

Lessons in Tanya: Kuntres Acharon

Essay 1

Kuntres Acharon, Essay One

The contents of this *Kuntres Acharon al Kamah Perakim* (“Later Booklet on Several Chapters”) are not near as homo-eneous as one might expect.

The ninth printing¹ of the *Tanya*, which included *Iggeret HaKodesh* and *Kuntres Acharon* for the second time, was introduced by an “Approbation of the ... sons of the illustrious author.”² This Approbation describes *Kuntres Acharon* as a work based “on certain chapters, which he wrote when he composed the *Sefer Likutei Amarim*” (i.e., the first part of *Tanya*). It is described as consisting of “profound discussions and insights in passages in the *Zohar*, *Etz Chayim* and *Pri Etz Chayim*, which appear to contradict one another, and in his understanding spirit [the Alter Rebbe] resolves each passage according to its context as explained in *Likutei Amarim*.”

As the Rebbe notes, however, close to half of the essays printed in current editions under the heading of *Kuntres Acharon*, beginning with Essay 6, appear to be letters of the Alter Rebbe that are quite unconnected with matters discussed in *Tanya*, *Zohar*, *Etz Chayim*, etc., and hence, seemingly out of place in *Kuntres Acharon*. And, indeed, when *Iggeret HaKodesh* and *Kuntres Acharon* were first included in *Tanya* (in the eighth edition; Koenigsburg, 1811), these essays were in fact not printed as part of *Kuntres Acharon*, but were grouped with *Iggeret HaKodesh*.

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The first essay of *Kuntres Acharon* answers two questions:

(a) How does a Jew become connected with Supernal Wisdom (*Chochmah* of *Atzilut*) by reading the narratives of the Torah?

(b) What is meant by the statement of the *Zohar* that “thought accomplishes nothing”? (I.e., that if one merely thinks about words of Torah but does not articulate them vocally, he does not effect an “arousal from below” that elicits an “arousal from above.”)

As to question (a): We can readily understand how when a Jew studies the reasoning and the laws of the Torah he is connected with Supernal Wisdom, for the Torah is “G-d’s Will and Wisdom.” But what of the narrative passages? True enough, in addition to their truth as narrative (for³ “A verse never departs from its plain meaning”), these passages of course simultaneously allude to spiritual truths in the higher worlds. But if a reader knows nothing of this beyond the simple story, how is he thereby connected with Supernal Wisdom?

The Alter Rebbe answers this query by quoting *Sefer HaKavanot* of the *AriZal*, who states that at the very same moment at which a Jew is engaged in Torah in this world, the “likeness” of Supernal Man above (the source of the soul of this Jew) is also engaged in Torah. The source of this individual’s soul is thus bound up with Supernal Wisdom.

Now, this applies when this individual merely meditates upon words of Torah, in silence. When, however, he actually verbalizes them, then the sound of these words pierces the heavens, and ascends to the spiritual level to which that sound is related, i.e., the level which matches the level of service of the person involved. If he is a *tzaddik* who, like a chariot, has no independent will but waits to be steered by its Rider, then the sound of his Torah study rises to the World of *Atzilut* (as explained in *Tanya*, ch. 39); if he serves G-d with intellectually-generated love and awe, the sound of his Torah study rises to the World of *Beriah*; if his love and awe of G-d are innate, the sound of his Torah study rises to the World of *Yetzirah* (as explained in *Tanya*, ch. 16).

As to question (b), regarding the inability of unvoiced thought (on words of Torah) to elicit an illumination from above, the Alter Rebbe will presently explain that it is nevertheless expressly *thought* that can elevate one’s Torah study and one’s performance of the commandments to the higher realms.

This, however, appears to be contradicted by a teaching in the *Zohar*,⁴ that the kind of “arousal from below” that draws down the reciprocal “arousal from above,” is effected specifically by “deed and speech,” as distinct from unvoiced thought.

The Alter Rebbe therefore clarifies: It is true that the *Zohar* here teaches that thought alone cannot draw down the flow of Divine light. That is why, even when one serves G-d with love and fear through the spiritual toil of the soul, he will not have fulfilled his obligation to perform the accompanying *mitzvah* unless these spiritual emotions find simultaneous expression in actual deeds or words (cf. *Tanya*, ch. 35). For the soul descended into this world in order to draw down Divine light, and thereby to refine and rectify the body and the animal soul. (The Divine soul itself is by definition not in need of rectification.) And it is only through “deed and speech” — the actual performance of *mitzvot* or articulated Torah study, for⁵ “the movement of the lips is also a [minor] deed” — that one draws the Divine light down into this world.

However, when it comes to the separate task of *elevating* one’s Torah study and performance of the commandments, this is accomplished specifically by means of positive *thoughts*, which include one’s devout intent (*kavanah*), and one’s love and awe of G-d.

Examine⁶ *Likkutei Amarim*, ch. 40

The Alter Rebbe explained in ch. 40⁷ that the love and fear of G-d are mere “wings”.⁸ Though wings enable a bird to fly aloft, they are not its essence. Indeed, even “if its wings were removed, [a bird] is kosher,”⁹ so long as its head and body are intact.

So, too, Supernal Unions (*yichudim*) are effected through Torah and *mitzvot* themselves. Love and awe, which are their wings, merely elevate the Torah and *mitzvot* to that spiritual level where a particular union is to take place. It is at that level that there is revealed within one's Torah and *mitzvot* an infinite Divine illumination that cannot be revealed in this physical world.

Thus, on one hand we say that love and fear do not bring about a Supernal Union, for they are mere “thought” and intent. On the other hand, we also say that it is specifically through one's intent that one's Torah and *mitzvot* are elevated to a height they could never ascend to unaided; once there, they bring about a Supernal Union and its resultant diffusion of Divine light.

להבין איך הקורא בסיפורי מעשיות שבתורה, הוא מקושר בחכמה עילאה

To understand how a person reading narratives in the Torah becomes connected with *Chochmah Ila'ah* (“Supernal Wisdom”):

When a Jew studies Torah intellectually, it stands to reason that he is then bound up with Supernal Wisdom — the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah* (the loftiest Divine emanation) in the World of *Atzilut* — for Torah law is “G-d's Will and Wisdom”; the rationale underlying a law is G-d's wisdom, while the ruling itself is G-d's will.

This is explained in ch. 5 of *Tanya*: “It so arose in His will that if, for example, Reuven would claim thus and Shimon thus, such and such should be the verdict between them.” Even if this litigation should never come to pass, still it is G-d's will that in such an instance the verdict should be such and such — in accordance with His will. The very knowledge of the ruling thus makes one aware of G-d's will.

Suppose, however, that instead of studying legal issues one merely reads the narratives of the Torah. While it is true that these narratives allude to spiritual matters in the higher worlds,¹⁰ yet since he perceives nothing beneath their seemingly simplistic surface, how is he thereby connected with Supernal Wisdom?

When, for example, the Alter Rebbe looked at the verse,¹¹ “And Jacob kissed Rachel and lifted up his eyes and wept,” he saw¹² that Jacob, who represents the attribute of Mercy of *Atzilut*, arouses compassion from the Supernal Source of Mercy upon Rachel, who personifies *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, the fount of all souls.

However, when one is unaware of the inner meaning of this verse, and merely follows the simple story, how is he then bound to Supernal Wisdom?

על פי מה שכתוב בכוונות, דף ט"ז עמוד ב': כמו שהאדם עוסק למטה, כך דיוקן האדם העליון למעלה כו'

[This matter may be understood] in the light of what is written in the *Kavanot*, p. 16b¹³ — that just as a man is engaged [in Torah study] below, so too is the likeness of the Supernal Man [engaged in Torah study] above.

As the Alter Rebbe will soon explain, this “likeness” refers to the source of a man’s soul, which is rooted in the *Sefirot* above. This is known as Supernal Man, for in the Kabbalah a complete configuration — a *partzuf* (lit., “visage”) of ten intellectual and emotive Divine *Sefirot* — is referred to as a “Man”.¹⁴ Supernal Man occupies Himself in Torah above, at the same time that mortal man does so below. When one is engaged in Torah, be it even in the narratives of the Torah, he is thus connected with Supernal Wisdom, inasmuch as his “likeness” above is bound up with Supernal Wisdom.

According to this explanation, however, he is connected with Supernal Wisdom only by virtue of his connection with his likeness above, and not through his actual study. The Alter Rebbe therefore now goes on to state that this is so only when his study of the Written Torah remains in the realm of thought. If, instead, the individual verbalizes the words audibly, the very sound of his voice enables the letters here below to ascend even to the highest of levels, the World of *Atzilut*.

כן יש לומר, בהרהור באותיות הכתובות

This [vicarious connection] applies [only] when one is thinking about the written letters [of the Torah’s narratives].

אבל הדבור, יש לומר דבוקע וסליק לאצילות ממש

But as to articulated speech, we may say that it pierces and ascends to the actual [World of] *Atzilut*;

The Alter Rebbe here seeks to distinguish between “the *actual* World of *Atzilut*,” and the highest level (the “relative *Atzilut*”) within each of the lower worlds. As explained above, the uttered words of a consummate *tzaddik* — like the rest of his Torah and *mitzvot* — ascend to the actual World of *Atzilut*.

או לבריאה, בדחילו ורחימו שכליים

alternatively, [the articulated speech of one’s Torah study rises] to *Beriah*, the world of comprehension, when impelled by intellectually-generated love and fear (i.e., a love and fear of G-d that result from comprehending Him);

או ליצירה, בדחילו ורחימו טבעיים

or else [this speech rises] to *Yetzirah*, the world of emotions, when motivated by the innate awe and love of G-d that are the heritage of every Jew.

This refers to the level of “concealed love” (*ahavah mesuteret*) that also includes fear.

ובמקרא

And through Scripture, i.e., when its words are merely uttered out of an acceptance of G-d's yoke, without any of the above three levels of motivation,

סליק מעולם הזה ליו"ד ספירות דעשיה, משום דבקע אוירין וכו'

[this speech] rises from This World to the Ten *Sefirot* of *Asiyah*, the level that relates to Torah and *mitzvot* that are performed merely out of acceptance of G-d's yoke,¹⁵ for "it pierces the atmospheres¹⁶..." between physical and spiritual *Asiyah*.

מה שאין כן בהרהור, אלא הדיוקן, שהוא שרש נשמתו וכו'

In contrast, one's [unvoiced] thought [does not ascend to the higher worlds; it affects] only the "likeness" which is the source of his soul..., and which at that time is also engaged above in Torah, thereby connecting him with Supernal Wisdom.

ומה שכתוב בזהר, חלק ג' דף ק"ה, דהרהור לא עביד מידי כו'

As to the statement in the *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 105, that "thinking achieves nothing,..."

והיינו, אפילו לטב

i.e., not even a beneficial effect, if the "arousal from below" of deed or speech are lacking,

Speaking of thought, the *Zohar* there refers to improper thoughts that "achieve nothing." For it is only when one actually speaks (and not merely thinks) of mundane matters on *Shabbat*¹⁷ that he causes a blemish in the spiritual realms, since his speech ascends aloft and introduces mundanity within the sanctity of *Shabbat* above. In the same way, the Alter Rebbe adds, thought alone — unless it is accompanied by words or deeds — has no *positive* effect above.

עיין שם, ובדף ל"א עמוד ב'

examine closely there, as well as p. 31b.

For the *Zohar* says there that in order to receive the sanctity and joy of the Jewish festivals, there must first be an "arousal from below" through deed or speech. It then goes on to say that mundane talk during *Shabbat* will cause a blemish above, though not mundane thoughts.

We thus see that the *Zohar* is speaking of the inability of thought alone to produce either positive or negative effects.

The same is true of the statement in *Zohar* III, 31b, that a deed below inspires a deed above. A holy deed brings forth an arousal of holiness from above that descends upon the doer, while a deed stemming from impurity causes a spirit of impurity to descend upon

him. The *Zohar* concludes there, that whatever depends upon action affects action, while whatever depends upon speech affects speech.

This, too, indicates that both a positive and a negative impact can be made only through action or speech, and not through disembodied thought alone.

Now, if thought alone “accomplishes nothing,” how does this square with the earlier statement that when one reads the narratives of the Torah, even if he does so only in his thought, he causes the “likeness” of Supernal Man to study Torah, and thereby the person involved is united with Supernal Wisdom?

The Alter Rebbe resolves this seeming contradiction as follows: The *Zohar* only means that thought has no effect in *drawing down illumination from above*: it is true that it is not an “arousal from below” that elicits an “arousal from above.” However, thought does have a vital effect above: one’s thought and intention are indispensable in *elevating* one’s Torah study and performance of the commandments, and in effecting the consequent Supernal Unions.

To return now to the above-quoted statement that “thinking accomplishes nothing”:

יש לומר דהיינו לאתערא לעילא, שיומשך משם לתתא

We may say, that this [disability] refers only to arousing a reaction Above, to call forth a downward flow [of Divine light];

רק מחשבתו נשארה שם

the thought that rises above simply remains there,

ומוסיפה שם אור גדול

greatly increasing the illumination there.

בתוספת וריבוי האור באצילות, על ידי מקרא ומצוות מעשיות שבעשיה

[This] increased illumination in *Atzilut* is brought about through the verbal study of Scripture and the practice of active *mitzvot* in *Asiyah*,

שעיקר היחוד הוא למעלה

for the [consequent] Union takes place primarily above, within *Atzilut*.

רק הפירות בעולם הזה, על ידי המשכת אור מעט מזעיר למטה על ידי הדבור ומעשה

Only [its] fruits reach this world, through the illumination that is called forth in minute measure, here below, by speech and deed, that serve as an “arousal from below” to draw down the “arousal from above.”

מה שאין כן בהרהור, לא נמשך כלום

Through thinking [alone], however, nothing is called forth [below]: the above-mentioned increased illumination remains entirely above.

ולכן לא יצא ידי חבותו

Hence, if one merely *thinks* the words of the *Shema* and does not verbalize them vocally, he has not fulfilled his obligation

מה שירדה נשמתו לעולם הזה, רק להמשיך אורות עליונים למטה

for which his soul descended into This World: viz., only to draw supernal illuminations into the lower world.

כמו שכתוב בעץ חיים, שער כ"ו: להמשיך אור

In the words of *Etz Chayim, Shaar 26*, [the purpose of the soul's descent is] “to call forth illumination.”

The G-dly soul does not descend into this world for its own sake, for it is not in need of any rectification. Rather, it descends here in order to rectify and refine the body and the animal soul, by drawing supernal illumination down into this otherwise dark world.

אבל להעלות ממטה למעלה

But to elevate [one's Torah and *mitzvot*] from below upward,

הוא דוקא על ידי מחשבה טובה

there must be “good thought” — the positive intent that stems from love and fear of G-d,

דבלא דחילו ורחימו, לא פרחא לעילא

for without awe and love, [his divine service in Torah and *mitzvot*] does not fly upward.

וכמו שכתוב בשער הנבואה, פרק ב': והמחשבה טובה כו'

As is stated in *Shaar HaNevuah*, sec. 2, “And the good thought [is that which raises Torah and *mitzvot* aloft].”

But here we appear to have a contradiction.

ומה שכתוב: דבקע רקיעין וכו'

Now, we have an expression, quoted in the *Zohar* above, [that the sound of Torah study] “pierces firmaments...,”

והיינו, אפילו בלא דחילו ורחימו

and this is true even when [the sound of Torah study] is without awe and love,

במכל שכן מדברים בטלים

by *a fortiori* reasoning from the case of idle words,

If idle or mundane words spoken on the Sabbath ascend and cause a blemish above, surely holy words ascend, *even when they are not accompanied by awe and love of G-d.*¹⁸

דמדה טובה, מרובה

since¹⁹ “the measure of good is more generous [than its opposite].”

How are we to reconcile this with the statement that “without awe and love one’s [Torah study] does *not* fly upward”?

The Alter Rebbe now answers:

היינו, רקיעין דוקא, שהן ההיכלות והבתים

This refers only to “firmaments”, meaning the chambers and abodes, i.e., the external aspects of Supernal Man,

ולא בגוף האדם העליון

but not the “body” of Supernal Man.

I.e., if one’s Torah study is not propelled by a love and awe of G-d, it does not ascend to the “body” of Supernal Man, which comprises the Ten *Sefirot* of the world involved.

וכל שכן בנפש רוח ונשמה

It certainly [does not ascend] to the *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah* of Supernal Man, the light of *Atzilut* that illumines that world,

אפילו באדם דעשיה, שהן יו"ד ספירות, אורות וכלים

even not of the Supernal Man of *Asiyah*, meaning the Ten *Sefirot*, both its lights and vessels.

Without awe and love, one's Torah study cannot ascend even to this level.

וזהו שכתוב בתקונים, דבלא דחילו ורחימו, לא יכלא לסלקא ולמיקם קדם ה' דוקא

This is the intention of the *Tikkunim*,²⁰ that without fear and love it cannot ascend or stand before G-d.

This means that it is capable of ascending to a higher world, but not before the G-dliness of that world, i.e., the *Sefirot* of that world. In order for it to ascend there, there must be awe and love.

FOOTNOTES

- ^{1.} Shklov, 1814; see the Bibliographical Listing by the Rebbe, reproduced (in Hebrew) in the Bi-Lingual Edition of *Tanya*, p. 714.
- ^{2.} It appeared in the Shklov edition of 1814 for the first time. See its English translation in Vol. I of the present series, p. 10.
- ^{3.} Shabbat 63a.
- ^{4.} III, 105a and 31b.
- ^{5.} *Sanhedrin* 65a.
- ^{6.} Note of the Rebbe: “[*Examine*], not simply *See*.”
- ^{7.} See Vol. II above, p. 558ff.
- ^{8.} R. Chayim Vital, in *Shaar HaYichudim*, ch. 11.
- ^{9.} Note of the Rebbe in He'arot veTikkunim: “In the Mishnah (Chullin 3:4) we find, ‘If its wings were broken...’ [From this we learn that the same law applies] ‘when its wings were removed’; see the Bach and Taz, Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah, beginning of sec. 53.”
- ^{10.} Actually, this may be viewed the other way around: The real subject of such a narrative is a spiritual truth; this is echoed by the physical aspects of the corresponding episode as it took place below. In the words of Asarah Maamarot (Maamar Chikur Din 3:22), “The Torah speaks on high and hints at matters below.”
- ^{11.} *Bereishit* 29:11.
- ^{12.} *Tanya*, ch. 45.
- ^{13.} I.e., *Sefer HaKavanot* of the *AriZal* (ed. Venice, 5380/1620).
- ^{14.} Cf. *Yechezkel* 1:26.
- ^{15.} Alternatively, it may be said that the degree of elevation varies with the subject of one's study. If it is Kabbalah, which extends no further “down” than *Atzilut*, then one's study is elevated as far “up” as *Atzilut*. If it is *Talmud*, which extends down to *Beriah*, then one's study is elevated as far up as *Beriah*. If *Mishnah*, it is *Yetzirah*; if Scripture, it is *Asiyah*; — as the Alter Rebbe explains in the Note at the conclusion of ch. 40 in *Tanya*. The Alter Rebbe makes a point of noting there, that in fact all the

above categories of Torah study belong in *Atzilut*, except that Scripture emanates all the way downward until *Asiyah*, *Mishnah* — only as far as until *Yetzirah*, and *Talmud* — until *Beriah*, while Kabbalah remains within the World of *Atzilut*. (See also *Torah Or*, p. 17a.)

- [16.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “This expression is also found in *Et’haleich [Liozna]*, [which is a book of discourses that includes these essays from *Kuntres Acharon*]. [However,] this warrants a critical comparison of early editions and manuscripts, for in many places (*Tanya*, ch. 40; *Zohar* III, as cited there; *et al.*), [the expression used is not ‘pierces atmospheres’ but ‘pierces’ heavens.]”
- [17.](#) Cf. *Yeshayahu* 58:13: “If you honor it by...refraining...from speaking [worldly] things....”
- [18.](#) At this point, the standard edition of *Kuntres Acharon* interpolates a phrase in brackets [תאווה איזו יש שם דגם, אינו זה], followed by a publisher’s note that this phrase does not appear in certain manuscripts.

The interpolation means: “This is not the case, for there, too, there is some measure of desire.” In other words: The above proof, which relates to idle talk on *Shabbat*, does not withstand scrutiny, for there, too, there is some measure of desire. Since this motivating desire counts as a certain measure of spirituality, this speech is not an exclusively physical activity; if it were, it would not be able to ascend to a spiritual world.

[19.](#) *Sotah* 11a.

[20.](#) *Tikkun* 10, p. 25b.



Essay 2

עיין עץ חיים, שער הנקודות, שער ה', פרק ו'

Examine the statement in *Etz Chayim, Shaar HaNekudot, Shaar* 8, ch. 6,

שאין החזרת פנים בפנים, כי אם על ידי מצות מעשיות דוקא

that there can be no “turning of face to face” except through *mitzvot* requiring action.

The text cited had previously discussed the stage of creation at which (i) the bracket of six *Sefirot* known collectively as *Za* (א"ז; *Z'eir Anpin*), and (ii) the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*,^{[1](#)} were first emanated and revealed (in the World of *Atzilut*) from *Chochmah* and *Binah*, their spiritual parents. Adam had not yet been created and hence the *avodah* of fulfilling *mitzvot* did not yet exist. At this stage, if *Za* and *Malchut* had united “face to face,” there would be an effusion of Divine energy from the innermost aspect of *Za* to the innermost

aspect of *Malchut*. This, however, would enable the *kelipot* to receive more than their due share of life-giving influence from the source of holiness. The union was therefore merely “back to back,” i.e., only the external aspect of *Za* was drawn down to *Malchut*.

Only after Adam was created and performed *mitzvot*, effectively “trimming and hacking off the thorns,” i.e., limiting the nurture of *kelipot*, could *Za* and *Malchut* be united “face to face.”

In other words, Divinity can be revealed within this world (without any nurture being illegitimately diverted to the *kelipot*) only by means of *mitzvot* whose performance entails an actual deed.

וטעם הדבר

The reason for this, as given there in *Etz Chayim*,

כי על ידי מעשים טובים גורם זיווג העליון וכו'

is that by means of good deeds one brings about a Supernal Union, causing *Za* and *Malchut* to turn “face to face.”

ולהבין אמאי מעשיות דוקא

Now, why only *mitzvot* involving action?

Why can the same result not be brought about by *mitzvot* fulfilled by thought and speech?

יובן ממה שכתוב בשער מ"ן ומ"ד

This may be understood in the light of what is written in [*Etz Chayim*,] *Shaar Ma'n Uma'd*,[2](#)

כי צריך תחלה להעלות מ"ן דנוקבא דז"א

that first, before the Supernal Union takes place, there must be an elevation of *mayin nukvin* (i.e., an arousal initiated by the recipient) from the *nukva* (i.e., the feminine element) of *Za*, viz., *Malchut*,

ומ"ן דנוקבא הן בחינת עשיה, כמו שכתוב שם, פרק א'

and the *mayin nukvin* of *nukva* is the state of action, as explained there, in ch. 1.

In other words: The things of this world, whose source is the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* (which is the *nukva* of *Za*) must be elevated to their source in holiness. This can be accomplished only through *mitzvot* whose fulfillment requires actions performed with the material

components of the world. This alone makes possible the Supernal Union which reveals Divinity within this world.

But how can it be ensured that no part of this revelation will leak to the *kelipot* (which are also known as *chitzonim* — lit., “extraneous forces”)?

והנה, המעשים טובים נקראים כסוה וקיצוץ הקוצים הנאחזים באחוריים

Good deeds are described as trimming and hacking off the thistles that attach themselves to the hinderpart,

שהן בחינת עשייה

which is the state of deed,

כמו שכתוב בשער מ"ז, פרק ה'

as is written in [*Etz Chayim*,] *Shaar* 47, ch. 5.

It is the performance of specifically these commandments that hacks away the *kelipot* which, like the unchecked roots of thistles or weeds in a vineyard, would otherwise encroach on the life-giving waters and divert them from their intended destination.

והיינו, על ידי העלאת הטוב הגנוז בהם, המלוּבש במצות מעשיות

This [pruning is effected] by elevating the element of good that is concealed in them (i.e., in things of this world that are related to *Asiyah*) and that is encloded in *mitzvot* of action,

למקורו, לקדושת האצילות שכבר הובררה

[elevating this element of good] to its source, to the sanctity of *Atzilut* that has already been refined.

The performance of practical *mitzvot* thus makes possible the purification and elevation of those physical things that are in need of this, by extracting the element of good that is within them and elevating it to holiness.

ומה שכתוב שם, שאדם הראשון תיקן גם כן על ידי תפלה

As to the statement there that Adam effected rectification (*tikkun*) through prayer as well, which would not appear to be a *mitzvah* requiring action,

היינו, על ידי אותיות הדבור, דעקימת שפתיו הוי מעשה

this means [that he did so] through uttering the letters of speech, i.e., not through the intent of prayer, but by the actual deed involved, for the movement of one's lips is also deemed a deed.³

כי הן מנפש החיונית שבגוף ודמו, אשר שרשן מנוגה

For they — these utterances — derive from the vivifying soul which is in one's body and blood, whose root (and life-force) is in *[kelipat] nogah*.

