth,’ in the literal sense.”

When this inspiration crystallizes into practical expression in this material world here below, the resultant *tzedakah* is of the finest, for it is born of one's own labors in the service of prayer.

ברך ה' חילם, ופועל ידם ירצה

May² G-d bless your³ effort and favor the work of your hands,

The above blessing, which Moses gave the Tribe of Levi, is understood by our Sages⁴ to refer to the service in the Holy Temple. As to the period of exile, when the *Beit HaMikdash* has not yet been rebuilt, *Avot deRabbi Natan* states⁵ that *tzedakah* and acts of lovingkindness bring about the same atonement as was effected by the Temple service. This may well explain why the Alter Rebbe chooses this particular verse as the text of the blessing that he offered to those who give *tzedakah*.

לרצון להם לפני ה' תמיד

so that you may be accepted before G-d at all times.⁶

With this addition the Alter Rebbe apparently implies that though his readers' *tzedakah* amounts to no more than a fifth of their earnings, this fifth nevertheless elevates the whole of their income to G-d, as explained above in *Tanya*, ch. 34. In this way, not only the effort expended in earning the funds set aside for *tzedakah*, but with it the entire “work of their hands,” becomes “accepted before G-d at all times.”

כה יתן וכה יוסיף ה', לאמץ לבם בגבורים

So may G-d ever continue to grant you [His blessings], to fortify your hearts amongst the valiant.⁷

This sentence would tend to connect this Epistle with the good news the Alter Rebbe received from his chassidim with regard to the giving of *tzedakah*. Hence his blessings

that G-d should further strengthen them in a practice whose performance requires one to be valiant, in the spirit of the teaching,⁸ “Who is *valiant*? — He who conquers his evil inclination”; i.e., he who gives even more than he desires to give.

ונדיב על נדיבות יקום

And he that is generous stands over generous things,⁹

This paraphrase evidently means that the public-spirited catalyst who motivates others to give is even more praiseworthy than those who actually give.

להיות גדול המעשה, בכל עיר ומנין

to be “great” by causing others to act, in every city and congregation, for¹⁰ “He who causes another to act is greater than the doer.”

ותחשב לו לצדקה

This will be accounted as his act of *tzedakah*.

ועל העושה נאמר: צדקתו עומדת לעד

And of him who does [the deed], it is said,¹¹ “His *tzedakah* stands forever.”

עומדת, לשון נקבה: שמקבל התעוררות לבו הטהור מגדול המעשה

[The verb] *omedet* (“stands”) is of feminine gender, which suggests a recipient, because [this donor] receives the [charitable] arousal of his pure heart from him who is “great, by causing others to act.”

Had he been roused to give *tzedakah* of his own accord, he would have been considered a true “giver”.

אף על פי כן, עומדת לעד

Nevertheless, [his *tzedakah*] “stands forever.”

פירוש: שכל הצדקה והחסד שישראל עושין בעולם הזה, מנדבת לבם הטהור

This means: All the acts of charity and kindness that Jews perform in this world, out of the generosity of their pure hearts,

הן הנה חיות וקיימות בעולם הזה הגשמי עד זמן התחייה

are alive and they endure in this physical world until the time of the Resurrection.

שאז זמן גילוי אלקות ואור אין סוף ברוך הוא, מבחינת סובב כל עלמין, בעולם הזה

For that will be the time of the manifestation of Divinity and of the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light, from the level of *sovev kol almin*, in this world,

This degree of spiritual illumination, which transcends (lit., “encompasses”) all created worlds, will be fully revealed in this world at the time of the Resurrection.

וכמו שכתוב באריכות במכתב דאשתקד

as explained at length in last year’s letter.[12](#)

וצריך להיות כלי ומכון, להתלבש בו אור אין סוף ברוך הוא

But there needs to be a vessel and an abode wherein the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light can vest itself,

כמו הגוף לנשמה, על דרך משל

just as the body is [a vessel] to the soul, metaphorically speaking.