As the Alter Rebbe explains in ch. 37 of *Tanya*, one's G-dly soul is incapable of uttering the words of Torah or prayer (which have to be sounded with the physical mouth, tongue and teeth), except through the agency of the vivifying soul that is invested in the body.

We see from the above that uttering the words of prayer can also elevate *Ma'n* from the *nukva* of *Asiyah*, just as is done by the practical *mitzvot*.

והנה הברורים דעשיה עולין ליצירה על ידי שם ב"ן, ומיצירה לבריאה ולאצילות, כמו שכתוב בשער מ"ן,
דרוש י"א, סימן ז'

The acts of refinement of *Asiyah* that are accomplished through practical *mitzvot* ascend to *Yetzirah* by means of the Divine Name *Ba'n*, and from *Yetzirah* to *Beriah* and *Atzilut*, as noted in *Shaar Ma'n*, *Derush* 11, sec. 7.

ובזה יובן דהרהור לא עביד מידי

Thus we can understand why mere thought accomplishes nothing, as Essay 1 of *Kuntres Acharon* quotes above from the *Zohar*,

כי בלי העלאת מ"ן מהמלכים שבנוגה, אי אפשר להמשיך טיפין מלמעלה לזווג זו"ן

for unless *mayin nukvin* is elevated from the “kings of *nogah*,”⁴ it is impossible to draw forth drops from above to effect the union of *Zu'n*, an acronym for the above terms *Za* and *nukva*.

This elevation can be effected only through activity on the level of *Asiyah*, as stated above.

Za and *Malchut* can unite only if a degree of illumination that transcends them both, is drawn down upon them. To use a mortal analogy: Concerning the union of man and woman it is written,⁵ “Male and female did He create them, and G-d blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply.’” I.e., in order for their union to bear fruit, a blessing must first descend upon the partners from above. And these “drops” of blessing from a source in Divinity that transcends both *Za* and *Malchut* cannot be drawn forth unless *mayin nukvin* is aroused and elevated by the refinement of the materiality of *kelipat nogah*.

כי רוצה לינק מאמו, ולא להשפיע למטה

For [Za] desires to seek its nurture from its “mother”, i.e., from the *Sefirah* of *Binah*, rather than giving forth for the lower realms,

It is only through the elevation of *Ma'n* of *nogah* that a higher degree of illumination is drawn down within *Za*, causing it to desire to unite with the *Sefirah* beneath it, viz., *Malchut*.

כמו שכתוב בשער מ"ן, דרוש ב'

as is written in [*Etz Chayim*,] *Shaar Ma'n*, *Derush* 2.

ועיין זהר, פרשת פקודי, דף רמ"ד, עמוד ב', דאית סדורא כו' לאסתכלא כו'

Examine *Zohar*, *Parshat Pekudei*, p. 244b, which states that there is a mode...of gazing....

Just as there is a mode of verbalized prayer, there is also a mode of prayer with *kavanah* by means of which one meditates and attains infinite heights, as one gazes upon the glory of the King.

והן כוונות התפלה ויחודים עליונים, ליודעים ומשיגים לאסתכלא כו'

This refers to the intentions (*kavanot*) in worship, and the supernal unions, for those who know and understand how to “gaze....”

Such individuals can have an impact on this world through their unarticulated intentions alone.

כי נפש רוח נשמה שלהם עצמן הן מ"ן, במסירות נפש על התורה

For their *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah* themselves constitute [the arousal initiated by the recipient which is known as] *Ma'n*, through their self-sacrificing devotion for the Torah,

ובנפילת אפים, כנודע

and during the *Tachanun* prayer, during which we say “To You, G-d, I lift my soul,” as is known.

This ability, however, remains the province of a select few. The overwhelming majority of Jews accomplish this elevation through *mitzvot* of action involving an actual deed or speech. And in this manner they are able to bring about a union “face to face” between *Za* and *Malchut* — the sublime union of *Kudsha Brich Hu* and His *Shechinah*, which draws Divinity down into this world.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Za* (as the benefactor) is termed “male”, and *Malchut* (as the recipient) is termed “female”. Their union — (The Rebbe here refers the reader to *Tanya*, ch. 41) — is called the union of *Kudsha Brich Hu* (“the Holy One, Blessed be He”) and His *Shechinah* (“the Divine Presence”), for *Za* (as implied by the term *kadosh*) is *separate* from the world, while *Malchut* is called *Shechinah* (from the root meaning “to dwell”) because it descends *within* the world. This union results in the revelation of Divinity within the world. [2.](#) The abbreviations ז"מ and מ"מ are the initials (respectively) of two Kabbalistic metaphors in Aramaic: *mayin nukvin* (lit., “feminine waters”) and *mayin d'churin* (or: *mayin duchrin*; lit., “masculine waters”). [3.](#) *Sanhedrin* 65a. [4.](#) As explained at length in the Kabbalah and in the literature of *Chassidut*, all things that are to be found in the *kelipot* “fell” there from the “seven kings” of the World of *Tohu*. The “kings” that “fell” into *kelipat nogah* are refined and elevated through man’s spiritual service. [5.](#) *Bereishit* 5:2.



Essay 3

In chs. 39 and 40 of *Tanya* the Alter Rebbe spoke of the various worlds to which souls ascend as a result of their Torah study and spiritual service. Their level in each case is determined by the individual’s intention at the time: If the study and prayer were accompanied by love and awe generated by the contemplation of G-d’s greatness, they rise to the World of *Beriah*, the world of comprehension; if the love and fear are merely instinctive (inasmuch as they are inherent within every Jew), then the study and prayer ascend to the World of *Yetzirah*, the world of the spiritual emotions.

The Alter Rebbe also stated there that the Torah and spiritual service itself ascends to the *Sefirot*, which are the G-dliness of the worlds.

All this, however, applies only when the Torah study and the spiritual service are motivated by a *kavanah lishmah*, a pure intent born of a love or awe of G-d. If, however, this intent is lacking, such as when one studies Torah out of habit, this Torah study does not ascend to the *Sefirot* of the worlds. For the *Sefirot* are the G-dliness of the world, and “without love and fear they cannot [ascend and] stand before G-d.” Such a grade of Torah study ascends only as far as the *chitzoniyut* (the “external” aspect) of the worlds, where the angels abide.

Concerning this the Alter Rebbe quoted R. Chayim Vital, who states^{[1](#)} that Torah study that is uninspired by proper intent (*kavanah*) creates angels in the World of *Yetzirah*, while commandments fulfilled without proper intent create angels in the World of *Asiyah*.

(“Without intent” here means without an intent that stems from love or fear of G-d; it does not mean that there was no intent at all. For, as explained by R. Levi Yitzchak

Schneerson, the saintly father of the Rebbe, since angels comprise both form and matter, as the Alter Rebbe stated above, we must say that the Torah study that creates them has form and matter likewise. These are speech and intent, respectively.)

In any event, we see that Torah even without proper intent creates angels in the World of *Yetzirah* — and this it can do only by having *risen* to that world.

Now why should this be different from prayer? For prayer without proper intent remains mired below in this world. Why is it that when Torah study and prayer are performed *with* proper intent they both rise to the same world (whether *Beriah* or *Yetzirah*), while when they *lack* the proper intent, the Torah rises to *Yetzirah* and creates angels there, while the prayers remain below in this world?

This is the central question addressed in the following essay.

להבין מה שכתוב בשער היחודים, פרק ב'

To understand the statement in *Shaar HaYichudim*, ch. 2,

Shaar HaYichudim of R. Chayim Vital (which appears in *Shemoneh She'arim* of current editions of the writings of the *AriZal*) is part of *Shaar Ruach HaKodesh*. The Rebbe once remarked in a talk, that the introduction to *Shaar HaYichudim* states that it is divided into several *She'arim* (*Shaar HaNevuah*, *Shaar Ruach HaKodesh*, and *Shaar Tikkun Avonot*). The Rebbe then noted the precision of the Alter Rebbe's writings: In ch. 40 of *Tanya* he quotes a passage from *Shaar HaYichudim* and specifies that its source is *Shaar HaNevuah*, while with regard to another passage he simply cites *Shaar HaYichudim*.

In light of the above, clarification is needed as to why in ch. 40, when speaking of the angels that are created in the World of *Yetzirah* by Torah that is not studied *lishmah* (“for its own sake”), the Alter Rebbe cites *Shaar HaNevuah*, while here he cites *Shaar HaYichudim*.

דעל ידי תורה שלא בכוונה, נבראים מלאכים בעולם היצירה

that through Torah without proper intention, angels are created in the World of *Yetzirah*:

ושם הביא מהזהר, פרשת שלח, דלית קלא דאתאביד כו', בר קלא דאורייתא וצלותא דסליק ובקע כו'

There [this source] quotes the *Zohar, Parshat Shlach*:² “There is no voice lost [from this world], except the voice of Torah and prayer that ascends and pierces [the heavens]”; i.e., it does not remain below, but ascends.

והנה מכוונת התפלה נבראו מלאכים בעולם הבריאה, כמו מכוונת התורה

Now, through intention in prayer, angels are created in the World of *Beriah*, as with intention in the study of Torah.

Considering the results of one's intent in *avodah*, then, prayer and Torah are thus similar: they both ascend to the same level, the World of *Beriah*.

ובלא כוונה, נדחית למטה לגמרי

Without proper intent, [prayer] is repelled utterly downward.

כמו שכתוב בזהר, פרשת פקודי, דף רמ"ה עמוד ב': גו רקיע תתאה כו'

So it is stated in the *Zohar, Parshat Pekudei*, p. 245b, "Into the lowest heaven,..."

When prayer is not "as it should be," i.e., when it is without proper intent, it is banished "into the lowest [of the heavens that govern the world]."

דאקריין צלותין פסילאן כו'

"These [prayers] are called invalid prayers," as the *Zohar* goes on to say.

ועיין שם פרשת ויקהל, דף ר"א עמוד ב': אי היא מלה כדקא יאות כו'

Examine also [the *Zohar*,] *Parshat Vayakhel*, p. 201b: "If it is a seemly word..." i.e., if a prayer is prompted by a proper intent, then the angel appointed as warden of prayers "kisses it" and elevates it.

Thus, prayer ascends only when it is propelled by a proper intent. If so, then since Torah and prayer are similar when they are performed *with* the proper intent, why when the proper intent is lacking is Torah still able to create angels in the World of *Yetzirah*, while prayer without proper intent is repelled into the lowest heaven?

אך ההפרש בין תורה לתפלה שלא בכוונה מובן מאליו

However, the difference between Torah and prayer without intention is self-evident.

כי לימוד התורה, הוא מבין ויודע מה שלומד, דבלאו הכי לא מיקרי לימוד כלל

For in the study of Torah without proper intent one understands and knows what he is learning, for otherwise it is not called study at all.

רק שלומד סתם, בלא כוונה לשמה מאהבת ה' שבלבו בבחינת גילוי

It is only that he is studying neutrally, without the intention of *lishmah* ("for its own sake") out of a manifest love of G-d in his heart,

רק מאהבה המסותרת הטבעית

but only out of the latent natural love for G-d that every Jew harbors in his heart.

אך אינו לומד שלא לשמה ממש, להתגדל כו'

On the other hand, he is not studying with an actual negative motivation, such as for self-aggrandizement or the like,

דהא לא סליק לעילא מן שמשא, כמו שכתוב בפרשת ויחי, דף רכ"ג עמוד ב'

“for this [manner of Torah study] does not ascend higher than the sun,” as stated in [the *Zohar*,] *Parshat Vayechi*, p. 223b.

The *Zohar* states there that the verse,³ “What profit is there for man from all the toil that he toils under the sun,” does not refer to one’s toil in Torah study, for Torah is “loftier than the sun”; however, if this toil is undertaken “for self-aggrandizement,” it is also considered to be “under the sun,” for it does not ascend aloft.

היינו משום שמחשבתו וכוונתו הן מתלבשות באותיות הדבור, ואינן מניחות אותן לסלקא לעילא

That is because one’s thought and intent are clothed within the letters [of Torah] that he utters, and prevent them from ascending.

The ulterior motive that derives from the *kelipot* thus encumbers his words of Torah.

והכי נמי בתפלה שלא בכוונה, שמחשב מחשבות זרות

So, too, in prayer without intent,⁴ meaning that one entertains alien thoughts.

אלא מפני שכוונתו לשם שמים)

(⁵But since his intention is addressed to G-d,

He is, after all, in a state of prayer, except that alien thoughts interpose.

לכך יש לה תיקון בקל, לחזור ולעלות

it is therefore easily corrected, so that [his prayer] may once again rise to the state from which it was originally repelled,

כשמתפלל בכוונה אפילו תפלה אחת מלוקטת מתפללות כל השנה

when he prays with proper intention even one [full] prayer gathered piecemeal from the prayers of the entire year.

When on one day one passage of the prayers was read with proper intent and on another day another passage, and so on, and then all these passages are gathered together, thus constituting one complete prayer from the prayers of a whole year, then all one’s prayers throughout the year are elevated.⁶

Thus it is written in *Mikdash Melech* on *Parshat Pekudei*.)

We thus see that in one sense Torah without proper intent is superior to prayer without proper intent, for such Torah study creates angels in the World of *Yetzirah*, while prayer without proper intent is repulsed. On the other hand, when the lack of proper intent in Torah study is such that it prevents it from ascending, as in the case of studying for the sake of self-aggrandizement, then this is lower than prayer without proper intent.

For one proper prayer, or even a compilation of different prayers that add up to one prayer with proper intent, elevates all the other prayers of that year. With regard to Torah study, by contrast, even if one later studies with proper intent, this does not elevate his previous study; actual repentance is required. Until such time one's Torah study is in exile within the *kelipah* which spawned his ulterior motive.

Nevertheless, since all Jews will eventually repent, for⁷ “No one of them will be rejected,” our Sages advise that⁸ “one should always study Torah and perform *mitzvot* even when they are not done for their own sake” — and, indeed, even if they involve an ulterior motive — for eventually he will achieve the state of *lishmah*, when he repents. This is explained by the Alter Rebbe at the end of ch. 39 of Tanya.

ומה שכתוב בפרשת פקודי: גו רקיע תתאה

As to what is stated in [the *Zohar*,] *Parshat Pekudei*,⁹ [that prayer without proper intent is repelled] “into the lowest heaven,” indicating that it is allowed to rise at least to that point,

ובפרשת ויקהל משמע דדוקא אי איהי מלה כדקה יאות, סלקין עמה עד אורא דרקיע דלעילא כו'

whereas in [the *Zohar*,] *Parshat Vayakhel*,¹⁰ the implication is that “only if it is a seemingly word, i.e., prompted by the proper intent, do [the appointed angels] ascend with it to the atmosphere of the heaven above...,”

How does this latter passage accord with the previously-quoted statement in *Pekudei*, that even when the prayer is without proper intent it still ascends, at least to the lowest firmament?

לא קשיא מידי

this [seeming contradiction] presents no problem.

דרקיע תתאה מאינון רקיעין דמדברי גו עלמא, שבפרשת פקודי, הן דמלכות דעשיה

For the expression in *Pekudei*, “the lowest heaven of the heavens that govern the world,” refers to *Malchut* of *Asiyah*,

ודפרשת ויקהל, הן דז"א דעשיה, כמו שכתוב בעץ חיים, שער השמות פרק ה', גבי ז"א דעשיה, עיין שם

whereas in *Parshat Vayakhel*, the reference is to *Za* of *Asiyah*, as is written in *Etz Chayim*, *Shaar HaShemot*, ch. 3, in reference to *Za* of *Asiyah*; see there.

It could be argued that the above question presupposed that the “lower heaven” of *Pekudei* was of the same level as the “heaven above” of *Vayakhel*, for the “lower heaven” too is “above the sun.”

By the same token, the answer refers to two distinct levels of “heaven”. *Pekudei* refers to *Malchut* of *Asiyah*, while *Vayakhel* refers to *Za* of *Asiyah*, to which prayers ascend when they are “seemly”. From this level they ascend yet further, to the G-dliness of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Yetzirah* and *Beriah*. The main point here is, however, that when a prayer is not “seemly” it is not elevated even to *Za* of *Asiyah*, but merely to *Malchut* of *Asiyah*.

It could be explained that when prayer without proper intent is elevated to the “lower heaven,” its elevation does not bring about that which prayer should effect. For in order for a prayer to have its proper effect, such as the fulfillment of its requests, there must be drawn down into this world a degree of Divine influence that transcends the world, thereby healing the sick, or providing the year’s blessings, and so on. When, however, a prayer is repelled to *Malchut* of *Asiyah*, i.e., to that level from which all worldly things derive their life-force, then this level obviously cannot provide for whatever the world is lacking.

But when a properly-motivated prayer reaches up to *Za* of *Asiyah*, from there an efflux can be drawn down into the world to provide whatever the world lacks, thereby fulfilling the individual’s petitions.

והא דמשמע לכאורה, בפרשת פקודי, דגם תפלה פסולה עולה עד היכל הראשון, שממנו נדחית למטה, והוא בז"א דבריא

As to the apparent implication in *Parshat Pekudei* that even invalid prayer — prayer whose intent is confused by alien thoughts — ascends to the First Chamber, whence it is hurled down, and this [Chamber] is in *Za* of *Beriah*,

It would thus seem that even an invalid prayer is at first elevated to *Za* of *Beriah*.

לא קשיא מידי, שהרי אפילו כל העוונות ממש, קלות וחמורות, עולות לשם, אפילו עד היכל הד', כמו שכתוב דף רנ"ב עמוד א'

this presents no difficulty, for even palpable sins, minor and grave, ascend there, even as far as the Fourth Chamber, as is written [in the *Zohar*] on page 252a.

אלא ודאי שאין מהות העליות שוות, ואין ערוך ודמיון ביניהם, אלא בשיתוף השם בלבד, ודי למבין

It is thus certain that in essence the [above] ascensions are not identical, and there is no comparison or similarity between them except for the common name. This will suffice for the discerning.

The elevation of good actions means that they are actually uplifted to higher degrees of holiness, where they accomplish whatever they are intended to accomplish. With regard to sins, however, their “elevation” to the higher worlds brings about a blemish there. So, too, when we say that an “invalid prayer” ascends to the First Chamber, we are not at all speaking of the kind of elevation that takes place when a prayer is offered with the proper intent.

ובזה יובן גם כן מה שכתוב שם, דף רמ"ז, שבהיכל הב' (אולי צריך להיות: אודמן הממונה, ואולי צריך להיות: קיימין הלבושים) ממונה על הלבושים שמלבישים הנשמה ממעשה המצות

This will also enable us to grasp the statement [in the *Zohar*] on page 247, that in the Second Chamber [there is to be found] the one appointed over the garments that clothe the soul as a result of the performance of *mitzvot*,

The bracketed Hebrew text here offers several variations: [11 “Possibly the text should read, ‘there is found the one¹² appointed’; or possibly it should read, ‘the garments are¹³ housed.’”¹⁴]

אף שהוא בגן עדן התחתון דעשיה, כמו שכתוב שם, דף ר"י

even though [the *mitzvot* performed], and by extension, the soul’s garments that are fashioned thereby, are in the Lower Gan Eden in [the World of] *Asiyah*, as stated there (in the *Zohar*) on page 210.

How, then, do we say that the one appointed over — or alternatively, the garments of — the performance of the *mitzvot* are to be found in the Second Chamber of the World of *Beriah*?

However, as explained earlier, the above elevations are essentially dissimilar. Thus, though the *mitzvot* performed are located in the lower Garden of Eden of the World of *Asiyah*, the soul nevertheless ascends to the Second Chamber of *Beriah* and receives from there the garments that result from the performance of *mitzvot*. For the elevation of the soul to the level of *Beriah* in order to receive its garments is utterly different from the elevation of the *mitzvot* themselves to the lower Garden of Eden of the World of *Asiyah*.

והנה תפלה פסולה עדיפא מתורה שלא לשמה ממש

Now, invalid prayer is superior to Torah studied with a distinctly improper intention,

שהיא תחת השמש

for [the latter] is “under the sun,” since if it is undertaken for the purpose of self-aggrandizement it does not ascend at all,

והתפלה היא גו רקיע כו'

while prayer — even “invalid prayer” — is “into the heaven,” albeit the lowest heaven.

אבל תורה סתם, שאינה שלא לשמה, רק מאהבה מסותרת טבעית

But the neutral study of Torah, that is without a negative intention, but is prompted merely by one's latent, innate love,

For unconsciously, it is this love of G-d that motivates even one's merely habitual study of the Torah.

לא גרעא מהבל פיהן של תינוקות של בית רבן, דסליק לעילא מפני שהוא הבל שאין בו חטא

is not inferior to the “breath of the mouths of school children,” which ascends aloft because it is “breath untainted by sin.”[15](#)

וסליק לעילא, אף אם הוא שלא לשמה ממש, מיראת הרצועה שביד הסופר

This [breath] ascends aloft, even though it may be emphatically not altruistic, but only prompted by fear of punishment by the teacher.

In the same way, an adult whose study is of neutral intent is not tainted by sin (which it would be if he had studied for an ulterior motive). It therefore ascends heavenward.

ועיין שם, דף רנ"ה עמוד ב', שהמלאכים הם מעלים ההבל של תינוקות של בית רבן עד האצילות

See there on p. 255b, [where the *Zohar* states] that the angels elevate the breath of schoolchildren to *Atzilut*.

Addendum

In its primary meaning, the term “breath untainted by sin” signifies that the breath of the Torah study of schoolchildren is untainted because it proceeds from individuals who at this age are incapable of sin.

As the *Gemara* states in *Shabbat*,[16](#) “Resh Lakish said in the name of R. Yehudah Nesiah, ‘The world exists solely by virtue of the breath of the mouths of schoolchildren [who study Torah].’ Said R. Papa to Abbaye: ‘And what of my Torah study and yours?’ He replied: ‘There is no comparison between breath that knows sin and breath that is free of sin.’” This means that children are not in the category of those who sin.

The Previous Rebbe once recalled¹⁷ that when his father, the Rebbe Rashab, taught him the above text, he first explained that the angels' elevation of the Torah study of these children to *Atzilut*, as cited above from the *Zohar* by the Alter Rebbe, relates to the same rarefied level as the Supernal Unions that are accomplished by those who refine their bodies according to the secrets of the Kabbalah.

The Rebbe Rashab then added that the Alter Rebbe's emphasis that this study comprised "breath untainted by sin" can be explained as follows: This is the breath of Torah words spoken by little children in artless simplicity. When they say, for example, "*kametz alef: ah*," and they believe with a simple and ingrained faith that these and likewise all the other vowels and consonants of the Torah were transmitted to Moses on Sinai, then the very *breath* that emanates from their hearts is utterly pure, and untainted by sin.

(This commentary, continued the Rebbe Rashab, comes as an addition to the plain and primary meaning of "breath untainted by sin" — that these children are still pure from the taint of sin.)

Moreover, the above interpretation of *breath* being untainted by sin inasmuch as it emanates from uttering words of Torah with simple faith, applies not only to children, but to adults as well. They, too, can effect sublime Supernal Unions.

The Rebbe Rashab based this interpretation on a story he heard from the Baal Shem Tov when he visited his holy resting place at Mezhibuzh. At that time the Baal Shem Tov related that on his 16th birthday (18 Elul, 5474/1714) he had found himself in a small village. The local innkeeper was a very simple person who hardly knew how to read the prayers, let alone understand what they meant. He was, however, a very G-d-fearing individual. On all matters and at all times he would quote the same phrase in the Holy Tongue, "Blessed be He; may He be blessed forever." His wife too would always say in Yiddish, "Praised be His holy Name."

That day, in accordance with the age-old custom of meditating in solitude for some time on one's birthday, the Baal Shem Tov went off by himself to the fields. He recited chapters of *Tehillim* and engaged in unifying the Divine Names that emanate from its holy verses.

"As I was immersed in this," the Baal Shem Tov related, "and unaware of my surroundings, I suddenly saw Elijah the Prophet. There was a smile on his lips. I was taken aback. For when I had been with the *tzaddik* R. Meir, and also when I had been in the company of the hidden *tzaddikim*, I had merited to see Elijah, but this was the first time that I had merited his appearance while all alone. I wondered about it. And besides, why was he smiling?

"Elijah said to me: 'You are toiling so mightily to have the proper mystical intentions in bringing about the Supernal Unions of the Divine Names that emanate from the verses of *Tehillim*. And Aharon Shlomo the innkeeper and his wife Zlata Rivkah know nothing of the Unifications that result from his "Blessed be He; may He be blessed forever," and

from her “Praised be His holy Name.” Yet the Divine harmonies they create resonate in all the heavens more than all the Unifications of the Holy Name that are effected by the mystical intentions of the greatest *tzaddikim*.’

“Elijah described to me,” continued the Baal Shem Tov, “the great pleasure, as it were, that results in heaven from the words of praise and adoration uttered by men, women and children. Especially so, when they come from the mouths of simple folk. And most especially, when these praises are offered consistently, for then these people are constantly united with G-d in pure faith and with an undivided heart.”

* * *

Having recounted this episode, the Rebbe Rashab added that it served as the basis for his additional interpretation of “breath untainted by sin” — that it applies not only to children but also to adults who act with pure faith and heartfelt simplicity, and who are thereby constantly united with G-d, at all times and in all places.

* * *

The Rebbe stresses that this applies equally to adults only with respect to effecting Supernal Unions. With regard to *maintaining* the world’s existence, however, it is clear from the above-quoted teaching in *Shabbat* that this is accomplished only by the “breath of the mouths of schoolchildren,” for this breath possesses as well the *first* quality of “breath untainted by sin”: it proceeds from those for whom sin is a virtual impossibility.

With regard to the *refinement* of the world, this is accomplished by those adults to whom the second exposition of “breath untainted by sin” applies — that the breath itself is untainted. In a sense, indeed, their breath has an even greater effect than the “breath of the mouths of schoolchildren.” For as the Rebbe Rashab further explains, children do not relate to the corporeality of this world, but only to its atmosphere. Since adults have a relationship with the corporeality of this world as well, the Supernal Unions that they effect refine its very crassness and corporeality.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Shaar HaNevuah*, ch. 2. [2.](#) 168b, 169a. [3.](#) *Kohelet* 1:3. [4.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “The specific intent that is lacking here, is keeping in mind the meaning of the words. This, however, does not make for an ‘invalid prayer,’ inasmuch as the worshiper has the pervasive intent of praying to G-d. And this is what the Alter Rebbe goes on to specify: ‘meaning that he entertains alien thoughts.’ For these thoughts — thoughts other than those of one’s prayer — vest themselves in his speech and cause the prayers to be drawn downward.” [5.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [6.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “The wording of the *Zohar* would appear to indicate that one would need to pray ‘one other [complete] prayer with pure intent,’ and when that ascends it elevates with it (since prayers can be gathered piecemeal together) all the previous prayers that were repelled. The commentary of the *Mikdash Melech*, however, states that ‘the master’ wrote that it is not necessary for all eighteen benedictions to be recited with proper intent, [as long as one full prayer with proper intent can be put together from the successful components of

one's various imperfect prayers throughout the year]. The wording of *Mikdash Melech* thus requires at least some examination. It would be worthwhile to compare the early editions, for there seems to be a printer's error." [7. II Shmuel](#) 14:14. [8. Pesachim](#) 50b. [9. P. 245b](#), quoted above. [10. P. 201b](#), quoted above. [11.](#) Brackets are in the original text. [12.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "Rather than 'one'." [13.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "Rather than 'appointed over the garments.'" [14.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "The expressions 'is found' and 'are housed' both relate [these garments] specifically to the Second Chamber. There is, however, some difficulty here, for it would seem that an even stronger statement is made there — that the garment is actually fashioned in this Chamber through the performance of the *mitzvot*." [15. Shabbat](#) 119b; see also the Addendum below. [16. Shabbat](#) 119b; see also the Addendum below. [17. Sefer HaSichot](#) 5703, p. 163ff.



Essay 4

In the beginning, as the *Midrash* teaches,[1](#) G-d "created worlds and destroyed them." The Kabbalah explains that this refers to spiritual worlds, Supernal *Sefirot* ("emanations"), that first existed in one state of being and then in another. The *Sefirot* in the former state of being — called the World of *Tohu* (lit., "Chaos") — underwent a "breaking of the vessels." The World of *Tikkun* (lit., "Order") was then built.

The *Sefirot* comprise *orot* ("lights") and *kelim* ("vessels") that contain these lights. The crisis in the World of *Tohu* occurred because the *orot* were so intense that the *kelim* were incapable of containing them. As a result of this breakage, sparks of holiness descended within the *kelipot*. These sparks are to be found in the Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* in general, but particularly within the physicality of our world. It is the task of the Jew to sift this materiality by using it properly, in order to extract and refine these sparks, thereby elevating them to their original source in the World of *Tohu*. This elevation in turn elicits a mighty downflow of Divine energy from *Tohu*, and from even higher than that level.

(Certain Divine Names, whose respective Kabbalistic meanings are signified by Hebrew letter-combinations, are related to this process of *beirurim*, the extraction and refinement of the sparks of holiness. Thus the Name known as *Ba'n* (בן) is the source of the fallen holy sparks; the Name *Ma'h* (מה) is the power that extracts and elevates them; while the Name *Sa'g* (סג) is the original source of the World of *Tohu*. When the extraction and elevation of the sparks deriving from the Name *Ba'n* is accomplished through the Name *Ma'h*, a lofty degree of Divine illumination is drawn down from the Name *Sa'g*, and is vested within the "capacious vessels" of the World of *Tikkun*.)

This extraction is for the most part accomplished through the performance of action-oriented *mitzvot* involving physical objects which derive their life-force from *kelipat*

nogah, and which house the sparks of *Tohu*. Performing a *mitzvah* with such objects disencumbers the hidden sparks of their corporeal husk and elevates them.

The seeking out of sparks, however, can also be accomplished through the study of Torah, as well as through prayer.

In the present essay the Alter Rebbe will explain the statement of *Pri Etz Chayim* that nowadays this “extraction” is mainly effected through prayer. For prayer is uniquely able to draw down an infinite degree of G-dliness; prayer alone can bring about changes within the world, healing the sick and causing rain to fall. In order for such a degree of G-dliness to be called down, there must first be an arousal initiated from below, an expression of man’s ardent desire to be the recipient of Divine benefactions. And if these benefactions are to flow from an infinitely high source, the plea that requests them must surge from a correspondingly deep source — “with all one’s might,” from the infinite depths of one’s soul.

להבין מה שכתוב בפרי עץ חיים, דבזמן הזה עיקר הבירור על ידי התפלה דוקא

To understand the statement in *Pri Etz Chayim*,² that in the contemporary period the refinement [of the sparks of *Tohu*] is primarily effected by prayer,

As explained above, the task of sifting the materiality of this world and salvaging its hidden holy sparks is the ongoing mission of Jews living as souls within bodies in this physical world.

This is accomplished either (a) through the performance of the action-oriented *mitzvot* which entail the use of physical objects whose life-force derives from *kelipat nogah*; (b) through the audibly-articulated study of Torah subjects that deal with physical matters; (c) through prayer, a form of spiritual service through which the Divine soul influences and refines the animal soul (whose life-force derives from *kelipat nogah*) to the point that it can attain a love of G-d.

As stated above, *Pri Etz Chayim* teaches that in these latter generations the extraction and elevation of sparks is effected primarily through prayer.

אף שתלמוד תורה למעלה מהתפלה

even though Torah study is superior to prayer:

Torah study is³ “equivalent to them all,” to all the *mitzvot*, and higher even than⁴ “concentration in prayer.” Why, then, is the extraction of the sparks of *Tohu* mainly accomplished in the present era through prayer?

הענין הוא, שעל ידי תורה ומצות מוסיפין אור באצילות כו'

The explanation is, that through Torah and *mitzvot* additional light is drawn forth into *Atzilut*...

Divine light is drawn forth into the various worlds either in accordance with (a) *Sod Shores* (lit., “the principle of the root”), the degree of revelation originally apportioned, or in accordance with (b) *Sod Tosefet* (lit., “the principle of addition”), depending on the spiritual service of mortals. This additional measure of revelation is much greater than the base allocation.

Through Torah and *mitzvot*, as stated above, one draws down an additional measure of Divine illumination into the World of *Atzilut*.

פירוש: אור אין סוף ברוך הוא בכלים דאצילות, על ידי תלמוד תורה, בפנימית, דהיינו המשכות המוחין

This means that through Torah study the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light [is drawn] into the inner aspect of the vessels of [the Sefirot of] *Atzilut*. This is a drawing down of the Divine Intellect.

Since Torah study involves mortal intellect, its heavenly echo calls forth a corresponding revelation of the Divine Intellect, which is the inward aspect of the *Sefirot*.

ובקיום המצות, בחיצונית הכלים, שהם בחינת נצח הוד יסוד שבי" ספירות ז"א שבאצילות

Through *mitzvah* observance [the light is drawn] into the external aspect of the vessels, meaning *Netzach-Hod-Yesod* of the *Ten Sefirot* of *Za* (the six emotive attributes) of *Atzilut*.

Za is a configuration (*partzuf*, lit., “countenance”) which comprises a full complement of *Ten Sefirot*. Into *Netzach-Hod-Yesod*, the lower *Sefirot* which are “outside of the torso”⁵ of *Za* and thus comprise its external aspect, the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light is drawn down, by means of those *mitzvot* that are performed with man’s power of action. For this power is external to man’s essence, just as *Netzach-Hod-Yesod* are external to *Za*.

The infinite lights from Divine Intellect that are drawn down by Torah and *mitzvot* are thus invested primarily in *Atzilut*.⁶

רק שמתלבשים בבריאה יצירה עשיה, בתורה ומצות הגשמיים שבעולם הזה

They [later] only clothe themselves with diminished intensity in *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, in the physical Torah and *mitzvot* in This World.

The Divine Intellect that is drawn down into *Atzilut* is ultimately vested within the Torah of this world, while the Divine light which is drawn into the externality of the vessels of *Za* of *Atzilut* is vested within the *mitzvot* of this world. The effect is thus strictly within the material aspect of the Torah and *mitzvot* of this world, but not within the materiality of the world itself.

אבל התפלה היא המשכת אור אין סוף ברוך הוא בבריאה יצירה עשיה דוקא, לא בדרך התלבשות בלבד

Prayer, however, calls forth the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light into *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* directly, and not by means of mere enclothement, as is the case with the study of Torah, where the Divine light is garbed in an entity which in turn is drawn down into this world.

רק האור ממש, לשנות הנבראים מכמות שהם

Rather, it is the actual light which modifies the state of created beings,

שיתרפא החולה, וירד הגשם משמים לארץ ויולידה ויצמיחה

so that (for example) the ill will be cured through the petition of “Heal us” in the Shemoneh Esreh, and the rain from heaven will fall to the earth so that it becomes fertile and yields vegetation,⁷ in response to the prayer of the “Blessing of the Years.”

These are changes effected within the actual physical world.

מה שאין כן בתורה ומצות, שאין שינוי בקלף התפילין על ידי הנחתן בראש ובזרוע

This is not the case with Torah and *mitzvot*: no modification in the parchment [on which are inscribed the Biblical passages] of the *tefillin* results from their being placed upon head and arm, notwithstanding the drawing down of Divine light and the subordination of mind and heart to the Divine Will.

וגם במצות שעשייתן הוא גמר מצותן

Even in the case of those *mitzvot* that are fulfilled through making [the object],

Examples would be the writing of a Torah scroll or making a *sukkah* (according to the opinions that the actual construction of a *sukkah* is a *mitzvah*⁸). Unlike *tefillin*, where the *mitzvah* is performed by wearing them and not by making them, these *mitzvot* are performed by modifying the relevant object. Nevertheless:

השינוי הוא על ידי אדם, ולא בידי שמים כבתפלה

the change within the object is effected by man, and not by Heaven, as is the case with prayer,

When an individual succeeds in bringing about a change in this world through prayer, e.g., the sick person becomes well, this change is ultimately brought about from above, not by the individual's prayer,

ששהיא המשכת החיות מאין סוף ברוך הוא, שהוא לבדו כל יכול

for this calls forth the vivifying power from the Infinite One, blessed be He, Who alone is all-capable.

It is only G-d who can effect a change such as this in our world, bringing about the cure or the productive rain.

והלכך, כדי להמשיך אור אין סוף ברוך הוא למטה, אי אפשר בלי העלאת מין נוקבין מלמטה דוקא

Therefore, calling forth the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light into the lower world is impossible without the [prior] “elevation of *mayin nukvin*” specifically from below, whereby the mortal recipient initiates an anticipatory “arousal from below” through his spiritual service during prayer.

As the Alter Rebbe will soon explain, since this entails an infinite degree of service on the part of man it is able to draw down an infinite response from above, reciprocating each individual’s particular “arousal from below.”

מה שאין כן לתלמוד תורה, שבאצילות, המיוחדת בלאו הכי במאציל ברוך הוא

This is not the case with the study of Torah, which [affects] *Atzilut*, for [the Torah] is united in any case with the Emanator.

Since Torah study thus does not need to be drawn down below, there is no need for an “arousal from below.”

As the Rebbe notes, “The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain how this may be considered *mayin nukvin*, and what is its connection to the infinite light.”

והעלאת מין נוקבין במוחו ולבו של אדם, היא בחינת רשפי אש בלי גבול

The “elevation of *mayin nukvin*” in the mind and heart of man is [the love of G-d] in a state of boundless flames of fire, and being boundless it relates to the infinite light;

ונקרא מאדך

it is described as *meodecha* — loving G-d “with all your might,”⁹ with each individual’s capacity for infinitude,

Though man is inherently limited, and though, moreover, all of one man’s might may be considered less than ultimate in another man, nevertheless, even this limited degree of “limitlessness” suffices:

כדי לעורר בחינת אין סוף

to arouse the [Divine] state of infinity.

For the “arousal from below” need but resemble the response from above that it seeks to elicit. If an “arousal from below” may truly be considered “infinite” relative to the particular individual’s capacities, it suffices to draw down the infinite light from above.

והיינו על ידי גבורות דס"ג, שהן הן הרפ"ח ניצוצין כו'

This is effected through the *Gevurot* (the attributes of severity) of [the Divine Name] *Sa'g*, which constitute the 288 sparks....

The love and longing (*ratzo*) which a man experiences during prayer to the extent of *meodecha* (“with all your might”) are aroused by the *Gevurot* of *Sa'g*, the Divine Name that is the source of the 288 sparks of *Tohu*. These sparks derive from the vessels of *Tohu*, whose *Sefirot* were originally in a state of infinite longing to become wholly one with G-d. This longing parallels the soul’s love and longing for G-d to the point of *meodecha*.

ולכן נקראת התפלה חיי שעה, היא מלכות היורדת בבריאה יצירה עשיה

For this reason worship is called¹⁰ “life of the moment,” for it is *Malchut* descending into *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*.

As Rashi explains on the straightforward level of *pshat*, the *Talmud* calls prayer “life of the moment” (lit., “life of the hour”) because people pray for health, peace and a livelihood — temporal things that are subject to the limitations of the passing moment.

Here the Alter Rebbe speaks of how these matters exist in their source, in the Supernal *Sefirot*. In the worlds above, the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* is the source of time. For it is the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* (“sovereignty”) that reflects the relationship of the Infinite One to time — “He reigns, He reigned, He will reign,” in the present, past and future.

This relationship is particularly evident as *Malchut* descends to animate the Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, for these worlds all exist in the category of time.

And because prayer draws down Divine energy into *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* through their source, the time-related *Sefirah* of *Malchut*, prayer is called “life of the moment.”

ותורה חיי עולם, הוא ז"א

Torah [by contrast is called]¹¹ “eternal life,” which (in terms of the *Sefirot*) is *Za*,¹²

כי רמ"ח פקודין הן מתחלקין בי' כלים דעשר ספירות דז"א כו'

for the 248 commandments of the Torah divide into the ten vessels of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Za*....

For *Za* comprises *Sefirot* within the World of *Atzilut*, and as stated in *Torah Or*, at the end of *Parshat Terumah*, *Za* marks the conclusion of the infinite worlds, utterly transcending the Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*.

* * *

והנה במקום אחר כתב שרמ"ח מצות עשה הן בה' חסדים

Now, in one source¹³ it is written¹⁴ that the 248 positive commandments are [rooted] in the Five Attributes of Kindness of *Za* of *Atzilut*, for every positive command serves as a vessel to receive an expression of the kindly attributes and a calling forth of Divinity,

ושס"ה לא תעשה בה' גבורות וכו'

and the 365 prohibitions are [rooted] in the Five Attributes of Severity of *Za* of *Atzilut*.

The *Gevurot* (the attributes of severity) reflect a Divine thrust to self-contraction and limitation. The prohibitory commands thus derive from them, since the intent of these commands is to withhold the efflux of holiness from *kelipot*.

ובמקום אחר כתב שהן תרי"ג ארחין נמשכין מחד ארחא כו'

Elsewhere it is written¹⁵ that there are 613 paths (i.e., the 613 mitzvot) that derive from one path...,

שהוא לבנונית וכו'

which is the *Lavnunit*..., the benevolent pristine “whiteness” of the Supernal *Keter*.

This level includes no element of severity at all. As the *Zohar* states there, “There is no ‘left’ in *Atik*” — i.e., there is no element of *Gevurah* in the internal level of *Keter*; there is only *Chesed*.

We thus seem to have a compound contradiction: We have just stated here that the 248 positive commandments stem from the vessels of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Za*; the *Zohar* states that the 248 positive commandments stem from the Five *Chasadim* (attributes of kindness) of *Za* while the 365 prohibitory commandments stem from the Five *Gevurot* (attributes of severity) of *Za*; and the *Zohar* states elsewhere that the commandments derive from the *Lavnunit* of the Supernal *Keter*, where attributes of severity do not exist at all.

אך הענין, שכל המצות לתקן רמ"ח אברי ז"א, על ידי המשכת אור אין סוף ברוך הוא במוחין, הכלולין בה' חסדים וה' גבורות

The explanation is: All the *mitzvot* are designed to rectify the 248 organs of *Za*, by drawing the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light into the [Divine] Intellect as incorporated within the Five Attributes of Kindness and Five Attributes of Severity. (In mortal man, too, by way

of analogy, one's intellectual decisions are commonly swayed by a natural leaning to kindness or severity.)

Since the purpose of mitzvot is to “repair” the 248 organs of *Za*, it is true to say that *mitzvot* are rooted in the vessels of the *Sefirot* that constitute *Za*. Since the repair is accomplished through drawing the infinite light into the Divine Intellect that is housed in the Five Attributes of Kindness and the Five Attributes of Severity, it is also sometimes said that the *mitzvot* themselves are rooted in the Five Attributes of Kindness and the Five Attributes of Severity.

ומקור המוחין הוא לבנונית כו'

The source of the [Divine] Intellect is the Lavnunit [of *Keter*],

הוא הענג וחפץ העליון להמשיך אור למטה, לרמ"ח אברין דז"א

which is the supreme delight and desire to draw the light below into the 248 organs of *Za*, for relative to *Keter*, *Za* is deemed “below”.

Thus the *Zohar* also says elsewhere that the commandments are rooted in the level of Supernal *Keter* called *Lavnunit*, where there are no attributes of severity whatever, for this is the source of *mitzvot* as they exist in the supreme delight and desire of *Keter*.

ומתחלקת ההמשכה לתרי"ג המשכות פרטיות, לפי בחינת ערך המצות

The light drawn forth divides into 613 individual streams according to the respective levels of the *mitzvot*.

כגון בצדקה וגמילות חסדים, נמשך אור אין סוף ברוך הוא לחיצוניות הכלי דחסד דז"א

For instance, through charity and kindly deeds the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light is drawn into the external aspect of the vessel of the Attribute of Kindness of *Za*,

Since “*Chesed* is of the right side” of *Za*, a kindly act of charity in this world below draws down the infinite light into the corresponding “right side” above — into the Attribute of Kindness of *Za*. Just as this “arousal from below” sprang from kindness, so too the reciprocal “arousal from above” comes as a direct and similar response, drawing down the infinite light into the *Chesed* of *Za*.

ובקיום הדינין, בחיצוניות גבורה ברחמים כו'

while through observing *mitzvot* that are in the order of severity, [the infinite light is drawn] into the external aspect of Severity [of *Za*], with mercy....

ודרך ומעבר ההמשכה הוא על ידי פנימיות הכלים ומוחותיהן

The path and passage of the issuing light that is drawn into the external vessels of *Za* is through the internal aspect of the vessels and their Intellects,

שהן דחילו ורחימו שכליים או טבעיים

which are, in terms of a Jew's service, awe and love, either intellectually generated or innate. (Whereas the former is an expression of intellect, the latter is an expression of the spiritual emotions.)

שהן בחינת מוחין דקטנות וגדלות

These [attributes] correspond, in terms of the Supernal *Sefirot*, to the “major” or “minor” [Divine] Intellect.

The “minor [Divine] Intellect” corresponds to man's innate love and fear of G-d, while the “major [Divine] Intellect” corresponds to the love and fear of G-d that are born of meditation.

ולזה ביקש משה רבינו עליו השלום מאד, לקיים המצות מעשיות התלויות בארץ

This is the reason for Moses' fervent plea to fulfill the active *mitzvot* that are contingent on the Land, [16](#) i.e., that can be fulfilled only in the Holy Land.

שהן תכלית ההשתלשלות

For these [practical *mitzvot*] are the ultimate purpose of the *Hishtalshelut*, the chainlike stages of progressive self-screening whereby the Divine light descends from level to level until ultimately this corporeal world is created —

להמשיך אור אין סוף ברוך הוא, לברר הכלים דז"א דבריאה יצירה עשיה, דבהן הן הרפ"ח ניצוצין

to call forth the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light, in order to refine the vessels of *Za* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, in which are located the 288 sparks.

על ידי תורה ומצות מעשיות שבבריאה יצירה עשיה דוקא

[And this purification is effected] exclusively through Torah study and *mitzvot* requiring action, in *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*.

Since this is the purpose of all of creation, and the *mitzvot* can be fully performed only in the Holy Land, Moses fervently desired to enter it so that he would be able to perform them in the most complete manner possible.

From all the above we understand why the extraction and refinement of sparks is primarily accomplished through prayer, even though the study of Torah is loftier than

prayer. For prayer involves the elevation of the sparks of *Tohu* to their most supreme source there, and from there even higher to the *Ein Sof*.

As the Alter Rebbe will soon explain, this is so specifically in contemporary times because the loftier souls of earlier generations could accomplish this speedily, merely by reciting the *Shema* with its introductory blessings and selections from the Verses of Praise. In our days, however, when such lofty souls are not to be found, the task of *beirur* must come about through prayer.

* * *

והנה לקיום מצוה שאי אפשר לעשות על ידי אחרים, מבטלין תלמוד תורה, ואפילו מעשה מרכבה

To perform a *mitzvah* that cannot be delegated to another one forgoes Torah study,¹⁷ even [the study of] *maaseh merkavah*, the sublime Kabbalistic mysteries of the celestial “Chariot”,¹⁸

וכל שכן תפלה, שהיא בחינת מוחין ודחילו ורחימו שכליים

and beyond question one forgoes prayer, which is the state of intellect and intellectually-generated awe and love.

והטעם כנ"ל

The reason is as we have noted; i.e., in order to extract and refine the sparks by means of the practical *mitzvot*, this being the purpose of creation.

ועוד זאת, שבאמת מאד גדלה וגבהה מעלות המצות מעשיות, וכן לימודם, על מעלת המוחין, שהן דחילו ורחימו שכליים

In addition, indeed, the standing of the practical *mitzvot* and their study, far transcends the standing of intellect, meaning intellectually-generated awe and love.

The *mitzvot* requiring action are superior — in their performance and in the study of their laws — not only because they fulfill the ultimate purpose of creation through the extraction of the sparks, but also because they bond the soul with G-d.

כי הגם דכתיב: ולדבקה בו, על ידי מדותיו

For though the verse declares,¹⁹ “and to cleave to Him,” i.e., through [cleaving to] His attributes (*middot*),²⁰

When one acts in a kindly manner, for example, he cleaves to the Supernal *Sefirah* of *Chesed* — and the *Sefirot* are wholly one with G-d.

מכל מקום, איננו דבק אפילו במדות העליונות אלא במציאותן, ולא במהותן

still, one does not cleave to the essence (*mahut*) of the Supernal attributes but only to [the externality of] their existence (*metziut*),

וכמו שכתוב: ואנכי עפר ואפר

as it is written,²¹ “I am dust and ashes.”

This was stated by Abraham with regard to the glimmer of his soul that illuminated his body, in comparing it to its source — an irradiation of Supernal Kindness, as explained above at length in Epistle XV, in the name of the Maggid of Mezritch.

Abraham experienced such an intense degree of love (deriving from the attribute of *Chesed*) toward G-d, that he was a “chariot”, a vehicle humbly waiting to be steered by the hands of its Driver.²² Nevertheless, he declared that his measure of love for G-d was but “dust and ashes” relative to the Supernal attribute of *Chesed*.

To appreciate the analogy: A tree, originally composed of the four elements of Fire, Air, Water and Earth, is burned. Losing its first three elements in smoke, it is reduced to its fourth element, mere ashes. Yet, though these ashes and the tree itself are of the same element, the ashes can hardly be compared to the original tree that was^{23a} “beautiful to behold and good to eat.”

So, too, the attribute of kindness and love that Abraham possessed while his soul was in his body, cannot be compared to the attribute of Kindness which is one of the Supernal *Sefirot*.

It is thus to be seen that one does not cleave to the essence of the Supernal attributes but only to their external state, their state of mere existence.

וכל שכן באור אין סוף ברוך הוא, דלית מחשבה תפיסא ביה באורו והתפשטות החיות ממנו יתברך

This is all the more true with regard to the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light, for no thought can apprehend Him in His radiance or the diffusion of the life-force issuing from Him.

כי אם במציאותו, שהוא שמחיה את כולם, ולא במהותו

One can only grasp His existence, that He gives life to all, but not His essence.