כמו שכתוב: הלא כה דברי כאש

Thus it is written:[13](#) “For My word is like fire”;

מה אש אינה מאירה בעולם הזה, אלא כשנאחזת ומתלבשת בפתילה כו'

just as fire does not radiate in this world except when it is attached to and vests itself in a wick..., so, too, if Divinity is to illuminate this world, it too must be able to attach itself to something in this world which, like a wick, will be wholly subjugated to the Divine flame and consumed by it,

כמו שכתוב במקום אחר

as explained elsewhere.[14](#)

והגוף והכלי לאורו יתברך, היא מדת החסד ונדיבת הלב

The body and the vessel for G-d’s light is the attribute of kindness and the generosity of the heart,

ליתן ולהשפיע חיות, למאן דלית ליה כו'

whereby one gives and effuses vitality to him who has nothing [of his own].

Generosity with a smile, empathy with the pauper, — this is the vessel for G-d's infinite light.

כמו שכתוב בתיקונים: וכמה גופין תקינת לון

Thus it is stated in the *Tikkunim*,¹⁵ “And You have prepared many bodies for [the illuminations of the *Sefirot*],

ואתקריאו בתיקונא דא: חסד, דרועא ימינא

and they are described in the following manner: *Chesed* — the right arm,”

Just as *Chesed* is the Supernal “right arm,” so too is man's corresponding attribute of kindness the appropriate vessel for revelations and benefactions from that source.

וכל הגוף נכלל בימין

Moreover, the entire body is included in the right side, which is its mainstay.

וכך אמר הפייט: לבושו צדקה

Thus too wrote the liturgical poet:¹⁶ “His garment is *tzedakah*.”¹⁷

Tzedakah, unqualified, is the garment which garbs and screens the entire Supernal “Body”, thereby enabling mortals here below to receive the infinite revelation of Divinity.

וזהו שאמרו רז"ל: אין צדקה משתלמת אלא לפי חסד שבה

This is the meaning of what our Sages, of blessed memory, said:¹⁸ “Charity is recompensed only according to the kindness within it,

שנאמר: זרעו לכם לצדקה, קצרו לפי חסד

as it is written,¹⁹ ‘Sow for yourselves for *tzedakah*, reap according to the kindness.’”

Why is *tzedakah* alluded to as “sowing” and its reward as “reaping”?

שהקציר הוא גילוי הזריעה הטמונה בארץ

For a harvest is the manifestation of the seed hidden in the soil.

וכך הוא הצדקה והחסד שישראל עושין בזמן הגלות: היא טמונה ונסתרת עד זמן התחיה, שיתלבש ויאיר אור אין סוף ברוך הוא בעולם הזה הגשמי

It is likewise with the charity and kindness that Jews perform in the time of exile: it [too] is hidden and concealed until the time of the Resurrection, when the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light will vest itself and radiate in this physical world.

This ultimate vestiture and revelation thus resembles the harvest of *tzedakah*.

Moreover, as the Alter Rebbe now explains, G-d's vestiture and revelation at the time of the Resurrection resembles and even surpasses His vestiture and revelation within the vessels of the *Sefirot* in the World of *Atzilut*.

ואיהו וגרמוהי חד הם, בחינת הכלים דעשר ספירות דאצילות

For “He is one with His causations”,²⁰ i.e., with the *kelim* (lit., “vessels”) of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Atzilut*: they are utterly fused with the infinite light that is revealed in them, as explained above in Epistle XX.²¹

וכל שכן וקל וחומר, אור אין סוף ברוך הוא, הסובב כל עלמין מלמעלה מעלה מבחינת אצילות

Thus, how much more so, with regard to the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light which encompasses all worlds (*sovev kol almin*) from far higher than the level of *Atzilut*.

If the vessel that receives the lower degree of illumination that permeates *Atzilut* is wholly one with the light that shines into it, then the vessel that receives an infinitely higher degree of illumination must surely be wholly one with it — absorbing and integrating this illumination within itself. This latter vessel is *tzedakah*.

ולפיכך נקראת צדקה, לשון נקבה

This is why [charity] is called *tzedakah*, [a noun] of feminine gender,

צדקתו עומדת לעד

[in the above-quoted phrase,] “his *tzedakah* stands forever.”

Correspondingly, the verb here translated “stands” (or “endures”) is *omedet*, also in the feminine form — which, it will be recalled, puts *tzedakah* in the light of a recipient.

שמקבלת הארה מאור אין סוף, הסובב כל עלמין, המתלבש בתוכה בעולם הזה הגשמי, בזמן התחיה

For it receives a radiation from the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light that encompasses all worlds, which vests itself in it (*and is revealed in it*) in this physical world at the time of the Resurrection.