אפילו לעליונים, כמו שכתוב: קדוש קדוש קדוש ה' צבאות כו'

This applies even to the supernal beings, of [whose praise] it is written,²⁴ “Holy, holy, holy is the L-rd of Hosts.”

The above phrase is uttered by the Seraphim, angels of the World of *Beriah*. They perceive that even as G-d descends to relate to created beings so that He is called the

“L-rd of Hosts,” He is *kadosh* (“holy”), a term which implies that He is separate from them.

לבד עלולים נאצלים משיגים כי אם בעילתו

Only emanated “effects” can conceive their “cause”,

The spiritual beings of the World of *Atzilut* are each an “effect” (*alul*) brought about by a “cause” (*ilah*) in the levels higher than themselves. These beings vest themselves in each other in turn, and at each level are able to comprehend the antecedent “cause” that is vested within them,

כפי הסדר שבעץ חיים, בהתלבשות הפרצופים

according to the order recounted in *Etz Chayim*, concerning the investment of the visages (*partzufim*).

Etz Chayim explains how the “visages” of the Supernal *Sefirot* of *Atzilut* vest themselves in each other. Each “effect” is able to comprehend its “cause” — the “visage” that is garbed within it.

אבל לא לנבראים, אפילו לנשמות דאצילות

This is not the case with created beings, even with souls of *Atzilut*,

Though the souls of *Atzilut* are Divinity, still, since they have become sundered from the vessels of the Ten *Sefirot* (as explained above in Epistle XX²⁵), they are termed “created beings” and are unable to apprehend the essence of G-dliness.

כמו שכתוב במשה רבינו עליו השלום: וראית את אחורי כו'

Thus it is written regarding Moses,²⁶ “You will see My hinderpart” — an external manifestation²⁷ of the mere existence (*metziut*) of Divinity, but not the essence (*mahut*).

Thus, through the vision of his soul alone, as the soul gazes upon G-d without the benefit of *mitzvot*, even Moses could apprehend no more than externality, not essence.

* * *

The performance of *mitzvot*, however, as the Alter Rebbe will now explain, connects a Jew with the essence of Divinity. When he holds an etrog together with the other three kinds of vegetation and fulfills the *mitzvah* of the “Four Species” on Sukkot, he is holding on to the essence of Divinity. And so too with regard to all the practical *mitzvot*.

מה שאין כן מעשה המצות, מעשה אלקים המה הנה

But as to the performance of *mitzvot*, these are the works of G-d, unlike other worldly actions, from which Divinity is utterly concealed. The Alter Rebbe now explains how this comes about:

בדרך השתלשלות מכלים דאצילות לבריא יצירה עשיה, ממהותן ועצמותן דחיצוניותן

In the process of the chain of descent from the vessels of *Atzilut* to *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, for the vessels of *Atzilut* that descend into these worlds are the Divinity of these worlds, from the very nature and essence of their external aspect —

כמו, על דרך משל, אתרוג ומינוי

as, for example, within the *etrog* and its “kinds” —

הלביש בהן הקב"ה ממהותן ועצמותן דחסדים [פנימית] [פנימים] דז"א

the Holy One, blessed be He, clothed something of the very nature and essence of the [28]internal attributes of Kindness of *Za*,

והיינו מבחינת חיצוניותן

meaning from their outward state, from the external aspect of these internal attributes,

כנודע בכל מצות מעשיות

as is known in the case of all *mitzvot* requiring action.

מה שאין כן האדם

Man, by contrast, who by means of his intellect or spiritual emotions can attain intellectually-generated love and fear,

אפילו יש לו נשמה דאצילות

even if he possesses a soul of *Atzilut*,

מאחר שמלובשת בגוף

yet since it is clothed in a body,

לא יוכל למצוא בנפשו ולהשיג מהותן ועצמותן של פנימית החסדים דז"א דאצילות

cannot detect and apprehend through²⁹ his soul the nature and essence of the inward attributes of Kindness of *Za* of *Atzilut*.

(כי האצילות היא בחינת חיה בכללות העולמות, אצילות בריאה יצירה עשיה

(30) For in general terms *Atzilut* represents the state of *Chayah* in the Four Worlds of *Atzilut*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*,

Specifically, each of the Four Worlds possesses all four soul levels of *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah* and *Chayah*. In a general sense, however, each of these Four Worlds corresponds to one of these levels. *Asiyah* corresponds to *Nefesh*; *Yetzirah* — to *Ruach*; *Beriah* — to *Neshamah*; and *Atzilut* corresponds to *Chayah*.

שהיא בחינת מקיף מלמעלה, ואינה מתלבשת בכלי כלל)

and [*Chayah*] denotes encompassing transcendence, not being vested within any vessel whatever.)

Unlike the soul-level in man called *Neshamah*, which reflects his power of comprehension, or *Ruach*, which reflects his spiritual emotions, and so on, each of these soul-levels having their specific “location” within the body, *Chayah* is a transcendent soul-level that encompasses the individual from above.

So, too, with regard to the worlds, *Chayah* (paralleled by the World of *Atzilut*) is the spiritual level that encompasses from above and does not vest itself at all within a vessel. Thus, a person living within a body cannot possibly apprehend the essence of an entity at the level of *Atzilut*.

כי אם מציאותו, על ידי דחילו ורחימו שכליים

[With regard to the internal attributes of Kindness of *Za*, man is able to apprehend] only their existence, through intellectually-generated awe and love.

ומה שכתוב: וראית את אחריו, הוא בדרך נבואה דוקא

As to the statement, (31) “You shall see my hinderpart” — and seeing penetrates to the essence of a matter — this refers only to prophecy.

(שהוא התפשטות הגשמיות, כמו שכתוב ברעיא מהימנא, פרשת משפטים)

(32) For prophecy entails divestment of the physical, (33) as explained in *Ra’aya Mehemna*, *Parshat Mishpatim*. (34)

Thus, Moses’ apprehension of the essence of Divinity resulted from a state of prophecy that entails divestment from the physical. Through other, non-prophetic means, it is impossible for the soul to apprehend the essence of any of the levels of *Atzilut*.

והטעם, היינו לפי שאי אפשר לנברא להשיג כלום במהות האלקות, שהוא הבורא

This, then, is the reason: No created being is capable of grasping anything whatsoever of the essence of Divinity, the Creator.

ובלי השגה, אין זו הלבשה ותפיסה ודביקות אמיתית

And without comprehension there is no real investiture, or grasping, or cleaving.

Man is thus incapable of truly cleaving to G-d's attributes, i.e., the attributes of *Atzilut*.

In light of the above it is clear that the love and fear of G-d that a Jew generates through meditation during prayer, grasps and cleaves to no more than the external aspect of the existence of Divinity, and not His essence.

מה שאין כן האתרוג, על דרך משל, חיותו נמשכה ונשתלשלה ממהות חיצונית דכלים דנוקבא דז"א דאצילות

However, as to the etrog by way of example, its life is drawn and descends from the very essence of the outer aspect of the vessels of *nukva* of *Za* of *Atzilut*,

שהוא בחינת אלקות

which is truly a state of Divinity,

כמו שכתוב בעץ חיים, שכל הפירות הן באצילות

as stated in *Etz Chayim*,[35](#) that all the fruits are [rooted] in *Atzilut*.

כי למ"ד כלים דאצילות ירדו לבריאה יצירה עשיה

For the thirty vessels of *Atzilut* descended into *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* in order to become the Divinity of those Worlds

(והן יו"ד מאמרות שבהן נברא העולם

([36](#)and these are the Ten Utterances[37](#) by which the world was created

על ידי התלבשות בנוקבא דעשיה, מהות במהות)

through enclothement in *nukva* of *Asiyah*, essence in essence).[38](#)

The essence of the vessels of *Malchut* of *Atzilut* vests itself in the essence of *Malchut* of *Asiyah*, which is the source of all created beings of that world. Included among them are the fruits of that world, such as the *etrog*.

While the G-dliness found in other physical matters is concealed, in an object used for a *mitzvah* it is manifest, as explained in *Tanya*, ch. 23.

כי הכלים דאצילות נעשו נשמה בעשיה, שהיא בחינת אלקות ממש

For the vessels of *Atzilut* became the soul of *Asiyah*, which is actually a state of Divinity.

לפי שבאצילות, איהו וגרמוהי חד, המאציל והנאצל

For in *Atzilut*³⁹ “He and His vessels are one” — the Emanator (the infinite light) and the emanation (the vessels of *Atzilut*).

ועל ידי התלבשות מהות הנשמה במהות הכלים דנוקבא דעשיה, נתהווה האתרוג

And through the enclothement of the essence of the soul [of the vessels of *Atzilut*] in the essence of the vessels of *nukva* (i.e., *Malchut*) of *Asiyah*, the *etrog* came into being.

נמצא כשתופס האתרוג ומנענעו כהלכתו

The result is that in holding the *etrog* and waving it as the law requires,

הרי זה תופס ממש חיותו המלוכש בו מנוקבא דאצילות

one is actually holding the life-force which is clothed within it and which derives from the *nukva* (i.e., *Malchut*) of *Atzilut*,

המיוחדת באור אין סוף, המאציל ברוך הוא

and [*Malchut*] is united with the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light, the Emanator of *Atzilut*, blessed be He.

But is this not also the case when one holds any other fruit, where no *mitzvah* is involved?

The answer is, as previously explained, that in other physical objects the G-dly life-force is concealed, whereas it is revealed in objects used for a *mitzvah*, for these are the “works of G-d.”

מה שאין כן בכוונתו

This is not the case concerning one’s intention while performing the *mitzvah* of the *etrog*.

אינו משיג ותופס, אף היודע הסוד, אלא מציאותה ולא מהותה

Here, even if he is familiar with the mystical [Kabbalistic and chassidic] meanings involved, he does not grasp and hold on to the essence (of *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, the source of the *etrog*), but only to the external fact of its mere existence.

This is entirely unlike holding a physical *etrog* and performing the *mitzvah* with it, at which time one grasps the essence of the physical *etrog* together with its source in Divinity.

אך בלימוד הלכות אתרוג, משיג ותופס האתרוג ממש ומצותו כהלכה, בבחינת דבור ומחשבה

However, by studying the laws of the *etrog* one does attain and grasp the *etrog* proper and its *mitzvah* appropriately, by speech and thought.

For here he is articulating or understanding or thinking about the laws of the physical *etrog*, whose essence he can grasp, and not its spiritual intent in the heavenly realms.

וכל שכן, הלומד הסוד

Even more so, he who studies the esoteric dimension of the *mitzvah* of the *etrog* according to the teachings of the Kabbalah and *Chassidut*.

For here, too, we are speaking of the esoteric dimension of the physical *etrog*, whose essence he can comprehend, and not of the spiritual intentions of the *mitzvah* or, yet higher, the relevant configurations of *Sefirot* in the World of *Atzilut*.

* * *

אבל דוקא סודות המצוה

This, however, refers only to [the study of] the Kabbalistic mysteries of the *mitzvah* itself,

דלא גרע מלימוד הלכותיה, ואדרבה כו'

for this is not inferior to the study of its laws; indeed, quite the contrary....,

אף שאינו משיג המהות

even though he does not apprehend the essence of the spiritual intent of the *mitzvah* as it applies to the visages of *Atzilut*.

Moreover, his understanding of the essence of the *etrog*, the object with which the *mitzvah* is observed, grants him some comprehension of the essence of the mystical reaches of the subject at large.

מה שאין כן בסדר ההשתלשלות

It does not apply to [the study of] the order of *Hishtalshelut*, the chainlike stages of progressive self-screening whereby the Divine light descends from level to level until ultimately this corporeal world is created:

אף אם משיג המציאות

Even if one does comprehend the external aspect of the existence of the *Sefirot* and spiritual levels involved,

לא עדיף מצד עצמו כלימוד המצות, שמשיג ותופס המהות

this is not intrinsically as worthy as the study of the laws of the *mitzvot*, where one comprehends and grasps their essence.

Knowledge of the various spiritual levels may indeed be superior for an unrelated reason, namely, that it leads to a “complete heart” (*lev shalem*), a wholehearted awe of G-d — and this, as the Alter Rebbe will later say, is the purpose of all the *mitzvot*. Intrinsically, however, gaining this knowledge is not superior to studying the laws governing the performance of the *mitzvot*, whose essence he can understand.

ומעלה עליו כאילו קיים בפועל ממש

Moreover, this [study] is considered [in certain cases] the equivalent of actual performance,

כמו שכתוב: זאת התורה כו'

as it is written,⁴⁰ “This is the law [of the burnt offering and the meal offering...].”

The *Gemara* comments on this,⁴¹ “He who occupies himself with these laws is considered as if he had actually offered a burnt offering and a meal offering.”

Mastering the revealed *laws* of the commandments is thus in one sense superior to delving into the innermost dimension (the *pnimiyut*) of the Torah, on esoteric subjects such as the order of *Hishtalshelut*. For the study of the laws relates to the *essence* of the subject at hand, such as the physical objects with which the commandments are performed.

G-d’s wisdom, moreover, which is inherent in these laws, descends and permeates the physical objects around which the laws revolve. It is thus the essence of G-d’s wisdom that the student comprehends, and thereby he becomes involved in the “wondrous union” described in ch. 5 of *Tanya*, whereby his mortal intellect simultaneously “encompasses and is encompassed by” the Divine wisdom embodied in the Torah which he is studying. This intellectual union in turn unites his soul (which transcends his intellect) with the infinite light that is vested in the wisdom of the Torah.

The above is true only when he understands the essence of his subject. This is the case when he studies (for example) the laws regulating the observance of the commandments. If, by contrast, his subject is the hierarchies of angels in the Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, or, yet higher, the configurations of *Sefirot* within the World of *Atzilut*, then his grasp is no more than external: he may indeed be aware of his subject’s existence, but he will be unable to know its essence.

* * *

And now, all the above notwithstanding, the Alter Rebbe is about to point out the superior aspect of the study of *Hishtalshelut*.

אלא שידיעת המציאות מההשתלשלות היא גם כן מצוה רמה ונשאה, ואדרבה, עולה על כולנה

However, the knowledge of the existence of the *Hishtalshelut* is also a lofty and exalted *mitzvah*.⁴² Indeed, it outweighs them all, all of the mitzvot and the study of the laws of the Torah.

כמו שכתוב: וידעת היום כו'

Thus it is written,⁴³ “Know this day [...that the L-rd is G-d],”

דע את אלקי אביך כו'

and⁴⁴ “Know the G-d of your father...”; i.e., there is an obligation to attain a knowledge or apprehension of Divinity.

ומביאה ללב שלם כו'

Moreover, this leads to a “whole heart,” for the latter verse concludes, “and serve Him with a whole heart”; i.e., a knowledge of G-d leads one to serve Him with one’s entire being.

As explained in *Likkutei Torah*, in the discourse beginning *VeLo Tashbit*, this refers to serving G-d with awe — and this is the ultimate intent of all the *mitzvot*, as the Torah states,⁴⁵ “G-d has commanded us to perform all these statutes so that we may fear the L-rd our G-d.” And it is the study of the innermost dimensions of the Torah and a knowledge of the various spiritual levels which comprise the order of *Hishtalshelut* that enable one to fulfill the *mitzvah* of “knowing G-d,” which leads in turn to the “whole heart” of “fearing Him.” Thus the Alter Rebbe concludes:

שהוא העיקר

And this is the essential thing: the wholehearted awe of G-d is the ultimate purpose of all the commandments.

As mentioned above, one can attain this state only through a knowledge of the order of *Hishtalshelut*, even though this knowledge is merely an awareness of its existence and not a grasp of its essence.

והשגת המציאות הוא להפשיט מגשמיות כו'

The comprehension of existence entails divesting [this subject] of any physicality....

In other words, one should endeavor to picture its *spirituality*. Hence, as the Rebbe has often stressed, one should study the innermost and mystical dimension of the Torah in such a way that one⁴⁶ “derives sustenance from it” (מיניה יתפרנסון) — viz., the “sustenance” derived from comprehension. And soundly-based comprehension can be

secured only when this dimension of the Torah is studied with the intellectual elucidation afforded by the teachings of *Chabad*.

רק שזו היא מצוה אחת מתרי"ג

However, this *mitzvah* (of knowing G-d and apprehending Divinity) is but one *mitzvah* of the 613,

והאדם צריך לקיים כל תרי"ג

and a man must fulfill all 613,

לפי שהן השתלשלות המהות דחיצוניות דכלים דאצילות

for they descend from the essence of the external aspect of the vessels of *Atzilut*, a source whose standing was explained above.

לכך צריך להרבות בלימוד כל התרי"ג, וקיומן בפועל ממש, במחשבה דבור ומעשה, שהן בריאה, יצירה, עשיה

Hence, one must extensively study all 613 *mitzvot*, and [hence] fulfill them in actual practice in thought, speech and deed — which parallel *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* respectively —

לברר בירורין אשר שם

in order to purify whatever needs purification (*beirur*) there.

As previously explained, the extraction and elevation of the sparks exiled in the various worlds is the ultimate purpose of creation.

ועוד זאת

In addition:

The Alter Rebbe will now state that beyond the above-discussed superior quality of *mitzvot* requiring action (as well as the study of their laws), they are also essentially superior to the source of the soul, by virtue of their source.

Thus, the love and awe experienced by the soul, though spiritual in nature, pale in comparison to these *mitzvot* (even though they are performed with physical entities), not only because these *mitzvot* and the extraction of the sparks accomplished thereby are the ultimate *purpose* of creation, but in essence too they are superior to the source of the soul.

שבאמת הברורין שבבריאה יצירה עשיה מרפ"ח, על ידי תורה ומצות, במחשבה דבור ומעשה

For the truth is that the purifications in *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* of the 288 [sparks of *Tohu*] by means of the Torah and *mitzvot* that man fulfills in thought, speech and deed,

גבוהין בשרשן מנפש רוח נשמה שבאדם

are superior in their source to the *Nefesh-Ruach-Neshamah* of man that possess the love and fear of G-d.

כי הן מס"ג שבפנימיות אדם קדמון

For they derive from the Divine Name *Sa'g* of the internal aspect of *Adam Kadmon*,

ונפש רוח נשמה שכבר נתקנו על ידי מ"ה הוא יוצא מהמצח, הארה בעלמא

while the *Nefesh-Ruach-Neshamah* that has already been corrected through the Divine Name *Ma'h* issues (i.e., this Name issues) from the “forehead” [of *Adam Kadmon*], being a mere reflection [of it], but not of its essence.

The Divine Names *Sa'g* and *Ma'h* are two of the four Names that echo the varying numerical values which result when the names of the four letters that comprise the Name *Havayah* are spelled out in any of four different ways. For example, one possible spelling entails the repeated use of the letter *vav*, while another possible spelling entails the repeated use of the letter *alef*.

When the Hebrew names of the four letters *yud* and *hei* and *vav* and *hei* are written out with the full complement (*milui*) of the letter *vav*, the numerical equivalent of the letters used totals 63 (hence the Divine Name ט"ג). When it is written with the full complement of the letter *alef*, the numerical equivalent of the letters used totals 45 (hence the Divine Name מ"ה).

The Kabbalah explains how the Name *Sa'g* is related to the World of *Tohu*, while the Name *Ma'h* is related to the World of *Tikkun*, which is inferior to it.

The Alter Rebbe is thus stating here that the purifications of the action-related *mitzvot* find their source in the Divine Name *Sa'g* that derives from the internal aspect of *Adam Kadmon*, the primal Divine thought of creation that encompasses all subsequent stages and levels of creation.

By contrast, since the souls of Jews derive from the World of *Tikkun* (lit., “correction”), the *Nefesh* or *Ruach* or *Neshamah* is of a level at which it was already corrected by means of the Divine Name *Ma'h*. And this Name is but a glimmer that derives from the “forehead” of *Adam Kadmon*.

וזוהו שכתוב: לפני מלך כו'

Hence it is written,⁴⁷ “...before a king ruled [over the Children of Israel].”

The verse reads thus: “These are the kings who ruled in the land of Edom before a king ruled over the Children of Israel.” The Kabbalah understands these “kings” as a reference to the *Sefirot* in the World of *Tohu* who reigned before (i.e., on a superior level to) “a king who ruled over the Jews,” i.e., the World of *Tikkun*, which is the source of their souls. For the World of *Tikkun* is merely a glimmer of *Adam Kadmon*, while *Tohu* (from whence derive the exiled sparks and their purification) stems from the Divine Name *Sa’g*, which is rooted in the internal level of *Adam Kadmon*.

והאי טעמא שהאדם חי במזונות דומם צומח חי, ומבררן במ”ה שבו

For this reason man is sustained by food of the inorganic, vegetative, and living classes, and purifies them by the *Ma’h* within him,

Since the soul derives from the World of *Tikkun* and incorporates the Divine Name *Ma’h*, it is thereby able to extract and purify the sparks found within the inorganic, vegetative and living classes.

וחי בהם

and lives through them,

Having refined these sparks that are found within the inorganic, vegetative, and living classes, and having drawn Divine energy upon them from their lofty source in *Tohu*, man in turn is then invigorated by them with an additional measure of spiritual vitality.

לפי שהם מס”ג

because they derive from *Sa’g*.

But is it not paradoxical that man, who is so far superior to the inorganic, vegetative and living classes, should derive his sustenance from them?

The teachings of *Chassidut* find the answer in the verse,⁴⁸ “Not on bread alone does a man live, but on all that comes forth from G-d’s mouth does a man live.” It is not the physical, vegetative bread alone that sustains man, but the creative Divine utterance that is found within the bread.

However, since man is provided with his ongoing existence by his own creative Divine utterance, viz.,⁴⁹ “Let us make man,” why does he need to be sustained by the creative word that sustains vegetative growth (or, for that matter, the inorganic and living classes of existence)?

The answer lies in the fact that the creative utterance that animates bread derives from a loftier source (the World of *Tohu*) than the source of the creative utterance that animates man (the World of *Tikkun*). In terms of the Divine Names, *Sa’g* transcends *Ma’h*.

Another point in which the *mitzvot* requiring action are superior to the love and awe experienced by the soul:

The Alter Rebbe will now explain that since love and fear are essentially spiritual in nature, they resemble the mere glimmer (and not the essence) of the master's own intellectual illumination that he imparts to his disciple. In contrast, a physical seminal drop is capable of creating a child — it imparts the entire essence. So much so, in fact, that it is possible for the [50](#) “power of the child to outshine the power of his father,” so that gifts dormant within the father can become manifest in the child.

The Alter Rebbe will now use this analogy to explain the difference between love and awe, which are spiritual, and the action-related *mitzvot*, which are physical. Love and awe are “illuminations” (*orot*), like the illumination of intellect, while the practical *mitzvot* are “vessels” (*kelim*) that give forth the essence, similar to the physical drop that gives forth the entire essence of its source.

שהרי הדבור מדברי חכמה עילאה אינו מוליד

For verbalizing any phrase of the Supreme Wisdom does not procreate — imparting wisdom does not create any being *ex nihilo*,

והטפה שנמשכה מהכלי דחכמה עילאה, יש בה כח המוליד ומהווה יש מאין

whereas the drop drawn from the vessel of the Supreme Wisdom, like the drop that derives from the father's brain, [51](#) has the power to procreate and bring about existence *ex nihilo*.

וגם המשכת חכמה עילאה כלולה בה

Also, a flow of the Supreme Wisdom — an illumination which is paralleled by a person's capacity for wisdom — is incorporated within it (i.e., within the drop that derives from the vessel of Supernal Wisdom).

והטעם, מפני שבה נמשך מהותה ועצמותה דחכמה עילאה

The reason is that into it there is drawn the essence and nature of the Supreme Wisdom.

All the above refers to the drop that derives from the vessels of wisdom.

מה שאין כן בדבור ומחשבה

This is not the case with thought and speech, where the intellect they draw forth does not possess the essence of the original wisdom,

ואפילו בהשכלת השכל באיזו חכמה

even in intellectual conception in any field of wisdom,

Though this is a rarefied level of conceptualization, transcending even the subtle articulation sketched by “letters of thought,” nevertheless:

הרי חכמה זו, רק הארה מתפשטת ממהות השכל שבנפש ועצמותו

this wisdom is a mere reflection that extends from the essence of intellect in the soul.

והארה זו היא רק לבוש למהותו ועצמותו של השכל

Then, too, this reflection is a mere garment for the very essence of the intellect,

והשכל הוא הארה ולבוש למהות הנפש

and the intellect in turn is but a reflection and garment for the essence of the soul.

Thus, the soul’s essence is not to be found even within intellectual conception — unlike the drop, which, though physical, comprises within it the essence of the soul, as the Alter Rebbe now goes on to say.

מה שאין כן, הטפה נמשך בה גם ממהות הנפש ועצמותה המלובשת במוחין

In contrast, there is also drawn into the drop something of the very essence of the soul which is clothed within the brain.

ולכן מולידה בדומה לה ממש

Hence it begets offspring precisely similar to itself, to the soul itself.

וזהו ההפרש בין עבודת המלאכים היוצאין מנשיקין

This is the difference between the divine service of angels, which are born of a spiritual kiss, and hence their divine service is likewise spiritual,

להנשמות היוצאין מהכלים

and that of souls, which issue from the “vessels” that contain an element of the “essence”, and which thus resemble the tangible product of the seminal drop which incorporates the entire essence of its source.

According to the above, however, it would seem that within the love and awe of souls as well, there should be an element of essence — whereas we learned above that the love

and awe of souls are likened to the mere reflection (and not the essence) of his own illumination which a master imparts to his disciple.

The Alter Rebbe anticipates this query by explaining that since the vessels of *Atzilut* become a *Neshamah* to *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, there are therefore two forms of issue from the soul itself: one is a *radiation*, which is intellectual love and fear; the other is an issue of *essence*, that finds expression in action-related *mitzvot*.

אך הכלים דאצילות נעשו נשמה לבריאה יצירה עשיה

But the vessels of *Atzilut* become the soul of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* — and from this soul emanate two manners of issue.

והלכך, דחילו ורחימו שכליים הן כמלאכים דנשיקין, מהארת חיצוניות דחב"ד בבריאה יצירה עשיה

Therefore intellectual love and awe are comparable to the angels that issue from the spiritual kiss, which irradiates only the external aspect of *ChaBaD* — *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat*, the three intellective *Sefirot* — in *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*.

Though it derives from the vessels of *Atzilut*, it is still not of the degree of essence.

והטעם, משום דפנימיות חב"ד ומהותו ועצמותו של אור פנימי אינו יכול להתגלות אלא על ידי הארת הכלים דוקא, היורדים למטה

The reason is that the innermost dimension of *ChaBaD* and the essential nature of the indwelling light (*or pnimi*) cannot be revealed except through the radiance of the vessels that descend below,

כטפת האדם ממוחין

as does the seminal drop of man issuing from the brain.

וכמו שכתוב: ופני לא יראו

As it is written,⁵² “My Face — My innermost dimension — shall not be seen.”

Not being manifest, it must therefore descend in a concealed manner, similar to the drop.

The Alter Rebbe will now point out the superior quality inherent in the very service of action-related *mitzvot* in comparison to intellectually-generated love and awe. For the direction of the latter form of divine service is merely elevation (*haalaah*), which causes a corresponding “elevation of the lights” above. The ultimate intent of creation is fulfilled not by this, but by the practical commandments, for their function is the drawing down (*hamshachah*) of Divinity to a state of revelation in this world below.

ובר מן כל דין

Besides all the above,⁵³ i.e., all the above-mentioned ways in which the action-related *mitzvot* are superior to intellectually-aroused love and fear, there is yet another superior quality to the practical *mitzvot*:

אפילו בנשמה דאצילות, אף שהיא מכלים דאצילות

Even in the case of a soul of *Atzilut*, though it derives from the vessels of *Atzilut*,

וכן בנפש רוח, מכלים דיצירה עשיה

and equally in the case of *Nefesh-Ruach* which derive from the vessels of *Yetzirah-Asiyah*,⁵⁴

הנה רחימו אולי צריך לומר: דחילו ורחימו שכליים שלהם מעוררים גם כן בכלים דיצירה עשיה בחינת העלאה ממטה למעלה, באתערותא דלתתא

their intellectual love [⁵⁵this should possibly read: “fear and love”], which themselves are a mode of elevation, also arouse in the vessels of *Yetzirah-Asiyah* a state of upward elevation, through an arousal initiated from below.

וזהו בחינת הסתלקות לבד, חס ושלום

However, this is a state of departure alone, G-d forbid.

The effect on the vessels is that they depart upwards and do not fulfill their purpose, just as love and fear that do not descend into expression in *mitzvot* are also in a state of elevation and departure. When love and fear do descend into *mitzvot*, they enhance the effect of the *mitzvot* in drawing down Divine light.

אבל בחינת המשכה מלמעלה למטה, הוא על ידי מצות מעשיות דוקא, להמשיך אור בכלים

But eliciting from above downward is effected only by means of the practical *mitzvot*, which draw light into the vessels,

ובחיצוניות הכלים דוקא, שחיצוניות העליון יורד למטה, ופנימיות התחתון עולה למעלה

and specifically into the external aspect of the vessels, so that the external aspect of the superior level descends, while the internal aspect of the inferior level rises.

As created beings thus experience an upward-directed longing for the Divine, Divinity descends into this world.

וזהו שכתוב בזהר, פרשת פקודי הנ"ל, דאית סדורא כו'

This is the intent of the above-quoted *Zohar* in *Parshat Pekudei*,⁵⁶ that “there is an order [of elevation and an order of descent].”

ושתיהן צורך גבוה, העלאה והמשכה

Both are needed for the Divine purpose, i.e., for man's spiritual service, the elevation and the elicitation,

על ידי העלאת מין נוקבין מס"ג, בבחינת עובדא ומלולא

by the elevation of *mayin nukvin* from the Divine Name *Sa'g* that is accomplished (by the elevation of the sparks) by deed and speech.

וזהו תכלית ההשתלשלות, להתגלות אור עליון למטה

This is the ultimate purpose of the downward progression of all the various worlds — that the supernal light be revealed below,

ולא לעלות התחתון למעלה, שזה אינו אלא לפי שעה

and not that the inferior level be elevated, for this [elevation] can only be momentary, until a further descent.

ואף גם זאת, דוקא עליות הכלים לאורות עליונים

And even so, when an elevation is necessary, this involves — not the ascent of the light, for that would be a move toward departure, but — specifically an elevation of the vessels toward the supernal lights.

היא מעלת השבת ויום הכפורים

This is the specific quality of *Shabbat* and *Yom Kippur*, at which time there is an “elevation of the worlds” (*aliyat haolamot*), where the vessels are in a state of elevation towards the supernal lights,

אבל לא עליות והסתלקות האורות, חס ושלום, כמו שכתוב בפרי עץ חיים

but not the elevation and departure of the lights, G-d forbid, as is written in *Pri Etz Chayim*.[57](#)

ונפש רוח נשמה של האדם, לגבי גופו בעולם הזה, חשיבי כאורות לגבי כלים

The *Nefesh-Ruach-Neshamah* of man relative to his physical body in This World are considered as lights relative to vessels.

וכן דחילו ורחימו שכליים, לגבי מצות מעשיות

So too are intellectual fear and love, relative to *mitzvot* of action; they, too, are considered as lights relative to vessels.

ולכן התפלל משה רבנו עליו השלום תפלות כמנין ואתחנן, על קיום מצות מעשיות דוקא

This is why Moses offered [515] prayers equivalent in number to [the Hebrew word] *Vaetchanan*, [58](#) asking that he be privileged to enter the Holy Land, specifically so that he could fulfill the practical *mitzvot*.

Only in the Holy Land can the practical *mitzvot* be fulfilled in their entirety — and the fulfillment of the practical *mitzvot* is the ultimate purpose of the entire *Hishtalshelut*, for through them Divinity is drawn down to this nether world.

והוא הדין לדבור גשמי של הלכותיהן

So too as regards the physical utterance of their laws.

For by uttering and studying the laws of the *mitzvot* with physical speech one also draws down the light below.

אך להבין איך האתרוג, שהוא מרפ"ח שלא נבררו עדיין

But let us understand how an etrog, which derives from the 288 sparks that have not yet been purified,

Since this physical fruit derives its life-force from *kelipat nogah*, it contains some element of the 288 sparks of *Tohu* which have not yet been elevated to Divinity.

וכן קלף התפילין

and so too the parchment scroll of the *tefillin*, upon which the Torah passages are inscribed,

ימשיך אור בכלים דזו"ן דאצילות, שכבר נבררו ונתקנו על ידי שם מ"ה, להיות בחינת אלקות

can elicit light into the vessels of *Zu"n* of *Atzilut*, that have already been purified and rectified through the [purifying] Name *Ma'h*, so that they are a state of G-dliness.

הנה המשל לזה היא הזריעה והנטיעה

The analogy for this is the process of sowing and planting.

שהגרעין מעורר כח הצומח שבארץ

The seed stimulates the power of growth within the soil,

שהוא דבר ה': תדשא הארץ כו' עץ פרי כו'

which is G-d's command, [59](#) "Let the earth sprout forth ... fruit trees..."

The actual growth is not from the seed but from the power of growth (as explained above in Epistle XX). The seed merely serves as an “arousal from below,” stimulating the particular aspect of the power of growth that finds expression within it. After the seed decomposes, this particular power becomes incorporated within the universal power of growth that is found in the ground.

It then stimulates the power of growth within the earth to produce the same sort of fruit tree as the seed that was implanted. The essence of the power of growth is the Divine decree, “Let the earth sprout forth...,” which is the ultimate source of all vegetative growth.

The G-d-given ability of the seed to rouse the power of growth acts:

על ידי העלאת מין נוקבין לשרשו

through the elevation of *mayin nukvin* to its source.

The seed, whose source is within the power of growth, serves as an “arousal from below,” from the recipient below to the benefactor. Although the seed that is planted can in no way compare to the power of growth, it can nevertheless arouse this power, for this is its source.

ככה מעוררים הקלף והאתרוג עד רום המעלות, שהוא שם ס"ג שלפני השבירה

In this manner the parchment of the *tefillin* and the *etrog* of the “Four Species” arouse unto the loftiest of levels; this is the Name *Sa’g* which precedes (and transcends) the shattering of the vessels,

שהוא מהות ועצמות אורות שבאדם קדמון

and which is the very essence of the lights of *Adam Kadmon*,

As explained above, *Adam Kadmon* is the first visage and thought of the infinite light as it encompasses all of creation. Here is to be found the essence of the visage and not merely a radiation. Thus, the Divine Name *Sa’g* relates to the essence of the illuminations of *Adam Kadmon*.

ולא הארה בעלמא, כמו שם מ"ה שממצחו

and not merely a reflection, as is the Name *Ma’h* which issues from the “forehead”.

All this is accomplished through the actual performance of the commandments of the *tefillin* and the *etrog*.

וכן בלימוד ועיון הלכותיהן

Similarly the study and careful examination of their laws, the laws regulating these *mitzvot*,

מעורר בחינת חב"ד שבעשר ספירות דכלים דזו"ן

arouses the *Chochmah-Binah-Daat* of the Ten *Sefirot* of the vessels of *Zu"n*,

ועד רום המעלות, גם כן בחינת חב"ד שבס"ג דפנימיות אדם קדמון, היוצא דרך העיניים כו'

and so upward to the greatest heights, including *Chochmah-Binah-Daat* of *Sa'g* of the inner dimension of *Adam Kadmon* issuing through the "eyes" [of *Adam Kadmon*].

"Eyes", signifying sight, denote an inner and essential level of Divinity, unlike the external aspect denoted by "forehead".

In summary, practical *mitzvot* performed with physical objects arouse their source unto the loftiest of levels, unto the Divine Name *Sa'g*, the level that transcends the "breaking of the vessels." This is also true with regard to studying the laws of these *mitzvot*; study likewise effects an elevation to this lofty level, for the study of a *mitzvah* is likened to its actual performance.

What, however, happens when one studies the laws of prohibitory commands? One cannot say that this study too is regarded "as if he performed them." Particularly so, with regard to those instances that do not occur in practice at all. For with regard to those that can occur, we at least say that [60](#) "if one remains passive and does not transgress, he is rewarded as if he had performed a positive command." However, when the relevant opportunity does not occur at all, this obviously does not apply. Yet despite all this, it was stated above that one should study the laws to an even greater extent than one studies the order of *Hishtalshelut*, even though a study of the latter leads to a love and fear of G-d!

The Alter Rebbe now addresses this issue, explaining that there is a certain aspect of Torah study that is common to both positive and negative commandments: Simply studying a subject, even if it has no practical application, binds the individual to Supernal Wisdom, inasmuch as this is the source from which all the detailed laws emanate.

וכל הנ"ל

All the foregoing, i.e., as to how through observing the practical *mitzvot* and studying their laws one attains to the Divine Name *Sa'g* that transcends the "breaking of the vessels,"

הוא במצות עשה, אבל לא בלימוד פרטי הלכות איסורי לא תעשה לכאורה

concerns positive commandments, but not, it would seem, the study of particulars of the prohibitions,

ובפרט בדלא שכיחי כלל

particularly those that do not occur in practice at all, for in these cases we cannot even state that “if one remains passive and does not transgress, he is rewarded as if he had performed a positive command,”

כמו פרטי הלכות פיגול, וכהאי גוונא

for example the detailed laws of *pigul* and the like, which presently have no practical application.

Why should these laws too be studied extensively, and in fact even more than one studies the order of *Hishtalshelut*, which can rouse one to a love and awe of G-d?

אך עוד זאת השוה בכל

There is yet another common characteristic⁶¹ shared by all the laws of the positive and prohibitory commandments, including those that have no practical application.

כי כל דחילו ורחימו שכליים של המלאכים, הן בחינת נבראים מאין ליש

For (in contradistinction) all intellectually-generated fear and love experienced by the angels are created *ex nihilo*,

והן בחינת נפש רוח דבריאה יצירה עשיה

and they are the (created levels of) Nefesh and Ruach (and not the G-dly level of Neshamah) of the Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*.

Now, if the intellectually-generated awe and love experienced by mortals can likewise not be compared to the study of the laws, why does the Alter Rebbe here choose to speak of angels?

To explain: (a) The love and fear experienced by souls is different from the souls themselves, for souls are not actual created beings; (b) the love and fear experienced by souls is, after all, a *mitzvah*, while that of the angels is not. Thus the angels' love and fear better stresses their created aspect, and this enables us to understand that even with regard to souls, the essential aspect of love and fear is a created entity. The laws, by contrast, are G-dliness.

אבל פרטי ההלכות הן המשכות חכמה עילאה דהמאציל ברוך הוא, המלובשת בגשמיות

However, the detailed laws of the various *mitzvot* are drawn from the Supreme Wisdom of the Emanator, blessed be He, which is clothed in physicality, within the physical objects to which a particular law applies, such as the law governing the case of⁶² “he who exchanges a cow for a donkey,” and the like.

והלבושה זו אינה כהלבושת חכמה עילאה בדחילו ורחימו שכליים

This investment of Supreme Wisdom in the physical aspects of the laws is not similar to the investment of Supreme Wisdom in intellectually-generated fear and love,

Supreme Wisdom is actually vested in all things, as is soon to be explained. This is especially so with regard to the love and awe which are aroused by intellectual activity, for the source of all such activity is Supreme Wisdom. In intellectually-aroused love and awe, however, the vestiture takes on a different form.

דהתם הלבוש הוא מעלים ומסתיר לגמרי

for there the garment conceals and completely obscures the Supreme Wisdom that is vested within it,

כהסתר והעלם הארץ החומרית לגבי חכמה עילאה המלוכשת בה

just as the material earth thoroughly conceals the Supreme Wisdom clothed within it;

כמו שכתוב: כולם בחכמה עשית

as it is written concerning all created beings,⁶³ “All of them You made with Wisdom.”

Supreme Wisdom is thus vested within all physical things as well, even the earth — which, however, completely conceals it, just as intellectually-aroused love and awe conceal the Supreme Wisdom vested in them.

והיינו, חיצוניות דחיצוניות דכלים דמלכות דאצילות שבעשיה, שהיא מסותרת לגמרי ברוח נפש דעשיה

This [Supreme Wisdom] is the externality of the externality of the vessels of *Malchut* of *Atzilut* found in *Asiyah*, that is absolutely hidden in the *Ruach-Nefesh* of *Asiyah*.

Malchut of *Atzilut* with the externality of the externality of its vessels is wholly concealed in *Ruach-Nefesh* of *Asiyah*. *Malchut* of *Atzilut* itself, even the externality of the externality of its vessels, belongs to the realm of the *Neshamah* and of Divinity proper — yet it is entirely hidden within *Nefesh-Ruach*, which belongs to the realm of created beings.

Since Supreme Wisdom is vested in *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, and *Malchut* of *Atzilut* illumines *Asiyah* with its Ten *Sefirot*, containing as they do the element of Wisdom as well, we thus have Supreme Wisdom entirely concealed within the physical earth.

וכן בבריאה היא מסותרת לגמרי ברוח נפש

So too in *Beriah* it is completely hidden in the *Ruach-Nefesh* [of *Beriah*],

שהם בחינת נבראים בהסתר והעלם הבורא מהנברא

which are beings that are created by the concealment and hiding of the Creator from the created.

We thus have here an element of Supreme Wisdom concealed within intellectually-aroused love and fear, the source of which is the World of *Beriah*, the realm of comprehension.

מה שאין כן ההלכות, הרי הארת החכמה מאירה בהן בגילוי

This is not so, however, with regard to the laws, in which a radiance of Wisdom illuminates them manifestly; they do not conceal it.

ולבוש העשיה הוא דרך מעבר לבד

The garment of *Asiyah* serves merely as a passage,

Though the laws vested in the physical things of this world (the physical World of *Asiyah*) are thus subject to the concealment that pervades *Asiyah*, they are not garbed in it to the point that the garment essentially affects the wearer, for they merely pass through the garment of *Asiyah*.

כמו ביום טוב, שחסד דאצילות, המלוּבש לגמרי בחסד דבריאה, מחיה עולם הזה הגשמי

just as on the festivals, when Chesed of *Atzilut*, which is completely clothed in *Chesed* of *Beriah*, vivifies this physical world

על ידי מעבר חסד דיצירה ועשיה

by passing through the *Chesed* of *Yetzirah* and of *Asiyah*,

הנקרא גם כן התלבשות

this [passage] is also called investment,^{[64](#)}

שאם לא כן, לא היה פועל בגשמיות עולם הזה

for otherwise it would not affect the physicality of This World.

Thus, just as with regard to the festivals, though the animating light first passes through *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* it is still considered to be an illumination of *Chesed* of *Beriah*, so too with regard to the laws: The light within the laws merely “passes through” the physicality with which they deal; it always retains a radiation of Supreme Wisdom.

ואף שגשמיות עולם הזה ודאי מסתיר לגמרי אפילו החסד דעשיה

Now though the physicality of This World as discussed in the law unquestionably conceals completely even the *Chesed* of *Asiyah* — and surely, then, it conceals the diffusion of Supreme Wisdom,

מכל מקום ההלכה עצמה אינה גשמיות ממש

still the law proper is not actually physical;

שהיא בחינת רצון, הנמשך מחכמה עילאה, להקל או להחמיר

it is the Divine Will, drawn from the Supreme Wisdom, for leniency or severity.

G-d's wisdom affirms that it be His will that a particular legal ruling be either lenient or strict.

רק שיוורד ומאיר בבחינת גילוי בגשמיות, כמים היורדים ממקום גבוה כו'

It is only that this [Will] descends and illuminates in revealed fashion in the realm of the physical, just as water descends from a high place, and so on.

It is the very same water that is now to be found in a low place.

והדבר הגשמי עצמו, שבו מדברת ההלכה, באמת הוא מסתיר לגמרי

The physical object itself which the law discusses does, in fact, utterly obscure,

כמו המחליף פרה בחמור, וכן בשר הפיגול, או לא פיגול וכשר

as, for example, in the law of [65](#) “one who exchanges a cow for a donkey,” or the laws concerning flesh that is *pigul*, or is not *pigul* and is kosher.

The actual cow or donkey or flesh do in fact completely conceal the radiance from the Supreme Wisdom.

In contrast, it was stated above that when holding a physical *etrog* one is grasping the G-dly essence of *Atzilut*. The difference lies in the fact that the *etrog* is part of the *mitzvah*. As such, it has no identity other than G-dliness and thus does not conceal it. Since, by contrast, the physical cow or donkey are not part of the law, they can conceal G-dliness. With regard to the human intellect, however, which studies this law, since the “intellectual” cow and donkey are part of the law, they in fact do not act as a concealment.

רק ההלכה בעצמה, עם הטעם הנגלה, היא מבחינת מלכות דבריה ויצירה דבחינת נשמה

Only the legal ruling itself with its revealed rationale are from *Malchut* of *Beriah* (i.e., the reasoning of the *Gemara*) and of *Yetzirah* (i.e., the rulings of the *Mishnah*), of the state of *Neshamah*,

שהוא אלקות, המחיה ומהוה נפש רוח דבריאה יצירה עשיה

which is G-dliness that vivifies and brings into being the *Nefesh-Ruach* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* which are in the category of created beings,

שהן דחילו ורחימו של המלאכים והנשמות וחב"ד שלהם, מאין ליש

and which are the awe and love of angels and souls and their *ChaBaD*, i.e., the contemplation of G-d's greatness that leads to love and fear; — all this is created and vivified *ex nihilo*, as are all created beings.

ולכן הוא מרוה צמאונם

As to this radiation of Supreme Wisdom that descends through *Malchut* of *Beriah* and *Yetzirah*, in the form of Torah as it is found in those worlds prior to its descent below, it therefore slakes [the] thirst of the souls and angels in the Worlds of *Beriah* and *Yetzirah*,

קודם שירדה לעולם הזה, כמים היורדים כו'

before its descent into This World like descending waters....[66](#)

וגם אחר שירדה לעשיה, היא למעלה מעלה מבחינת חכמה בינה דעת דעשיה, אפילו דבחינת נשמה, שהיא אלקות

Even after it descends into *Asiyah*, it transcends by far *ChaBaD* of *Asiyah*, even of the state of *Neshamah*, which is G-dliness.

For this is G-dliness of *Asiyah*, while the illumination of Supreme Wisdom within the laws is the G-dliness of *Atzilut*.

והטעם: משום דחב"ד דעשיה דבחינת נשמה, הוא מקור החיות דחב"ד דנפש רוח

The reason for this transcendence is that the *ChaBaD* of *Asiyah* of the state of *Neshamah* is the source of life of *ChaBaD* of *Nefesh-Ruach*

ותולדותיהן והתהוותן מאין ליש עם תולדותיהן, עד סוף העשיה, היא הארץ וכל צבאה

and their offspring, and their coming into being *ex nihilo* with their offspring, unto the ultimate stage of *Asiyah*, namely the earth and all its hosts.

The *ChaBaD* of *Asiyah* (in the state of *Neshamah*) is thus a source for created beings.

אבל חב"ד דהלכות ושעמיהן, שבמלכות דבריאה ויצירה

But as to the *ChaBaD* of the laws with their rationales, that are in *Malchut* of *Beriah* and *Yetzirah*,

This level of *ChaBaD* is not a source of created beings; rather:

ענין החכמה היא בתיקון פרצופי האצילות

the function of the *Chochmah* [within them] is the rectification of the visages of *Atzilut*,

שבהן תלוין כל טעמי המצות

upon which are dependent all the rationales of the commandments —

מצות עשה בה' חסדים, ומצות לא תעשה בה' גבורות

[the rationales of] the positive commandments [depend] on the five attributes of Kindness of *Za* of *Atzilut*, and [the rationales of] the prohibitions in the five attributes of Severity of *Za* of *Atzilut*.

ומשום הכי נמי כשירדו להתלבש בנבראים

Therefore, even when they descended to be clothed in created beings,

Even when the rationales for the laws, that essentially derive from visages of *Atzilut*, descended to become rationales for laws for created beings, —

הן במלכות דבריא ויצירה, דבחינת נשמה דוקא, שהוא מכלים דאצילות

they are in *Malchut* of *Beriah* and *Yetzirah* of the specific [G-dly] state of *Neshamah*, which is of the vessels of *Atzilut* — for the thirty vessels of *Zu"n* of *Atzilut* become a *Neshamah* for *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*,

ולא בבחינת נפש רוח

and not of the degree of *Ruach* and *Nefesh*; the rationales for the laws did not vest themselves within *Ruach* and *Nefesh*, which are created beings.

ואף דחב"ד דבריא ויצירה דבחינת נשמה, שגבהה מאד מעלתן על בחינת מלכות דבריא ויצירה דנשמה

Now though *ChaBaD* of *Beriah-Yetzirah* of the state of *Neshamah* by far transcend *Malchut* of *Beriah-Yetzirah* of the state of *Neshamah*, for *ChaBaD* is the highest of the *Sefirot* of the world, while *Malchut* is the lowest,

ואף על פי כן, הן מקור לחב"ד דבריא ויצירה של בחינת נפש רוח, שהן המלאכים

still, [the *ChaBaD* of *Beriah* and *Yetzirah*] are the source for *ChaBaD* of *Beriah-Yetzirah* of the state of *Nefesh-Ruach*, namely the angels.

How do we then say that *Malchut* of *Beriah* and *Yetzirah* of the state of *Neshamah* cannot descend to become a source for created beings, when *ChaBaD* of *Beriah* and *Yetzirah* of the state of *Neshamah* that is far loftier than *Malchut* does serve as a source for created beings?

לא קשיא מיד

This is not a question at all.

דבאמת המלאכים והנשמות אינן אלא מטפה הנמשכת מחב"ד דנשמה ליסוד ז"א, וניתן לנוקבא

For in truth, the angels and souls that are created of *ChaBaD* of *Beriah* and *Yetzirah* are only of a drop drawn from *ChaBaD* of the *Neshamah* to the attribute of *Yesod* of *Za*, and then transmitted to *nukva*, i.e., to *Malchut*,

ומשם יצאו בבחינת לידה

and from there they (the souls and angels) went forth in a state of “birth” — a new entity resulted.