Not only is the feminine gender used because (as explained earlier) a donor may receive his motivation from another, but also because *tzedakah* itself is a feminine recipient: it is man's vessel or receptor for the transcendent light of G-d.

אבל: צדק לפניו יהלך, הוא לשון זכר

However, the verse,[22](#) “*Tzedek* shall go before him,” is in the masculine gender, both the noun (*tzedek*) and its matching verb (*yehaleich*).

היא מדת החסד המתעוררת בלב האדם מעצמו

This refers to the attribute of kindness that is aroused in a man’s heart of his own accord, not through another’s inspiration,

על ידי התעוררות אהבת ה' בקריאת שמע, ולדבקה בו ולמסור נפשו באחד

through an arousal of the love of G-d when reading the *Shema*,[23](#) cleaving to Him and surrendering his soul at *Echad*, i.e., as he completes that verse, “...G-d is One”;

ובכל מאדך כפשוטו וכו'

[loving G-d] “with all your wealth,” in the literal sense[24](#)...

I.e., the individual’s love and surrender to G-d inspire him to give *tzedakah*.

ובאתערותא דלתתא

And as a result of [this] arousal from below —

וכמים הפנים לפנים, כן לב אדם העליון כו'

for[25](#) as waters reflect face to face, so is the heart of the Supernal Man [that is “upon the throne”] —

אתערותא דלעילא

there is an arousal from above.

הוא המשכת אור אין סוף ברוך הוא, הסובב כל עלמין, למטה מטה בעולם הזה הגשמי בבחינת גילוי, בזמן התחיה

This is [expressed as] a manifest downward flow of the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light that encompasses (i.e., transcends) all worlds, down to the nethermost level of this physical world, at the time of the Resurrection,

כמבואר במכתב דאשתקד באריכות

as explained at length in last year’s letter.[26](#)

Charity inspired by a person's *avodah* during prayer is thus called *tzedek*, a noun of masculine gender, suggesting emanation and provision — for it gives forth and elicits the transcendent light of *sovev kol almin*. Moreover, as the Alter Rebbe will soon explain, this kind of unsolicited charity draws down the innermost essence of this light. When, however, one's giving has to wait for another man's inspiration, such *tzedakah* remains a recipient, a mere receptor or vessel for a mere glimmer of the light of *sovev kol almin*.

וזהו: לפניו יהלך

And this is the [mystical] meaning of [two of the words from the above-quoted verse],²⁷ “[*Tzedek*] shall go before him.”

The verb *yehaleich*, here translated “shall go,” in fact appears in this verse in the causative mode: “shall *cause* to go”; i.e., “shall lead.”

The word *lefanav*, here translated “before him,” stems from the root *panim*, meaning “face” or “countenance”.

שמוליק וממשיך פנים העליונים מלמעלה מהאצילות, עד עולם העשיה

Hence: *Tzedek* leads and elicits the Supernal Countenance, the most essential and inward aspect of the Divine light, drawing it from higher than [the World of] *Atzilut*, down to the World of *Asiyah*.

* * *

וכעת עת לקצר, וכל טוב מהם לא יבצר

But let's close; quite enough I've prepared you, and may no kind of blessing be spared you.

הטיבה ה' לטובים, ולישרים בלבותם

“Do good, O G-d, to the good, and to those who are upright in their heart”²⁸ — bless those who donate generously to *tzedakah*, and also those whose generous intentions are forced to remain unrealized.

כנפש תדרשנו

Such is the prayerful wish of him who seeks [your welfare].²⁹

Addendum

The Rebbe once explained in a talk that the Alter Rebbe's statement in the above Epistle, that the spiritual effects of *tzedakah* are drawn down into this physical world at the present time as well, is truly novel. Generally, *Chassidut* explains that the performance of

mitzvot draws the Divine light downward into the World of *Atzilut*. The parable offered (see *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5627, p. 433; *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5629, p. 209) thus describes the reward for *mitzvot* as being kept in *Atzilut* within a chest, so to speak, whose key is in the possession of the individual who performed the *mitzvah*.

This flow of Divine light is incapable of descending into this world — “There is no reward in this world for a *mitzvah*”³⁰ — for this finite and material world cannot receive the reward that comes from the transcendent level of Divinity called *sovev kol almin*.