Thus, this is not a mere emanation from *ChaBaD*, as is the case with laws, for such an emanation cannot in fact serve as a source of created beings. Rather, it resembles the drop that brings about a birth. For this reason it is possible that created beings should result even from *ChaBaD* of *Beriah* and *Yetzirah*.

כי אף אם תמצוי לומר שנבראו מהארת הכלים דנוקבא דאצילות, הרי הם היוורדים ונעשים נשמה

For even if it is proposed that they are created from the radiance of the vessels of *nukva* of *Atzilut*, nevertheless, they themselves descend into *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* and become *Neshamah* unto them.

אבל עצמות חב"ד דנשמה מתפשט בו' קצוות דזו"ן

But the essence of *ChaBaD* of *Neshamah* extends into the “six directions” of *Zu”n*,

ושם הם שיתא סדרי משנה וגמרא

and there they are the Six Orders of *Mishnah* and the *Gemara* — the laws of the Torah.

The essence of *ChaBaD* thus descends specifically within the laws of the Torah, which are Divinity. Torah, in turn, descends within the level of *Neshamah*, which is also Divinity.

ומה שכתוב בעץ חיים ושער היחודים שעל ידי הכוונה נעשה לבוש נשמה

As to the statement in *Etz Chayim*⁶⁷ (and in *Shaar HaYichudim*⁶⁸) that through intention a *Neshamah*-garment is formed,

ועל ידי התורה: לבוש רוח דרוח דיצירה על ידי משנה, ורוח דנשמה דבריאה על ידי הגמרא

and through Torah study, a *Ruach*-of-*Ruach* garment of *Yetzirah* is formed through [the study of] *Mishnah*, which derives from *Yetzirah*, and a *Ruach*-of-*Neshamah* [garment] of *Beriah* [is formed] through *Gemara*, which derives from *Beriah*:

It would thus seem that Torah precipitates a garment of *Ruach*, which is a created being.

יש לומר דהיינו דוקא על ידי תורת האדם בעולם הזה, העולה למעלה

This can be understood as referring only to Torah studied by man in This World as it ascends above; it then becomes a garment of *Ruach*, since it derives from created man.

אבל התלמוד עצמו, שניתן בסיני, הוא בנשמה

But the Talmud itself that was given at Sinai, i.e., the Torah as it was given from above, is at the level of *Neshamah*, which is a degree of Divinity.

ולכן הוא מברר הרוח

Therefore it (the study of the *Talmud*) refines *Ruach*.

וכן במשנה דיצירה

So too with *Mishnah* of *Yetzirah*: as it was given from above at Sinai, it too is of the degree of *Neshamah*.

ואף אם תמצוי לומר שגם הניתן מסיני הוא ברוח דבריאה יצירה

Even if it be suggested that even what was given from above at Sinai is at the level of *Ruach* of *Beriah*-*Yetzirah*,

Even so, it is not like an independent created entity, but rather like an emissary, who merely expresses the power of his principal.

הרי נודע שכל מלאך שהוא שליח מלמעלה, אזי נקרא בשם ה' ממש, השוכן בקרבו

it is known that every angel that is an emissary from above, is literally called at that time by the Name of G-d, which then dwells within him.

מה שאין כן כשאנו שליח, יש לו שם אחר כפי עבודתו

However, when he is not a messenger, he has some other name according to his manner of service.

ואזי קורא: קדוש קדוש קדוש ה' כו'

Then he proclaims,⁶⁹ “Holy, holy, holy is G-d...,”

כלומר ששם ה' מובדל ממנו

meaning that the Name of G-d is separate from him, for the word *kadosh* (“holy”) implies separateness.

We thus see that it is entirely possible for a created being to be called by the name of actual Divinity.

וכן הוא ממש בבחינת התלבשות התלמוד בבחינת רוח דבריה, והמשנה ברוח דיצירה

Exactly this is the case with the investment of the Talmud in the *Ruach* state of *Beriah*, and the *Mishnah* in the *Ruach* of *Yetzirah*, *Ruach* being a created being:

הם שלוחי ה', דהיינו כלים דנוקבא דאצילות

they are messengers of G-d, meaning vessels of *nukva* (*Malchut*) of *Atzilut*;

החיצונים בתלמוד, והאמצעים במשנה

the external vessels in *Talmud*, and the intermediate vessels in *Mishnah*.

אשר המשנה והתלמוד שבהם נמשכים מיסוד אבא, המקבל מחכמה סתימאה דאריך אנפין, שבו מלובש אור אין סוף ברוך הוא

For the *Mishnah* and *Talmud* that are within them (i.e., within the *Ruach* of *Beriah* and *Yetzirah*) issue from *Yesod* of *Abba* (i.e., of *Chochmah*), which receives influence from *Chochmah Stimaah* of *Arich Anpin* (i.e., from *Chochmah* of *Keter*), in which is clothed the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light.

ונמצא שאור אין סוף, הוא שם ה', שוכן ברוח דבריה יצירה עשיה, במקרא ומשנה ותלמוד

The result is that the infinite light, namely the Name of G-d, abides in the *Ruach* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, in Scripture, *Mishnah* and *Talmud*.

וכשהאדם לומד, ממשיך אור אין סוף ברוך הוא בעולם הזה

And when a man studies [them], he draws forth the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light into This World,

להיות נכלל ובטל באורו יתברך

so that it will be incorporated and nullified in the Divine light.

כי זה כל האדם

For this is all of man.[70](#)

The entire purpose of man's creation is to make the world become nullified in G-d's light. And this is accomplished through Torah study.

וזאת היתה עבודת רבי שמעון בר יוחאי וכל התנאים ואמוראים בנגלה

This was the spiritual service of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and of all the *tannaim* and *amoraim* who studied the revealed aspect of the Torah —

להמשיך אורו יתברך, ולברר בירורי נוגה

to call forth the Divine light within this world, and to effect the purifications of *kelipat nogah*,

כל משך זמן הגלות, דשלטא אילנא דטוב ורע

throughout the entire period of the exile, the time of dominion of the Tree of Good and Evil, for the life-force of this world derives from *kelipat nogah*, which is composed of both good and evil;

כמו שכתוב: עת אשר שלט האדם באדם כו'

as the verse states,[71](#) “The time that [the evil] man dominates the man [of holiness].”

כי זהו תכלית ההשתלשלות

For this is the ultimate purpose of the chain of descent which brings the worlds into being —

שירד העלון למטה, ויהיה לו דירה בתחתונים

that the One Above descend, and that there be a dwelling for Him among the nethermost creatures,

כדי להעלותן, למהוי אחד באחד

in order to elevate them, so that there be “one in one” — that the “one” of the lower level of Unity (*yichuda tata'ah*) of the Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* be similar to the “one” of the higher level of Unity (*yichuda ila'ah*).

מה שאין כן עבודת המלאכים, דחילו ורחימו שכליים, אינה בבחינת המשכה כלל וכלל, רק הסתלקות כו'

In contrast, the spiritual service of the angels with intellectual fear and love does not call forth G-dliness [within the world] at all; rather it is a mode of departure alone..., for they are in a state of longing and self-nullification to G-dliness.

The true intention of creation is that G-dliness be drawn down below, not a state of departure.

ובזה יובן מה שנבראים מלאכים מאין ליש על ידי עסק התורה, אפילו שלא בכוונה

Thus we may understand how angels are created *ex nihilo* through the study of the Torah, even without proper intent,

שהוא בחינת רוח בלבד, שאינה אלקות כלל

when [such study] is only in a state of *Ruach*, which is not Divinity at all.

The intended state is *Neshamah*, which is Divinity. However, when the *kavanah* is lacking, and one's study is merely at the level of *Ruach*, how are angels created *ex nihilo*, when such creation derives only from Divinity?

אלא לפי שאף על פי כן, שם ה' שוכן וכו'

Still, nevertheless, i.e., even though these words of Torah are studied without proper intent, the Name of G-d does dwell [within them].

As explained earlier, even a created angel is called by the Divine Name at the time that he is carrying out his mission, because at that time G-d abides within him. So, too, since G-d abides within the words of the Torah, angels can be created *ex nihilo*.

ודי למבין

This will suffice for the understanding.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Bereishit Rabbah* 3:9. [2.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "Examine there, *Shaar* 1, ch. 7." [3.](#) *Peah* 1:1. [4.](#) *Peah* 1:1. [5.](#) From the Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar* which begins, *Patach Eliyahu*. [6.](#) Cf. *Yeshayahu* 55:10. [7.](#) Cf. *Yeshayahu* 55:10. [8.](#) The Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, beginning of sec. 641, and sources cited there. [9.](#) *Devarim* 6:5. [10.](#) *Shabbat* 10a. [11.](#) *Shabbat* 10a. [12.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "As above: through Torah and mitzvot one draws down the Divine Intellect (*mochin*) and so on, within the Ten *Sefirot* of *Za*." [13.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "See *Or HaTorah* by the *Tzemach Tzedek* on *Bereishit*, Vol. III, p. 471, *et al.*" [14.](#) See *Etz Chayim, Shaar Kitzur ABiYA*, ch. 4. [15.](#) Note of the Rebbe: "*Zohar* III, 129a." [16.](#) *Sotah* 14a. [17.](#) *Moed Katan* 9a. [18.](#) *Yechezkel* 1. [19.](#) *Devarim* 11:22. [20.](#) Cf. *Sotah* 14a *et al.* [21.](#) *Bereishit* 18:27. [22.](#) *Bereishit Rabbah* 47:6; *Tanya* ch. 23. [23.](#) *Bereishit* 2:9. [24.](#) *Yeshayahu* 6:3. [25.](#) Vol. IV in the present series, p.

376. [26.](#) *Shmot* 33:22. [27.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Examine *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle 19 [above].” [28.](#) The brackets are in the original text. [29.](#) The Rebbe explains that here the prefix ב in בנפשו does not mean “in his soul,” but “through his soul” (as in the verse, ויקח בידו — “He took by means of his hand”). [30.](#) The parentheses are in the original text. [31.](#) *Shmot* 33:22. [32.](#) The parentheses are in the original text. [33.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Cf. the Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim*, beginning of sec. 98; *Hilchot Talmud Torah* 4:9.” [34.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Possibly the intent is p. 116b ff.” [35.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “At its conclusion. This requires some examination, for there the text makes a point of enumerating *seven* [species].” [36.](#) The parentheses are in the original text. [37.](#) *Avot* 5:1. [38.](#) The closing parenthesis has been relocated according to the Table of Glosses and Emendations. [39.](#) See *Iggeret HaKodesh*, beginning of Epistle 20 (above). [40.](#) *Vayikra* 7:37. [41.](#) *Menachot* 110a. [42.](#) Current Hebrew editions of *Tanya* read, “a great (רבה) and exalted *mitzvah*,” which the Rebbe amends to read (as above) “a lofty (רמה) and exalted *mitzvah*.” This is how the phrase is quoted (and explained) in *Likkutei Torah* on *Vayikra*, in the discourse entitled *VeLo Tashbit*. [43.](#) *Devarim* 4:39. [44.](#) *I Divrei HaYamim* 28:9. [45.](#) *Devarim* 6:24. [46.](#) *Tikkunei Zohar*, end of *Tikkun* 6; discussed in *Likkutei Sichot*, Vol. XV, p. 42ff. et al. [47.](#) *Bereishit* 36:31. [48.](#) *Devarim* 8:3. [49.](#) *Bereishit* 1:26. [50.](#) *Shevuot* 48a, and sources cited there. [51.](#) *Tanya*, ch. 2. [52.](#) *Shmot* 30:23. [53.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “On the forthcoming text see *Or HaTorah, Parshat Acharei*, p. 549ff.” [54.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Inspection of the manuscripts of Kuntres Acharon is required, for it appears that the text is incomplete and should read as follows: ‘...and equally in the case of *Nefesh-Ruach-Neshamah* and the vessels of *Beriah, Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*...in the vessels of *Beriah, Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, in the state of...’ However, *Or HaTorah* gives the text as above.” [55.](#) The brackets are in the original text. [56.](#) P. 249a. [57.](#) *Shaar HaShabbat*, ch. 7 of the Introduction, et al. [58.](#) *Devarim* 3:23; *Devarim Rabbah* 11:9. [59.](#) *Bereishit* 1:11. [60.](#) *Kiddushin* 39b. [61.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “See *Or HaTorah, Parshat Shemini*, p. 462ff.” [62.](#) *Bava Metzia* 100a. [63.](#) *Tehillim* 104:24. [64.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “See *Or HaTorah, Parshat Shemini*, p. 470ff.” [65.](#) *Bava Metzia* 100a. [66.](#) *Taanit* 7a. [67.](#) *Shaar* 49, ch. 5. [68.](#) Ch. 2. [69.](#) *Yeshayahu* 6:3. [70.](#) *Kohelet* 12:13. [71.](#) *Ibid.* 8:9; see above, *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle XXV.



Essay 5

The *mitzvot* requiring action were a major theme in Essay IV. There the Alter Rebbe explained how their observance extricates and elevates the sparks of holiness that originated in the World of *Tohu* and that are embedded in this material world, and thereby causes G-dliness to descend there. The same, it was stated, is true regarding the study of the laws that govern the *mitzvot*.

The Alter Rebbe went on to say that this applies as well to the prohibitory *mitzvot*, where one cannot apply the dictum that “it is considered as if one performed the command.”

Moreover, Torah study remains valuable even with regard to the laws concerning situations that will never occur, even though there too we cannot say that “if one remained passive and did not transgress, he is rewarded as if he had performed a *mitzvah*.” Nevertheless, even in such cases, a Torah law draws down Supernal Wisdom within the world.

In the Essay before us, the Alter Rebbe will state that although it would seem that purifications (*beirurim*) cannot be brought about when studying these types of laws (for one only draws down Supernal Wisdom), yet in point of fact, purifications do come about through this Torah study. Moreover, the reason for this is *not* that the Torah study leads one to observe a positive commandment or to refrain from transgressing a prohibition; nor is it that by virtue of his study he is regarded “as if” he performed the positive commandment or is rewarded for refraining from transgressing a prohibition.

ולהבין פרטי ההלכות דלא שכיחי כלל

Let us understand [how this applies to] the details of the laws that never occur at all,

ואפשר שלא היו מעולם במציאות

and possibly never actually existed,

מכל שכן שלא יהיו לעתיד לבא

and certainly will not come to pass in the Time to Come;

כמו פרטי דיני פיגול, וכהאי גוונא

for example, the detailed laws of *pigul*¹ and the like.

How does the study of these laws extract, refine and elevate the sparks of *Tohu*?

הנה מודעת זאת שכל איסור שבעולם יש לו שרש ומקור חיים בקליפות

It is known that every prohibited thing in the world has a source and a root of life in the *kelipot*.

שאם לא כן, לא היה יכול להיות במציאות בעולם, בלתי השפעה עליונה

Otherwise, it could not exist in this world, without the flow from above, i.e., without receiving vitality from a spiritual source.

ואפילו המסלסל בשערו, וכהאי גוונא, מקבל חיותו ברגע זו מהיכלות הקליפות, כמו שכתוב בזהר

Even one who crinkles his hair, and the like, receives his life-force at that moment from the spiritual chambers of the *kelipot*, as is explained in the *Zohar*.²

והלכך גם פרטי האיסורים שלא באו לידי מעשה מעולם, בעולם הזה הגשמי

Therefore even the particular prohibitions that never became practical issues in this physical world,

מכל מקום שרשי חיותם הן במציאות בפועל ממש בהיכלות הקליפות

still the roots of their life-force do actually exist in the spiritual chambers of the kelipot.

וגם הפרטים שיוכל להיות שלא היו ולא יהיו לעולם במציאות

Even the particular instances that possibly never did and never will actually occur,

כגון טעות ושגגות, שטעה וקרא לתשיעי עשירי כו', וכהאי גוונא

for example errors and unwitting misdeeds, like (when tithing) erroneously calling the ninth [sheep] the tenth,³ and the like,

דלא שייך במזיד, להיות קליפה שורה על זה

the kind of eventuality that cannot be deliberate and thereby cause a kelipah to light upon it.

ויוכל להיות דכהאי גוונא אינו במציאות בהיכלות הקליפות

Possibly in these circumstances it does not exist in the chambers of the *kelipot*.

How, then, does it possess a source and root in the *kelipot*?

דלא אלמא, להיות ויוכל שכתב מה לי נראה: עדן נשמתו, לברכה זכרוננו, צדק צמח בעל מאדמו"ר הגה"ה דנוגה בהיכלות שרש להם דיש לומר יש כן אם, מנוגה באות שהשגגות משום היינו, ליה ברירא

[⁴Note inserted by the Tzemach Tzedek, of blessed memory: It appears to me that the Alter Rebbe uses the word “possibly”, implying uncertainty, because unwitting errors derive from *nogah*. It may therefore be said that their origin is in the chambers of *nogah*.]

מכל מקום, על כל פנים ישנו במציאות, להבדיל, בחכמה עילאה שנתפשטה בפרט זה למשה רבנו, עליו השלום, בסיני

In any event, it does exist if not in kelipot, then at least — keeping in mind the distinction between the sacred and the profane — in the Supreme Wisdom that issued and descended in this detail to Moses at Sinai,

כמאמר: מה שכל תלמיד ותיק עתיד לחדש כו'

[5]as in the expression,6 “Whatever teaching] any seasoned student will one day innovate... [was taught to Moses at Sinai].”

וכל פרטי האבעיות דרבי ירמיה

Likewise, all the detailed queries of R. Yirmeyah, who posed so many hypothetical possibilities that he was escorted from the House of Study, as the *Gemara* relates,7

Obviously, his queries involved situations that were entirely unlikely to ever take place.8

וכרכתו כו', פרק ד' דחולין

and [detailed queries such as] “If she wrapped him...,” in ch. 4 of *Chullin*.9

The question discussed there is whether a firstborn animal can be considered to have directly “opened the womb” (and hence be sanctified) in either of two hypothetical cases. According to *Rashi*, it is a question of what happens if the person assisting in the birth entirely wraps up the animal as it is born. According to *Rabbeinu Tam*, the question involves a multiple birth, with a cow being born together with the firstborn bull, and wrapping itself completely around it — something extremely unlikely to ever occur.

Nevertheless, all these detailed queries were given to Moses at Sinai.

כי התפשטות חכמה עילאה היא בחינת אין סוף, המלוּבש בה בפועל ממש

For the extension of the Supreme Wisdom that is vested in the laws of Torah is infinite, since the Infinite is actually clothed in it.

וכל פרט הלכה הוא שער נמשך מחכמה עילאה

Every particular of the law is a gate drawn from the Supreme Wisdom

דיסד ברתא, ומלוּבש בה

which “founded the daughter,” and is clothed in it,

Chochmah (the “father”) founded *Malchut* (the “daughter”). “*Malchut* is the mouth, which we call the Oral Torah.”10 *Chochmah*, then, is clothed in the laws of the Oral Torah as they are to be found in their source in *Malchut* of *Atzilut*.

וממנה נמשך, ומתלבש בבריאה יצירה עשיה

and from [*Malchut*], [*Chochmah*] is drawn and invested in *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*.

The Alter Rebbe will now conclude by explaining how this brings about the refinement of the sparks.

ונודע כי יניקת הקליפות, מאחוריים דיו"ד ספירות דקדושה

It is known that the nurture of the *kelipot* derives from the hinderpart of the Ten *Sefirot* of holiness,

ובפרט, מלבושים דיו"ד ספירות דבריא דיצירה עשיה

and more precisely, from the garments of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*,

ובפרט, דיצירה ועשיה המעורבים בקליפות

and yet more precisely, [they derive their nurture from the garments] of *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* that are intermingled with *kelipot*,

The evil of the *kelipot* in the Worlds of *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* is intermingled with the good.

כנודע שיניקתם מבחינת הלבושים

for, as is known, their nurture derives from the state of garments.

ועל ידי עסק ההלכות בדבור ומחשבה, מתפרשים ומתפרדים מהקדושה

Through the study of the laws, in speech and in thought, they become separated¹¹ and distinct from the sacred.

כמו שכתוב בתיקונים ורעיא מהימנא: לאפרשא כו'

Thus it is stated in *Tikkunim* and *Raya Mehemna*,¹² "To separate [¹³etc.] [the *kelipot* from holiness through Torah study]."

How does Torah study accomplish the separation and refinement of the *kelipot*, when the issue of Supernal Wisdom originally in Torah was unable to effect this, and there came about the admixture of good and evil in the Worlds of *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*?

והיינו כנודע ממה שאמרו: על שלא ברכו בתורה תחלה כו'

This accords with what is known concerning the teaching of our Sages¹⁴ (in answer to the prophet's query,¹⁵ "Why was the land destroyed?"): "For they did not recite the blessing before Torah study...."

The inner meaning of this is that the people of those times failed to draw down the infinite light into their study of the Torah (for ברך, the root of the word in the Holy Tongue that means "blessing", signifies "drawing down"). Evil cannot be separated from good by the Torah alone: it must be studied in the proper manner.

שהוא על ידי המשכת אור אין סוף בחכמה עילאה המלובשת בהן

This [separation] is effected by drawing down the infinite light into the Supreme Wisdom clothed in them, in the laws of the Torah.

ובחכמה איתברירו, באור אין סוף שבה

Through *Chochmah* they are sorted out — through the infinite light that is within it, i.e., within *Chochmah*.

This is equally true regarding the study of the laws of prohibitory commands, even those that most probably will never occur. For the Torah study itself accomplishes this purification.

והמשכה זו נעשה על ידי דיוקן העליון של האדם, העוסק גם כן בהלכות אלו למעלה

This [light] is drawn into the Supreme Wisdom by the supernal “likeness” of man, who is also occupied with these laws above,

When a man studies Torah below, his source above engages in Torah study as well.

בשרשו בנוקבא דז"א דבריאה יצירה עשיה

in its source in *nukva* of *Za* of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*.

ובזה יובן חיוב כל נפש רוח נשמה להשלים כל התרי"ג, במחשבה דבור ומעשה

Thus we can understand the requirement¹⁶ that every *Nefesh-Ruach-Neshamah* fulfill all 613 commandments in thought, speech and deed,

שהן פרטי ההלכות

meaning the details of the laws, for thought and speech refer to the study of all these details.

וצריכות לבא בגלגול להשלים התורה בפשט, רמז, דרוש, סוד

They (any *Nefesh-Ruach-Neshamah* that failed to complete a previous mission in this world) must be reincarnated to fulfill the Torah — in its simple meaning, allusions, homiletics and secrets,¹⁷

כדי לברר כל הברורין הנוגעים להם מכל הרפ"ח, שהיא קומת אדם שלמה

in order to sort out and refine all that pertains to them from among the 288 sparks that constitute the complete structure of man,

תרי"ג בחינות כלליות ופרטיות

with the 613 categories, general and particular, that relate to each soul.

אבל לעתיד לבא, כשיושלם הבירור, יהיה עסק התורה בבחינת עשה טוב לבד

But in the Time to Come, when the refinement is culminated, the study of Torah will be in the form of “do good” alone, and no longer in order to separate good from evil.

להעלות הנפש רוח נשמה מעלה מעלה עד אין סוף

[Its purpose will be] to elevate the *Nefesh-Ruach-Neshamah* ever and infinitely higher;

וגם בשם"ה לא תעשה, בשרשן למעלה, שהן גבורות קדושות

and also, with regard to [the study of] the 365 prohibitions, [to elevate them] to their source, the holy attributes of Severity,

ולהמתקן בחסדים ברמ"ח מצות עשה, ולכללן יחד

and to “sweeten” them through the attributes of Kindness that are in the 248 positive commandments, and to fuse them — the attributes of Severity with the attributes of Kindness.

ועל כן התורה כולה נצחית בכללה ובפרטה

The entire Torah is thus eternal in general and in detail.

I.e., including even all the detailed laws that have no practical application at all in the Time to Come.

שגם פרטי ההלכות דשם"ה לא תעשה, הן הן ענפים מהכללות

For even the individual laws of the 365 prohibitions are branches of the Torah’s general statements.

ויש לכולם שרש למעלה, בה' גבורות דקדושה

All of them have a source above in the five holy attributes of Severity,

כמו השם"ה לא תעשה עצמן שהן למעלה, בחינת הדם המחיה האברים דכלים דז"א

just as the 365 prohibitions themselves as they are above, in the state of “blood” that animates the organs of the vessels of *Za*.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Vayikra* 7:18; *Zevachim* 29a. [2.](#) See *Zohar* I, 166b. [3.](#) *Bechorot* 59a. [4.](#) The brackets are in the original text. [5.](#) The brackets are in the original text. [6.](#) Cf. *Megillah* 19b; *Yerushalmi*, *Peah* 2:4; *et al.* [7.](#) *Bava Batra* 23b. [8.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “But

see also *Tosafot* [which gives a different reason for his being asked to leave]. See also p. 165b there [where the *Gemara* states that R. Yirmeyah was reinstated in the House of Study because of problems which he solved]. Moreover, the *Acharonim* note that most of his queries remained unresolved.” [9](#). P. 70a. [10](#). *Tikkunei Zohar*, in the Introduction which begins, *Patach Eliyahu*. [11](#). Emended according to *Luach HaTikkun* of the Rebbe. [12](#). See *Zohar* III, 11b; 27b. [13](#). The brackets are in the original text. [14](#). *Nedarim* 81a. [15](#). *Yirmeyahu* 9:11. [16](#). Note of the Rebbe: “See also above, *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle XXIX; the Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, *Hilchot Talmud Torah* [1:4, and sources cited there].” [17](#). In the Heb. original, the last four words are abbreviated to פֶּרֶדֶס — “In the Pardess” (lit., “orchard” of the Torah).

Essay 6

The last two Essays explained how the observance of the commandments seeks out the exiled sparks hidden in this world and thereby suffuses it with G-dliness. They also pointed out that the same is true of the study of their laws. The present Essay goes one step further, and explains that the laws of the Torah transcend the world beyond any possible comparison.

When David triumphantly brought back the Ark from its captivity in the hands of the Philistines,[1](#) it was placed on a wagon. David had momentarily forgotten the stipulation of the Torah,[2](#) “On the shoulder shall they carry it.” Commenting on this episode, our Sages[3](#) teach that David’s forgetfulness came as a punishment for his having referred to the laws of the Torah as “songs”:[4](#) “Your statutes were songs for me in my place of terror.”

Why should this expression be regarded as an offense? And in what way is it related to its punishment?

These are among the questions discussed in the Essay before us, and at greater length in *Likkutei Torah* and *Or HaTorah*, and in *Derech Mitzvotcha*, *Mitzvat Masa HaAron BaKatef*.

דוד, זמירות קרית להו כו'

“David! You call them songs?!”[5](#)

Because he had referred to the laws of the Torah as “songs”, David was punished by being made to[6](#) “stumble in a matter that even schoolchildren know” — that the Ark is to be carried on the shoulders.

הנה בזהר: שבחא דאורייתא ורננה כו'

In the *Zohar*⁷ we find the expression, “the praise of Torah and its song” — the Torah is a hymn and a song to G-d.

ולהבין מהו השבח להקב"ה, כשזה אסור או מותר

Let us understand, what is the praise of G-d when a particular object is forbidden or permitted.⁸

הנה הוא על דרך: מה גדלו מעשיך ה', מאד עמקו מחשבותיך

A similar concept is implicit [in the verse],⁹ “How great are Your works, O G-d, Your thoughts are very deep.”

Why does the verse make the deed precede the thought? The Alter Rebbe will soon explain that from an appreciation of G-d's great works one begins to understand the depth of His thoughts.

כי הנה נודע שכל העולמות, עליונים ותחתונים, תלויים בדקדוק מצוה אחת

As is known, all the worlds, the exalted and the lowly, are dependent on the meticulous performance of a single *mitzvah*.

דרך משל: אם הקרבן כשר, נעשה יחוד עליון, ועולים כל העולמות לקבל חיותם ושפעם

For example, if an altar offering is valid then a Supernal Union in the *Sefirot* is effected, and all the worlds are elevated to receive their life-force and spiritual sustenance.¹⁰

ואם שינה, שקיבל הדם בשמאלו, דרך משל, או שלא בכלי שרת כשר, או שהיתה חציצה

However, if [the celebrant] altered the precise requirements of the law — if, for example, he received the blood of the offering with his left hand, or in an invalid vessel, or¹¹ if there was a separation¹² —

אזי נתבטלה עליות העולמות, וחיותם ושפעם מחיי החיים, אין סוף ברוך הוא

then all the elevations of the worlds that would have been accomplished are nullified, as is the life-force and sustenance that they would have received from the Source of Life, the *Ein Sof*, blessed be He.

וכן בתפילין כשרות, מתגלים מוחין עליונים דזו"נ, שהם מקור החיים לכל העולמות

So, too, through the use of valid *tefillin* there is revealed the Supernal Intellect of *Zu"n*, *Za* and *Malchut of Atzilut*, the source of life for all the worlds.

ובדקדוק אחד נפסל, ומסתלקין המוחין

Yet through [the omission of] one required detail they are invalidated, and the Intellect departs.

וכהאי גוונא בדקדוקי מצות לא תעשה

The same applies to the detailed requirements of the prohibitory commandments — a single detail affects all the worlds.

והלכך המתבונן מה גדלו מעשי ה' שבריבוי העולמות וכל צבאם

Let one therefore ponder how great are the works of G-d in the multiplicity of worlds and all their hosts,

ואיך כולם בטלים במציאות, לגבי דקדוק אחד מדקדוקי התורה

and how all of these are literally null, relative to any one of the specific requirements of the Torah,

שהוא עומק מחשבה העליונה וחכמתו יתברך

for it is the profundity of the Supreme thought and the Divine wisdom.

אשר בדקדוק קל, עולים כל העולמות ומקבלים חיותם ושפעם, או להיפך, חס ושלום

For through [the observance of] one minor specification, all the worlds ascend and receive their life-force and spiritual sustenance — or the reverse, G-d forbid.

In the case of a detailed requirement of a prohibitory commandment, transgression brings about (G-d forbid) a descent in all the worlds.

ומזה נתבונן גדולת עומק מחשבתו יתברך, שהוא בבחינת בלי גבול ותכלית

From this we may ponder the prodigious profundity of G-d's thought, which is boundless and endless,

ומעלתה לאין קץ ותכלית על מעלות חיות כל העולמות

and which infinitely transcends the vitality of all the worlds.

שכל חיותם שופע מדקדוק אחד ממנה

For their entire vivifying power issues from a minor requirement of [G-d's thought],

שהוא נמשך ממקורו, הוא עומק מחשבתו יתברך

[this requirement being] drawn from its source, namely the depth of G-d's thought that specified it.

כמו שער האדם הנמשך ממוחו, על דרך משל

Analogously, man's hair issues from his brain,

וכנודע מהתיקונים והאידרא רבה

as is known from *Tikkunei Zohar* and *Idra Rabbah*.

וזאת היתה שמחת דוד המלך, עליו השלום, שהיה מזמר ומרנן לשמח לבו בעסק התורה בעת צרתו

This was the delight of King David, may he rest in peace, as he sang to gladden his heart in his Torah study during his time of anguish.

He was overjoyed when he contemplated how the entire world is of no account, relative to one minor specific detail of the Torah.

אך מה שהיה משתבח בתהלת התורה במעלתה זו, ואמר: זמירות היו לי כו', נענש על זה

However, for extolling the Torah with this quality, saying, [13](#) “[Your statutes] were songs for me,” he was punished.

ואמר לו הקב"ה: זמירות קרית להו

G-d reproved him: [14](#) “You call them songs?!”

משום שבאמת, מעלתה זו, שכל העולמות בטלים לגבי דקדוק אחד ממנה

For indeed, this quality [of the Torah], that all the worlds are nothingness compared to one detail of it,

היא מבחינת אחוריים של עומק המחשבה

is [but] of the hinderpart, the externality, of the profound Supernal Thought.

כמו שכתוב במקום אחר בשם האריז"ל על מאמר רז"ל: נובלות חכמה שלמעלה, תורה

This is explained elsewhere [15](#) in the name of the *AriZal*, on the teaching of our Sages, [16](#) “Torah is [merely] a shade of Supernal Wisdom.”

אבל פנימית שבעומק, שהוא פנימית התורה, היא מיוחדת לגמרי באור אין סוף ברוך הוא, המלוכש בה בתכלית היחוד

However, the innermost core of the depth [of Supernal Thought], which is the innermost core of the Torah, is utterly fused with the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light that is vested within the Torah in a perfect unity.

ולגבי אין סוף ברוך הוא, כל העולמות כלא ממש, ואין ואפס ממש

Relative to the Infinite One, all the worlds are as absolute naught, sheer nothingness, nonexistent.

כי אתה הוא עד שלא נברא העולם וכו'

For¹⁷ “You were [the same] before the world was created, [You are the same since the world has been created].”

Being of absolutely no account relative to G-d, all the worlds effect no change in Him.

והלכך גם לפנימיות התורה אין לשבחה כלל בתהלת חיות כל העולמות, מאחר דלא ממש חשיבי

Hence, the internal aspect of the Torah too (which is wholly united with G-d) is not at all to be lauded as being the animating force of all the worlds, for relative to the internal aspect of the Torah they are reckoned as nothingness itself.

ובבחינת פנימיותה, אינה שמחת לבב אנוש ושעשועיו

In this inward aspect of the Torah there can be no mortal heartfelt joy and delight,

אלא, כביכול, שמחת לב ושעשוע המלך, הקב"ה, שמשתעשע בה

but rather, in a manner of speaking, the heartfelt joy and pleasure of the King, the Holy One, blessed be He, Who delights in it.

כי אלקים הבין דרכה, וידע מקומה ומעלתה

For [only]¹⁸ “G-d understands its way, and knows its station” and quality

בידיעת עצמו, כביכול

through His self-knowledge,¹⁹ as it were; knowing Himself, he also knows the Torah that is entirely one with Him.

אבל נעלמה מעיני כל חי

This, however, is²⁰ “concealed from all mortal eyes.”

כמו שכתוב: לפני לא יראו, דהיינו בחינת פנימיותה, כמו שכתוב שם בשם האריז"ל

As it is written,²¹ “My Face — i.e., the innermost dimension of the Torah, its *pnimiyut*, as implied by the word *panim* — shall not be seen,” as is explained there²² in the name of the *AriZal*.

וזהו שאמר הכתוב: ואהיה אצלו כו' שעשועים

Hence the verse,²³ in which the Torah itself is the speaker, “I was... a delight unto Him,”

אצלו דוקא

specifically “unto *Him*.”

The order of the words in the original makes it clear that the Torah is G-d’s delight alone.

משחקת לפניו

[Likewise, in the following phrase] which describes the Torah as causing G-d delight by “playing before Him,”

לפניו דוקא, דהיינו בבחינת פנימיותה

the verse specifies the term “before Him” — *lefanav*, deriving from *panim* (“face”), which is related to *pnimiyut* (“inwardness”) — for this refers to the inwardness [of the Torah] that cavorts before the inwardness of the Infinite One.

* * *

The Alter Rebbe will now explain that this sublime level of Torah in which G-d alone delights, descends to nurture the souls of the Jewish people. For this reason the *Midrash* calls the Torah *uman* (lit., “a craftsman”), one who skillfully nurtures a young child.

ועל זה אמר: ואהיה אצלו אמן, אל תקרי אמן, אלא אומן כו'

Concerning this [innermost level of the Torah] it is written,²⁴ “I was by Him amon (‘one who is nurtured’),” [and the *Midrash* comments],²⁵ “Do not read amon, but *uman* (‘one who nurtures’).”

This sublime and innermost level of the Torah descends to nurture Jewish souls, inasmuch as they transcend the world. The world, however, is vitalized not by this level of the Torah but by its externality.

ועל בחינת אחוריים אמר: משחקת בתבל ארצו, ושעשועי את בני אדם

It is with reference to the hinderpart (the external aspect of the Torah) that it is written,²⁶ (and in this verse the Torah describes itself as) “Playing in the world, His land; and my delights are with mortal men.”

It is the external aspect of the Torah that brings delight to the world and to man.

כי התורה ניתנה בבחינת פנים ואחור

For the Torah was given in states of both inwardness and externality;

כדכתיב במגילה עפה דזכריה: והיא כתובה פנים ואחור

as it is written concerning the “flying scroll” of *Zechariah*,²⁷ “and it was written front and back.”

Panim (“face” or “front”) is the root of *pnimiyut* (“inwardness”); *achor* (“back”) is the root of *achorayim* (“hinderpart”, i.e., externality).

ולפי שתפס דוד בבחינת אחוריים

Since David seized upon [and praised] the hinderpart [of the Torah],

A term such as “songs” relates to the merely external aspect of the Torah that relates to the world and animates it.

לכך נענש בשכחה, הבאה מן בחינת אחוריים

he was punished with forgetfulness, which derives from an attitude of externality.

A person does not forget things that are truly internalized within him, but only things which remain external to him.

ונעלם ממנו לפי שעה מה שכתוב: עבודת הקדש עליהם, בכתף ישאו

He thus became momentarily oblivious to the verse concerning the Ark,²⁸ “The sacred service is their duty; on the shoulder shall they carry it” —

לחבר וליחד את הכתפיים, שהן בחינת אחוריים

in order to combine and unite the “shoulders”, which are akin to the hinderpart,

אל עבודת הקדש, היא חכמה עילאה, בבחינת פנים

with the sacred service, viz., the Supernal Wisdom, which is also called “sacred”, in a manner that reflects inwardness.

שמשם נמשכו הלוחות שבארון

For this state [of inwardness] is the source of the Tablets in the Ark,

of which the verse states,²⁹ “Written on both their sides....”

וכמו שכתוב בירושלמי דשקלים, שלא היתה בהן בחינת פנים ואחור

And as explained in the *Yerushalmi*, Tractate *Shekalim*,³⁰ [the Tablets] did not have any front (*panim*) and back (*achor*) — they were entirely *panim*, signifying *pnimiyut* (“inwardness”).

The purpose of carrying the Ark on the shoulders was thus to connect the external aspect of man with the inwardness of the Torah.

ע"י שם

Study that reference (in the *Yerushalmi*) well.

FOOTNOTES ^{1.} *II Shmuel* 6; *I Divrei HaYamim* 13. ^{2.} *Bamidbar* 7:9. ^{3.} *Sotah* 35a. ^{4.} *Tehillim* 119:54. ^{5.} *Sotah* 35a. ^{6.} *Sotah* 35a. ^{7.} *II*, 8b. ^{8.} Note of the Rebbe: “As is explicit in many sources, including *Tanya*, there are in fact *six* specific categories — *mutar* [‘permitted’], *kasher* [‘fit for use’], *tahor* [‘pure’], (and also, as in *Tanya*, end of ch. 52, *patur* [‘exempt’]?), and their respective opposites. It seems to me that the Alter Rebbe chose just these two categories [‘forbidden’ and ‘permitted’] because they embody a principle common to them all: *assur* [lit., ‘bound’] implies that something is held in the clutches of the *sitra achra* [and hence cannot be elevated to G-d], while *mutar* [lit., ‘unbound’] is so called (as in *Tanya* [ch. 7; see also ch. 8]) because a permitted thing is free to be elevated.” ^{9.} *Tehillim* 92:10. ^{10.} Note of the Rebbe: “Cf. the end of *Iggeret HaTeshuvah*.” ^{11.} The Rebbe notes that the first example is a change that relates to the person; the second is a change that relates to the vessel; while with regard to “there was a separation” the Rebbe notes that “both of the preceding stages were done without any change.” ^{12.} “Separation” (*chatzitzah*) can denote (e.g.) the intervention of a foreign body between the Kohen and (i) the vessel (*Zevachim* 24a, in the *mishnah*) or (ii) the floor (the *Gemara* there, 15b) or (iii) his vestments (*ibid.*, 19a). ^{13.} *Tehillim* 119:54. ^{14.} *Sotah* 35a. ^{15.} Note of the Rebbe: “See *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle XIX.” ^{16.} Note of the Rebbe (in *Likkutei Biurim*, Vol. I, p. 485): “*Bereishit Rabbah* 17:5 and 44:17; explained in *Etz Chayim*, *Shaar HaKlalim*, end of ch. 1, et al.” ^{17.} Text of the morning prayers, cf. *Tanna Dvei Eliyahu Rabbah*, sec. 21. ^{18.} Cf. *Iyov* 28:23. ^{19.} *Rambam*, *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 2:10. ^{20.} *Iyov* 28:21. ^{21.} *Shmot* 30:23. ^{22.} Note of the Rebbe: “See *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle XIX.” ^{23.} *Mishlei* 8:30. ^{24.} *Mishlei* 8:30. ^{25.} Beginning of *Bereishit Rabbah*. ^{26.} *Mishlei* 8:31. ^{27.} The scroll referred to in *Zechariah* 5:1-2 is the same (see *Rashi* there) as that referred to — earlier in the *Tanach* — in *Yechezkel* 2:9-10, from which the above quotation is drawn. The Rebbe notes that an explanation is needed as to why the *later* reference is quoted. ^{28.} *Bamidbar* 7:9. ^{29.} *Shmot* 32:15. ^{30.} 6:1.

Essay 7

Tzedakah, as we shall presently appreciate, sensitizes the Jew who practises it so that the superrational degree of *Chochmah* in his *Neshamah* is able to light up the innermost recesses of his heart.

As mentioned in the introduction to *Kuntres Acharon*, the Rebbe observes that this is one of several Essays that would appear to belong more logically in *Iggeret HaKodesh*. The Rebbe also notes that the subjects discussed in this essay are elaborated upon in *Likkutei Torah*, beginning of *Parshat Re'eh*, and in the *maamar* beginning *Amar R. Yehoshua ben Levi, BeChol Yom...*, which the Previous Rebbe delivered in 5688 (1928).

וצדקה כנחל איתן בעמוס, (סוף סימן ה')

It is written, "...and charity like a mighty river" ([1Amos](#), end of ch. [52](#)).

The verse begins by saying that justice should become manifest like water that gushes into revelation from the hidden depths of the earth; it goes on to say that *tzedakah* ("charity") should likewise reveal and maintain its intensity like the surging current of a mighty river (Heb.: *nachal eitan*).

פירוש:

The meaning in spiritual terms is,

כמו שנחל איתן הוא המשכה הנמשכת מבחינת איתן

that [*tzedakah*] resembles a mighty river which issues from the state of *eitan*.

"River" suggests a downward flow, in this case emanating from *Chochmah*, which is termed *eitan*.

For this word, as is known, [3](#) has three meanings: "vigor", "toughness", [4](#) and "antiquity". [5](#) All three meanings relate to the soul's element of *Chochmah*, and are reflected in the tripartite written form of the letter *yud* (commonly representing *Chochmah*), which comprises the basic point of the letter and its upper and lower tips.

This level of *eitan* (*Chochmah*) flows down into the intellectually expansive "river" called *Binah*.

שהיא בחינת נקודה בהיכלא

In this state it is known in Kabbalistic terms as [6](#) "the point in its chamber,"

This phrase can refer either (a), as above, to the seminal point of *Chochmah* being drawn into the broad chamber of *Binah*, or (b) to the essential self-nullification of the soul that derives spontaneously from *Chochmah* (which transcends the loving self-nullification that is consciously produced by the meditation exercised by *Binah*) being drawn into the innermost point of the heart — the “chamber” for the issue from *Chochmah*.

ותרין רעין וכו'

and as [7](#) “two comrades [who are inseparable].”

The continued existence of all creation depends upon the constant union in *Atzilut* of the Supernal *Sefirot* of *Chochmah* and *Binah*.

ואותיות איתן משמשות לעתיד

The letters that spell the [Hebrew] word *eitan* [each] indicate the future tense.

At a deeper level, this term thus hints at future revelation: in the Time to Come there will be a revelation of the spiritual degree called *eitan*.

פירוש: אנא עתיד לאתגליא

This means, [8](#) “I am destined to reveal myself”; that which is presently in a state of concealment is destined to become manifest in the Time to Come;

כמו שכתוב: הנה ישכיל עבדי וגו'

as it is written, [9](#) “Behold, My servant will prosper...” — i.e., in the future.

והיינו, שיתגלה אז אור אין סוף ברוך הוא ויחודו יתברך תוך פנימיות נקודת הלב

This means that at that time — with the arrival of *Mashiach*, about whom the verse states “My servant will prosper” — the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light and the Divine Unity will be revealed within the innermost point of one’s heart,

על ידי המשכת נחל איתן, הוא הארת חכמה עילאה שיאיר בפנימיות הלב

by the calling forth of the “mighty river,” which is a radiance of the Supernal Wisdom that will illuminate the inwardness of the heart,

ליבטל ביחודו יתברך בתכלית, מעומקא דלבא

so that one will be nullified utterly in the Divine Unity, from the depths of one’s heart,

אחרי הסרת הערלה מתאוות הגשמיות וכו'

after it has been cleared of the [obscuring] *orlah* of physical lusts, and so on.

When the metaphorical *orlah* (lit., “foreskin”) will then be removed (as in the verse,¹⁰ “And you shall excise the *orlah* of your heart,” and likewise,¹¹ “The L-rd your G-d will circumcise your heart”), nothing will hide the innermost core of the heart. It will then be possible for the heart to experience the utter self-nullification of the *Neshamah* to G-d, that derives from the revelation of *Chochmah* in the soul.

This essential soul-level reflects all three above-mentioned connotations of *eitan* — the resolute “vigour” of the soul’s essence, its unswerving “toughness”, and the hoary “antiquity” of this bequest to the Jewish people from the Patriarchs of old.

והנה עתה, בגלות החל הזה

At present as well, during the exile of this folk,¹²

יש גם כן עצה יעוצה, להאיר קצת אור ה' מבחינת איתן לתוך נקודת פנימיות הלב, כעין לעתיד

counsel is offered [herewith] as to how to bring a glimmer of the illumination of the light of G-d from the state of *eitan* into the innermost point of the heart, as in the Time to Come.

והיינו, על ידי שמעורר על ניצוץ אלקות שבנפשו, בחינת רחמים רבים העליונים

This is [attained] by arousing the abounding Divine mercies for the G-dly spark within one’s soul.

כי באמת, כל זמן שאין האדם זוכה שיתגלה אור ה' מבחינת איתן בנקודת פנימיות לבבו

For in truth, so long as a man does not merit the revelation of the light of G-d from the state of *eitan* in the innermost core of his heart,

ליבטל ביחודו יתברך מעומקא דלבא, עד כלות הנפש ממש

so that he becomes nullified in the Divine unity, until the very expiry of the soul,

אזי באמת יש רחמנות גדולה על הניצוץ שבנפשו

then the spark within his soul is indeed to be pitied.

כי הניצוץ נמשך מבחינת חכמה עילאה ממש

For that spark is drawn from the state of the Supernal Wisdom itself,

וכשאינו יכול להאיר מבחינתו לתוך פנימיות הלב

and when it cannot illuminate from its own state — from the state of *Chochmah* that is utterly nullified to G-d — into the innermost core of the heart,

ששם מקום גילוי הארה זו

which is the proper place for the revelation of this illumination,

הרי זה בבחינת גלות ממש

then it is really and truly in exile.

For what is exile if not the shackling of one's gifts?

ועל ידי רחמים רבים העליונים, יוצא מהגלות והשביה

Through the plentiful Supernal mercies, however, that are drawn down upon the soul, it goes out of exile and imprisonment,

ומאיר לתוך נקודת פנימיות הלב בחינת אהבה רבה זו

and illuminates the innermost core of the heart with this great love,

כנודע ממה שכתוב: ליעקב אשר פדה את אברהם

as is known from the verse,¹³ “For...Jacob who redeemed Abraham,”

וכמו שכתוב בלקוטי אמרים, פרק מ"ה

as expounded in *Likkutei Amarim*, ch. 45.

The *Midrash*¹⁴ teaches that Abraham was saved in the future merit of Jacob, who was destined to descend from him.

In spiritual terms:¹⁵ When Abraham's characteristic attribute, kindness and love, remains latent within a Jew, it is revealed and redeemed by Jacob's characteristic attribute — mercy.

Since we are speaking here of Supernal Mercy, there must first be a sufficiently vigorous “arousal from below” that will cause it to descend to this lowly world. The required arousal initiated from below must therefore spring from the palpable realities of this lowly world. In plain words, as the Alter Rebbe will now conclude, this is the practice of *tzedakah*.

ומודעת זאת כי אתערותא דלעילא, באתערותא דלתתא דוקא תליא מלתא

It is known¹⁶ that an arousal from above is specifically dependent on an arousal from below,

דהיינו, על ידי התעוררות רחמים רבים בלב רחמנים וגומלי חסדים

meaning [that the abundant mercies from above are secured] by an arousal of great mercies in the hearts of “the compassionate...and the kindly,” as Jews are characterized in the *Gemara*,¹⁷

להשפיע השפעה גשמיית, זהב וכסף וכו'

so that they bestow physical gifts of gold and silver, and the like.

ולכן פעולת הצדקה היא פעולת נחל איתן ממש

Thus the effect of *tzedakah* is actually the effect of the “mighty river” (*nachal eitan*).

For the “arousal from below” expressed by the practice of *tzedakah* draws forth the loving self-nullification of the vigorous essence (the “*eitan*”) of the soul, so that it becomes revealed — through the “river” of *Binah* — within the innermost core of man’s heart.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to write that one’s *tzedakah* should be given unstintingly, without regard for limitations. Just as a person in jeopardy spends without limit in order to save his life, so, too, should one hold one’s own G-dly soul in high regard, and give *tzedakah* boundlessly.