Here, however, the Alter Rebbe states explicitly that “all the acts of charity and kindness that Jews perform in this world, out of the generosity of their pure hearts, are alive and they endure in this physical world until the time of the Resurrection.” Moreover, the Alter Rebbe specifies “in this physical world,” as opposed to the spiritual source of this world. In addition, when he states that the acts of charity “are alive,” how does this term apply in our context?

The Rebbe explains this by citing the following exegesis of the Maggid of *Mezritch*³¹ on the verse,³² “You shall observe my statutes and commandments that one is to do and live in them.”

The operative commandments draw down spiritual life-force only when a *mitzvah* has been actually performed. To consider the *tzitzit*, for example: Only when a person has *used* its threads in the performance of the commandment, are all the sublime levels of Divinity drawn downward into the physical world; only then are this person’s thoughts, speech and action (relative to the *tzitzit*) united; only then do all the laws of *tzitzit* and all the appropriate Torah passages apply.

The same is true with regard to all the other operative commandments as well. The Maggid concludes that this is the meaning (at the non-literal level of *derush*) of *vechai bahem* — “you shall *live* in *them*”: every individual Jew draws down spiritual life into the *mitzvot* he performs.

The above teaching of the Maggid gave the *Tzemach Tzedek* a fresh insight into a statement with which the Sages extrapolate Moses’ entreaty to be allowed to enter the Holy Land:³³ “Let me enter the Land so that all of [the *mitzvot*] will be fulfilled through me.” The request was not “...so that I will be able to perform the *mitzvot*,” but rather, “...so that all of [the *mitzvot*] will be fulfilled and animated through me.” For the commandments are *alive* and they *endure* only when a Jew actually performs them.

In this light, the Rebbe concludes, we can understand the above teaching of the Alter Rebbe, that “all the acts of charity and kindness that Jews perform in this world, out of the generosity of their pure hearts, are *alive* and they *endure* in this physical world until the time of the Resurrection.”

FOOTNOTES ^{1.} See above, Vol. IV, p. 1. ^{2.} Cf. *Devarim* 33:11. ^{3.} See above, Epistle 27, Part (a), footnote 7. ^{4.} *Pesachim* 22b. ^{5.} 4:5. ^{6.} Cf. *Shmot* 28:38. ^{7.} Cf. *Amos* 2:16. ^{8.}

Avot, beginning of ch. 4. [9.](#) Cf. *Yeshayahu* 32:8. [10.](#) *Bava Batra* 9a; the key word המעשה (vocalized *patach-sheva-patach-segol*) does not mean “the action” but “he who causes another to act.” [11.](#) *Tehillim* 111:3. [12.](#) Epistle XVII (above), in Vol. IV, p. 298. [13.](#) *Yirmeyahu* 23:29. [14.](#) *Tanya*, ch. 53. [15.](#) In the Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar* which begins *Patach Eliyahu*; see *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 125. [16.](#) In the hymn which begins *Atah Hu Elokeinu*, recited during the *Shemoneh Esreh* on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur; see (e.g.) *Machzor for Rosh HaShanah with English Translation* (trans. Rabbi Nissen Mangel; Kehot, N.Y., 1983), p. 98. The word *tzedakah* means both “charity” and “righteousness”. [17.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Cf. Epistle III, above.” [18.](#) *Sukkah* 49b. [19.](#) *Hoshea* 10:12. [20.](#) *Etz Chayim, Shaar* 47, ch. 12, *et al.* [21.](#) See above, Vol. IV, p. 357 ff. [22.](#) *Tehillim* 85:14. [23.](#) *Devarim* 6:4; *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 46. [24.](#) *Berachot* 54a. [25.](#) Cf. *Mishlei* 27:19; the original verse speaks of the heart of one man to another. [26.](#) Epistle XVII (above), in Vol. IV, p. 298. [27.](#) *Tehillim* 85:14. [28.](#) *Tehillim* 125:4. [29.](#) Cf. *Eichah* 3:25. [30.](#) *Kiddushin* 39b. [31.](#) *Likkutei Amarim* by the Maggid, sec. 227 in Kehot editions. [32.](#) *Vayikra* 18:5. [33.](#) *Sotah* 14a.