והנה מודעת זאת מה שכתוב: עור בעד עור, וכל אשר לאיש יתן בעד נפשו האלקית

All know the verse,¹⁸ “Skin for skin,”¹⁹ i.e., a person will protect one limb at the expense of another, “but all that a man possesses he will give for his soul” — he will give away everything in order to save his life. The Alter Rebbe adds a word to the quoted verse, so that it ends, “...for his G-dly soul.” One should be willing to forego everything for the sake of his G-dly soul,

להאירה באור החיים, אין סוף ברוך הוא

in order to illumine it with the light of life — the Infinite One, blessed be He.²⁰

FOOTNOTES ¹. Parentheses are in the original text. ². Verse 24. ³. *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5703, p. 71ff. ⁴. *Sotah* 9:5. ⁵. See I Kings 8:2 and *Targum* there. ⁶. Cf. *Zohar* I, 20a. ⁷. *Zohar* III, 4a. ⁸. See *Likkutei Torah*, *Parshat Re’eh* 18d. ⁹. *Yeshayahu* 52:13. ¹⁰. *Devarim* 10:16. ¹¹. *Ibid.* 30:6. ¹². *Ovadia* 1:20. The phrase may alternatively be translated as “this valley.” ¹³. *Yeshayahu* 29:22. Note of the Rebbe: “The verse states *beit Yaakov* (‘the house of Jacob’). However, *Sanhedrin* (19b) and *Bereishit Rabbah* (63:2) explain plainly that it is ‘Jacob who redeemed Abraham.’ The phrase is likewise

cited in many other sources. Indeed, this too is the meaning in the continuation of this very verse (quoted in *Sanhedrin*, *loc. cit.*, and elsewhere): ‘Now will *Jacob* not be ashamed....’” [14](#). See *Bereishit Rabbah*, *loc. cit.* [15](#). Note of the Rebbe: “Cf. *Tanya*, ch. 45.” [16](#). *Zohar* I, 88a, et al. [17](#). *Yevamot* 79a. [18](#). *Iyov* 2:4. [19](#). Note of the Rebbe: “At the end of Epistle XVI in *Iggeret HaKodesh*, this verse is quoted [in its entirety] as well. This is not the case at the end of Epistle X [which quotes only the conclusion of the verse, ‘but all that a man possesses he will give for his soul’], and so too in many other places. Evidently, since the opening phrase (‘skin for skin’) signifies a limited degree of *tzedakah* (as in the plain meaning of the verse), this phrase is quoted only when the Alter Rebbe speaks (also) of this degree of *tzedakah*.” [20](#). The conclusion of this letter appears in *Igrot Kodesh* (Letters) of the Alter Rebbe (Kehot, N.Y., 5740), p. 95.



Essay 8

Word had evidently reached the Alter Rebbe that the chassidim of a certain synagogue did not permit a worshiper who would pray at length to lead the services, because some individual there was pressed for time. In this letter of admonition, the Alter Rebbe writes that it is better for this person to even forgo participation in the congregational responses of *Barchu* and *Kedushah* (if it is absolutely impossible for him to remain longer), than to keep his fellow-congregants from praying at length. For deliberate prayer involves life itself, and, indeed, prolongs one’s life; by cutting short the prayers of others, this busy individual tampers with their very lives.

The Alter Rebbe also explains that *meditation during prayer* with the goal of revealing the love of G-d that is concealed within the heart of every Jew, constitutes an obligation explicit in the Torah — “And you shall love the L-rd your G-d....”

הנה לא טובה השמועה שמעתי, ותרגז בטני

I have heard with foreboding and am deeply grieved, writes the Alter Rebbe,

אשר עם ה' מעבירים מלפני התיבה האיש החפץ בחיים ואריכות ימים של כל אנשי שלומנו, שבמקדש מעט
הזה של אנשי שלומנו

that G-d’s people are preventing¹ one who yearns for the life and longevity of all our brethren, from leading the services in this small sanctuary² — the synagogue — of our [chassidic] brotherhood.

The person who leads the service at a measured pace and thus enables his fellow-congregants to pray at length, provides them all with life and longevity.

כמאמר רז"ל: שלשה דברים מאריכים ימיו של אדם, ואחד מהם: המאריך בתפלתו

As our Sages of blessed memory teach,³ “Three things prolong the days of man,” and one of these is prolonged worship.

ואף גם מי שהשעה דחוקה לו ביותר, ואי אפשר לו בשום אופן להמתין עד אחר עניית קדושה של חזרת השליחצבור הזה

Even one extremely pressed for time, who finds it utterly impossible to wait until the congregational response called *Kedushah* in the repetition of the *Shemoneh Esreh* by this person who leads the prayers [slowly],

הלא טוב טוב לו שלא לשמוע קדושה וברכו, מלירד לחייהם של החפצים בחיים

far better is it for him to forgo hearing *Kedushah* and *Barchu* than to tamper with the lives of those who desire life, and hence desire to pray at length.

ואונס, רחמנא פטריה

The Torah does, after all, exonerate the compelled.⁴

Moreover:

והשליחצבור מוציאו ידי חובתו, אף שלא שמע, כאילו שמע, שהוא כעונה ממש

The Reader discharges his obligation for him⁵ of hearing *Kedushah* and *Barchu* even though he did not hear them recited,⁶ just as though he had heard, and this — hearing from the Reader, even without reciting — is counted precisely like responding.⁷

Unlike other instances of duress where the Torah indeed exonerates the individual concerned but does not consider him to have performed the omitted act, in this instance he is considered to have done so, for the Reader discharges his obligation for him.

וכדאיתא בגמרא גבי עם שבשדות, דאניסי, ויוצאים ידי חובת תפלת שמונה עשרה עצמה בחזרת הש"ץ, כאלו שמעו ממש

The *Gemara*⁸ notes this in reference to “the people in the fields” who are considered to be under duress, and fulfill their obligation of reciting the *Shemoneh Esreh* prayer itself, and not only of participating in the responses of *Barchu* and *Kedushah*, with the Reader’s repetition, as if they had actually heard it from him.

וגם קדושה וברכו בכלל

Kedushah and *Barchu* are also included among those obligations which are fulfilled through the Reader’s prayer.

This being the case, a person under duress should obviously not inconvenience others who seek to prolong their prayers.

והנה זאת חקרנוה, כן הוא

This we have searched out and verified,⁹

אף גם בדורות הראשונים של חכמי המשנה והגמרא

even regarding the early generations of the Sages of the *Mishnah* and *Gemara*,

שהיתה תורתם קבע ועיקר עבודתם, ולא תפלתם

whose Torah study, not prayer, was constant and their primary service.

Even with them, prolonged prayer was related to life and longevity.

ומכל שכן עתה הפעם בעקבות משיחא, שאין תורתנו קבע מצוק העתים

It is even more emphatically true at this time, in the period just preceding the advent of *Mashiach*, when our Torah study is not constant because of the difficulty of our times.

ועיקר העבודה בעקבות משיחא היא התפלה, כמו שכתב הרב חיים ויטל, זכרנו לברכה, בעץ חיים ופרי עץ חיים

The primary service in the period just preceding the coming of *Mashiach* is prayer, as Rabbi Chayim Vital (of blessed memory) writes in *Etz Chayim* and *Pri Etz Chayim*.¹⁰

מכל שכן וקל וחומר, שראוי ונכון ליתן נפשינו ממש עליה

Surely then, it is fitting and proper to devote ourselves utterly to it.

והיא חובה של תורה ממש למביני מדע תועלת ההתבוננות ועומק הדעת קצת, כל חד לפום שיעורא דיליה

This — prolonged prayer buttressed by the disciplined contemplation of G-d's greatness — is an actual Torah-mandated imperative to those who understand the efficacy of at least a little profoundly-considered meditation, each according to his measure,

In some individuals, as discussed in ch. 41 of *Tanya*, a feeling of love or awe of G-d will be aroused by a brief effort of meditation, and in others, only by a deeper and longer stretch of meditation.

בסדור שבחו של מקום, ברוך הוא, בפסוקי דזמרה ושתי ברכות שלפני קריאת שמע, יוצר ואהבה

in the ordered enumeration of the praises of G-d, blessed be He,¹¹ in *Pesukei DeZimrah* and in the two blessings preceding *Shema*, viz., *Yotzer* (Yotzer Or) and *Ahavah* (Ahavat Olam),

לעורר בהן האהבה המסותרת בלב כל ישראל, לבא לבחינת גילוי בהתגלות הלב, בשעת קריאת שמע עצמה

in order to arouse through [these blessings] the love latent in the heart of every Jew, so that it attain a state of revelation in the openness of the heart during *Keriat Shema* itself, which follows these two blessings.

שזאת היא מצות האהבה, שבפסוק ואהבת גו' בכל לבבך גו', הנמנית ראשונה בתרי"ג מצות

This is the meaning of the commandment of love that appears in the verse,¹² “And you shall love [the L-rd your G-d] with all your heart...,” that is reckoned first¹³ among the 613 *mitzvot*.

כמו שכתב הרמב"ם ז"ל, שהיא מיסודי התורה ושרשה, ומקור לכל רמ"ח מצות עשה

Thus the *Rambam*, of blessed memory, writes¹⁴ that this is a fundament of the Torah and its root, and the source of all 248 positive commands.

Concerning these commandments the Alter Rebbe states in ch. 4 of *Tanya*, “For he who fulfills them in truth, is he who loves G-d’s Name.”

This commandment — “And you shall love” — is the obligation imposed by the Torah to meditate during prayer in order to arouse and reveal one’s latent love. As to the emotion of love itself, a commandment is obviously impossible and irrelevant: if one has it, he has it, and if not, no command is going to produce it.

Thus, in reply to the question, How is it possible to mandate love?, the Maggid of Mezritch points out¹⁵ that the subject of the command is not the love but the meditation that will assuredly lead one to experiencing it. When one considers (“Hear, O Israel”¹⁶) how “the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is one,” one will surely come to love Him. The key verb (*Ve’ahavta*) is thus not to be understood as a command (“You *shall* love”), but as an assurance (“You *will* love”).

כי על אהבה המסותרת בלב כל ישראל בתולדתם וטבעם, לא שייך ציווי כלל

For regarding the love latent in the heart of all Israel by birth and nature, there can be no command at all, for it already exists.

Rather, the command is that this latent love be revealed; moreover, that it be felt not only by the G-dly soul, but by the animating soul as well, which previously did not harbor it at all.

ודעת לנבון נקל

This is apparent to the understanding,

כי כשהאהבה היא מסותרת, היא עודינה בנפש האלקית לבדה

that while the love is concealed it is still lodged within the divine soul alone.

וכשבאה לבחינת גילוי לנפש החיונית, אזי היא בהתגלות הלב בחלל שמאלי, מקום משכן נפש החיונית

Only when it attains to a state of revelation in the animating soul is it revealed in the heart in the left chamber, the abode of the animating soul.[17](#)

Since this soul animates the entire body, the person as a whole will be permeated with this love.

וזהו ענין בירור ניצוצות, המוזכר שם בעץ חיים ובפרי עץ חיים, גבי תפלה

This is the meaning of the “elevation of the sparks” mentioned there in *Etz Chayim* and *Pri Etz Chayim*[18](#) in reference to prayer: through prayer one elevates the sparks of holiness that fell from *Tohu*.

שלכן היא עיקר העבודה בעקבות משיחא, לברר ניצוצות כו'

And for this reason prayer is the primary service in the period just preceding the coming of *Mashiach* — in order to seek out and elevate the sparks, and so on.

שהוא בחינת אתהפכא או אתכפיא של נפש החיונית לנפש האלקית, כנודע

This may take place either through the transformation[19](#) or the subjugation of the animal soul to the divine soul, as is known.

כי הדם הוא הנפש כו', והדם מתחדש בכל יום מאוכלין ומשקין

“For the blood is the soul...”[20](#) and hence the life-force of man, and the blood is renewed daily through food and drink,

By directing his eating and drinking to the holy goals of the divine soul, one refines and elevates the sparks found within the food and drink.

וגם מתפעל ונתקן ממלבושים ודירה כו'

and [the man] is affected and improved by his garments and his shelter, and so on.

The refinement of the sparks latent in all these physical things is effected by revealing one's innate love of G-d during prayer. In our days prolonged prayer and meditation are thus a necessity.

מה שאין כן בדורות הראשונים, שהיו נשמות האלקית גדולי הערך

It was different, however, in earlier generations, when the divine souls were of a higher order,

היה הברור נעשה כרגע בקריאת שמע לבד וברכות שלפניה, ופסוקי דזמרה בקצרה וכו'

and the refinement and elevation of the sparks were instantaneous by means of *Keriat Shema* alone²¹ and the blessings preceding it, and the abridged *Pesukei DeZimrah*, and so on.²²

These prayers alone then sufficed to reveal the Jew's love of G-d, and brought about the resulting *beirurim* of the sparks.

ודי למבין

This will suffice for the discerning.

FOOTNOTES ¹. Cf. I *Shmuel* 2:24. ². Cf. *Megillah* 29a, commenting on *Yechezkel* 11:16. ³. *Berachot* 32b. ⁴. *Nedarim* 27a, commenting on *Devarim* 22:25-27. ⁵. The Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 124:1. ⁶. *Ibid.* 591:2. ⁷. *Ibid.* 124:2. ⁸. *Rosh HaShanah* 35a. ⁹. See also *Igrot Kodesh* (Letters) of the Alter Rebbe (Kehot, N.Y., 5740), sec. 15. ¹⁰. *Pri Etz Chayim, Shaar HaTefillah*, ch. 7. ¹¹. *Tur Orach Chayim*, sec. 52. ¹². *Devarim* 6:5. ¹³.

Note of the Rebbe: "This requires some further examination. (In *Sefer HaMitzvot* of the *Rambam* this appears as the third positive command. In the *Zohar* I, 11b, the order is (1) awe, (2) love, (3) knowledge of G-d, and so forth.)"

Note the idiom of our Sages, of blessed memory (in *Avodah Zarah* 73a), בטל ראשון ראשון [where each successive portion of wine poured into the vat is nevertheless called 'the first'].

"Note also that in *Chinuch Katan* [see Vol. III in the present series, p. 817, and notes there], love is the root of all positive commandments (including the positive commandment of awe (which in turn is the root of all prohibitory commandments) and hence) the source of *all* the commandments."

¹⁴. Beginning of ch. 2 of *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah*. ¹⁵. See also the Addenda to *Or Torah* by the Maggid of Mezritch (Kehot edition), sec. 12. ¹⁶. *Devarim* 6:4. ¹⁷. *Tanya*, ch. 9. ¹⁸. *Pri Etz Chayim, Shaar HaTefillah*, ch. 7. ¹⁹. *Ibid.* ch. 10. ²⁰. *Devarim* 12:23. ²¹. *Berachot* 13b, citing the case of Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi. ²². The Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 52:1.

Essay 9

הוכח תוכיח את עמיתך, אפילו מאה פעמים

[It is written,]¹ “You shall surely reprove your comrade” — “even one hundred times,” add our Sages,² taking up the hint offered by the repetitive form of the Hebrew verb.

ולזאת לא אוכל להתאפק ולהחריש מלזעוק עוד, בקול ענות חלושה

Therefore, writes the Alter Rebbe, I cannot contain myself and cannot refrain from crying out yet again, in a voice betraying [pained] weakness.³

במטותא מינייכו ברחמין נפישין

I plead with you out of deep compassion,

חוסו נא על נפשותיכם, והשמרו והזהרו מאד מאד על התורה ועל העבודה שבלב, זו תפלה בכוונה

have pity on your souls. Take care, be extremely vigilant, concerning the study of Torah and the service of the heart, which is prayer⁴ with proper intent.

להתחיל כולם יחד כאחד, מלה במלה, ולא זה בכה וזה בכה, וזה דומם וזה משיח שיחה בטלה, ה' ישמרנו

All should begin [the prayers] in unison, as one, word by word, not one person here and another elsewhere, one mute and the other idly chatting, may G-d protect us.

ועיקר הסיבה וגרמא בנזקין, הוא מהיורדים לפני התיבה

The main cause and instigator of [this] damage comes from those leading the services.

שהוא הפקר לכל הרוצה לפשוט רגליו החוטף אפרתי

That office is abandoned to whoever wishes to stride forth and snatch the honor,⁵

או מחמת שאין גם אחד רוצה כו'

or because not even one desires it..., so that ultimately the prayers are led by someone inappropriate to the task.

ואי לזאת, זאת העצה היעוצה ותקנה קבועה, חוק ולא יעבור עוד, חס ושלום

For this reason, this is the counsel offered, and a regulation established as law not to be violated further, G-d forbid.

דהיינו, לבחור אנשים קבועים הראויים לזה, על פי הגורל או בריצוי רוב המניין

That is, choose fixed individuals fit for this office of leading the prayers, by lot or by consent of the majority of the worshipers.

And who, indeed, is fit for this office?

דהיינו שמתפללים מלה במלה, בדרך המיצוע, בקול רם

These shall be men who pray word by word, at a moderate pace, aloud,

ולא מאריכים יותר מדאי, ולא מקצרים וחוטפים, חס ושלום

neither overly prolonging the prayers, nor racing intemperately, G-d forbid.

ועליהם מוטל החובה לירד לפני התיבה, כל אחד ואחד ביומו אשר יגיע לו

Theirs is the duty to lead the prayers, each on his day as determined.

ולאסוף אליו מסביב סמוך כל המתפללים בקול קצת על כל פנים, ולא בלחש ולא חוטפים, חס ושלום

He shall assemble close around him all those who pray audibly, at least, neither whispering nor rushing, G-d forbid.

וכמבואר בתקנות ישנות בכמה עיירות

This is amplified in age-old communal regulations in many towns.

ועתה באתי לחדשן ולחזקן ולאמצן, בל ימוטו עוד לעולם, חס ושלום

I come now, writes the Alter Rebbe, to renew them, to strengthen and invigorate them, never again to be weakened, G-d forbid.

[7](#)גוולד [6](#)לדגוו

([8](#)The following two words appear in Yiddish⁹ in the Alter Rebbe's original manuscript: Gevald! Gevald! — an outcry of agonized consternation.)

עד מתי יהיה זה לנו למוקש

How long will this be an obstacle for us?¹⁰

How long will we be burdened by praying without proper intent?

ולא די לנו בכל התוכחות והצרות שעברו עלינו, ה' ישמרנו, וינחמנו בכפלים לתושיה, ויטהר לבנו לעבדו
באמת

Have we not sufficient reproofs and troubles that have overtaken us? — May G-d protect and console us with redoubled support,[11](#) and purify our hearts to serve Him in truth.

חזקו ואמצו לבבכם, כל המייחלים לה'

Strengthen and fortify your hearts, all who hope in G-d.[12](#)

* * *

גם לגמור כל הש"ס בכל שנה ושנה

Also: Complete the study of the entire *Talmud* year after year,

ובכל עיר ועיר, לחלק המסכתות על פי הגורל או ברצון

and in every community apportion the tractates by lot or by consent, each individual choosing the tractate that he desires to study.

ועיר שיש בה מנינים הרבה, יגמרו בכל מנין ומנין, ואם איזה מנין קטן מהכיל, יצרפו אליהם אנשים מאיזה מנין גדול

In a city with numerous synagogues, each congregation should complete [the *Talmud*]. And if a congregation is too small to implement this program, they should join forces with men of a larger one.

בבל ישונה, חק ולא יעבור

This statute — that the entire *Talmud* be studied every year — shall not be varied or violated.

וכל אחד ואחד מהלומדים הנ"ל יגמור לעצמו בכל שבוע התמניא אפי שבתהלים קי"ט

In addition, each of the participants shall individually read the whole of the eightfold Psalm 119 every week.[13](#)

The Previous Rebbe comments on the connection between completing the study of the *Talmud* and the recitation of *Psalms* as follows:[14](#) “From here we see that the study of *Gemara* is complete only when it is accompanied by the recitation of *Tehillim*; and in order to recite *Tehillim* properly, one needs to study *Gemara*.”

ולהיות מחמת חלישות הדור, אין כח בכל אחד ואחד להתענות כראוי לו

Moreover, since, due to the frailty of our times, not everyone is capable of fasting as he ought,

In *Iggeret HaTeshuvah*¹⁵ the Alter Rebbe cites the classical works of *Mussar* as to the number of fasts prescribed for each major sin, so that a penitent will be able to render himself as acceptable to G-d after his repentance as he was before sinning.

לזאת עצה היעוזה, כמאמר רז"ל: כל השומר שבת כהלכתו, מוחלין לו על כל עוונותיו

the counsel offered follows the declaration of our Sages, of blessed memory,¹⁶ “Whoever observes *Shabbat* according to its law, is forgiven all his sins.”

כהלכתו דייקא

The term “according to its law” is used advisedly, for the *Shabbat* cannot be properly observed without a knowledge of its laws.

לכן מוטל על כל אחד ואחד, להיות בקי בהלכתא רבתי לשבתא

It is therefore incumbent upon every individual to master the “great law” of *Shabbat*.

The term “great law” echoes the expression in the *Gemara*¹⁷ regarding checking one’s clothes before sundown on Friday in order not to transgress a prohibition later. The laws of *Shabbat* thus not only inform us of what is prohibited, but also of how to avoid transgression.

וגם יזהר מאד שלא לשוח שום שיחה בטילה, חס ושלום

Also, be most careful [on *Shabbat*] not to indulge in idle chatter, G-d forbid.

בהיות מודעת זאת ליודעי חכמה נסתרת, כי בכל המצות יש פנימיות וחיצוניות

For, as is known to the initiates in the mystical wisdom [of *Kabbalah*], all the *mitzvot* comprise an internal and an external aspect — the spirituality of the *mitzvah*, and the physical act which it requires.

וחיצוניות מהשבת היא שביתה מעשיה גשמיית, כמו ששבת ה' מעשות שמים וארץ גשמיים

The externality of the [*mitzvah* of] *Shabbat* is the cessation of physical activity, just as G-d ceased making the physical heaven and earth.

ופנימיות השבת היא הכוונה בתפלת השבת ובתלמוד תורה, לדבקה בה' אחד

The internal dimension of *Shabbat* is one’s intention in the *Shabbat* prayers and during one’s Torah study, to cleave to the One G-d,

כמו שכתוב: שבת לה' אלקיך

as it is written,¹⁸ “It is *Shabbat* to the L-rd your G-d.”

Underlying the cessation of labor on *Shabbat* is the concept of elevation. When a person rests from his labor at any time, the energy that had been vested in it rises and returns to its source within the soul. So, too, the cessation of labor and resting on *Shabbat* means that the soul, which during the week had been immersed in mundane activities, is uplifted “to the L-rd your G-d.”

וזו היא בחינת זכור

This [internal level of the *mitzvah* of *Shabbat*] is the element of “remembering”.

The *Shabbat* comprises two elements, “remembering” (*zachor*) and “observing” (*shamor*), reflecting the two commandments, [19](#) “Remember the *Shabbat* day, to sanctify it,” and [20](#) “Observe the *Shabbat* day, to sanctify it.” Elevating the soul on *Shabbat* through proper intent (*kavanah*) during prayer and Torah study, is an act of “remembering”.

ובחינת שמור בפנימיות, היא השביתה מדיבורים גשמיים, כמו ששבת ה' מיו"ד מאמרות שנבראו בהם שמים וארץ גשמיים

The inner dimension of the element of “observing” is refraining from speech about material affairs, just as G-d ceased from the Ten Utterances through which the physical heaven and earth were created.

The external aspect of “observing” is refraining from active labor; the internal aspect of “observing” is refraining and resting from speech about material affairs.

כי זה לעומת זה כו'

For [21](#) “one opposite the other...” — speaking about material affairs on *Shabbat* is the inverse of the rest and elevation that a Jew secures on *Shabbat*, through prayer and Torah study.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Vayikra* 19:17. [2.](#) *Bava Metzia* 31a. [3.](#) Cf. *Shmot* 32:18. [4.](#) *Taanit* 2a; *Sifrei*, commenting on *Devarim* 11:13. [5.](#)

Note of the Rebbe (in *Likkutei Biurim*, foot of p. 487): “‘To stride forth’ — cf. the expression in the Responsa of the *Rashba* 1:450 (quoted in *Bet Yosef, Orach Chayim* 53); ‘to snatch’ — cf. *Chullin* 133a [regarding the priestly dues], and *Yalkut Shimoni* (quoted in *Rashi*) on *Balak*, sec. 769: ‘snatches *Keriat Shema*.’”

“*Efrati* — possibly the intent is to *both* explanations that the *Radak* offers on this word (*I Samuel* 1:1): ‘person of distinguished lineage,’ and ‘one who shares in something sanctified.’”

[6.](#) *Vayikra* 19:17. [7.](#) *Vayikra* 19:17. [8.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [9.](#) See *Likkutei Sichot*, Vol. XXIII, p. 415. [10.](#) *Shmot* 6:7. [11.](#) Cf. *Iyov* 11:6. [12.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Cf. *Tehillim* 31:25.” [13.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “I have not observed that people make a point of

doing this.” Elsewhere the Rebbe adds: “It will be noted that in many places it is customary to recite this Psalm on *Shabbat* after *Minchah* (and this too was the custom of my revered father, of blessed memory).” [14.](#) *Sefer HaSichot* 5704, p. 48. [15.](#) Ch. 3. [16.](#) *Shabbat* 118b. [17.](#) *Ibid.* 12a. [18.](#) *Shmot* 20:10. [19.](#) *Ibid.*, verse 8. [20.](#) *Devarim* 5:12. [21.](#) Cf. *Kohelet* 7:14.

