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THE PROFOUND INNOVATION THAT TOOK PLACE AT MATTAN-TORAH

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by Rabbi Yoel Kahn a"h



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THE PROFOUND INNOVATION THAT TOOK PLACE AT MATTAN-TORAH

Abstract: G-d chose to radically change His 'superficial' relationship with His creations at the time of the Giving of the Torah, and enable it to be a deeper, more 'intrinsic', connection.

Torah, mitzvot, and Divine worship, existed even before Mattan-Torah on Mount Sinai, and Chazal {our sages, of blessed memory} maintain that the Avot {the Patriarchs} studied Torah and actually observed the entire Torah • So what really changed at the phenomenal revelation at Mount Sinai? • The truth is that the Torah and mitzvot that were given at Mount Sinai differ in their quintessence from the Torah and mitzvot that were prior to that • {Mattan-Torah achieved something so novel, that Torah as it existed prior to Mattan-Torah bore absolutely no semblance to Torah as given at Mattan-Torah.} The novelty is at both ends of the spectrum - from where the command originates and until where it reaches

Nullification of the Decree Separating the Upper Domains from the Lower

A. The occasion of the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai is described in the Torah as a special, unique occurrence, that was accompanied by thunder, lightning, and a deep, powerful horn blast; as well as Mount Sinai ablaze, with a thick cloud at its peak. The obvious question: why all the fireworks ? The Torah given at Sinai was not new to the world ! Jews studied Torah even beforehand, as Chazal state¹ “From the days of our ancestors, yeshiva never left them.” {Our ancestors were leaders of their generations, who taught Torah to students who came to them.}; and similarly, regarding mitzvah-observance: even before Mattan-Torah the Avot kept the mitzvot, as Chazal state² “Abraham Avinu {our Patriarch} fulfilled the entire Torah before it was given”. Assuming that the Giving of the Torah on the sixth of Sivan was not something new, so what was unique about the occasion ? The novelty that really occurred at the phenomenal revelation at Mount Sinai can be understood from the statement of Chazal related to the verse³ “Because of the fragrance of your goodly oils, Your name is an 'ointment poured forth.’” The Midrash comments: “All the hymns (meaning Torah-study⁴) that the Avot chanted before

1. Yoma 28b

2. Yoma ibid.

Kiddushin 82a. and correspondingly regarding the rest of the Avot and tribes, see Midrash Rabbah Vayikra Parsha 2,10, and others.

3. Shir Hashirim {- Song of Songs -} Chapter 1 Verse 3, and Midrash Rabbah ad loc.

4. This is how Chassidic discourses explain the word “Songs” {or hymns}, based on the dictum of our sages (Chagigah 12b)

“Whoever occupies himself **with Torah** at night... as it is stated: “and in the night **His song**,” {i.e., the song of Torah,} “is with me.”,

see: Chasidic discourses by the Rebbe Rayatz {the sixth leader of Chabad-Lubavitch, Friediker Rebbe (Yiddish for ‘Previous Rebbe’), the Rebbe RaYYaTz

You were merely fragrances, but for us, {after Mattan-Torah}, Your name is an 'ointment poured forth.'". Similarly, it is written regarding the mitzvot: "All the mitzvot that the Avot performed before You were merely fragrances, but for us, {after Mattan-Torah}, Your name is an 'ointment poured forth'".

In other words, the novelty of the Torah and mitzvot that were given at Sinai is, that the Torah and mitzvot before Mattan-Torah were, so to speak, only "fragrances"; whereas the superiority of the Torah and mitzvot that were transmitted at Sinai is, that they are likened to "Your name is an ointment poured forth".

However, this in itself requires explanation: what is the reason that before Mattan-Torah the Torah and mitzvot were comparable to 'fragrances'; versus after Mattan-Torah they are compared to the oil itself⁵? What is the significance of this distinction?

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn 1880-1950}, delivered in year 5706 {1946} p. 102.

5. There are some who explain, that the superiority of keeping the mitzvot after Mattan-Torah is in that the observance of the mitzvot before Mattan-Torah was without having been commanded to do so, whereas the observance of the mitzvot after Mattan-Torah is specifically by virtue of having been commanded to do so, and "Greater is one who is commanded to do a mitzvah and performs it than one who is not commanded to do a mitzvah and performs it." (Kiddushin 31a). But, according to this, the superiority that was added to the mitzvahs by virtue of Mattan-Torah would apply only to those mitzvot that were not commanded before Mattan-Torah, but with regard to those mitzvot which were already commanded before Mattan-Torah (like the seven Noachide Laws, the mitzvah of circumcision, and others), where absolutely nothing new {i.e. superiority, because since they were already commanded before Mattan-Torah, no addition 'value' would accrue to them when being re-commanded at Sinai amongst all the mitzvot} was added at Mattan-Torah. However, scrutinizing the exact wording of the Midrash: "**All** the mitzvot that the Avot performed were, {so to speak,} merely fragrances", it is clear that Mattan-Torah added something new and extra, {over and beyond what was before Mattan-Torah,} to **ALL** the mitzvot. And this is understood in the Rambam's Peirush Hamishneh {commentary to the Mishneh} which is quoted below.

Moreover, the difference between the mitzvot before Mattan-Torah and those after Mattan-Torah – also has halachic {rules and regulations according to the Jewish halacha (code of law)} ramifications. The Rambam {Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon ‘Maimonides’, Moses Maimonides (1135-1204)}, in his Peirush Hamishneh {commentary to the Mishneh}⁶, states an important principle for our mitzvah-observance: “pay heed to the awesome principle...that everything we currently avoid doing {i.e. the negative commandments} or do perform, it’s only because we are thus commanded from G-d via Moshe Rabbeinu, of blessed memory, not that G-d told the prophets before him. Such as the fact that we don’t eat a limb of a living creature, is not because Ha-Shem forbade this to Noach”. Along these lines, he says regarding the commandment of circumcision: “We do not circumcise because Avraham Avinu circumcised himself, but rather, due to the fact that G-d commanded us via Moshe Rabbeinu”, and likewise in relation to the rest of the mitzvot.

This also necessitates elucidation: what is so special about the commandments that were given at Sinai, to the degree that “the awesome principle” of our mitzvah-observance is, that we perform the commandments because G-d commanded regarding them via Moshe Rabbeinu at Sinai, and not due to the commanding of the prior prophets ? What is the fundamental difference between the two frameworks of mitzvot ?

The Midrash⁷ explains the innovation that was brought about at Mattan-Torah via a parable regarding “a king that decreed and said, that the citizens of Rome should not descend to visit Syria, nor the citizens of Syria ascend to visit Rome. Thus, when G-d created the world He decreed and said: “The heavens are the Lord’s heavens, but the earth He gave to the children of man”⁸. Yet when He was about

6. In Tractate Chullin, end of Perek Gid Hanashe.

7. Shmos Rabbah Parsha 12,3.

8. Tehillim 115,16.

to give the Torah, He rescinded the first decree and said: “those who are below shall ascend to those on high, while those on high shall descend to those who are below, and I will begin,” as it is said “And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai”⁹ (those on high shall descend to below); and it is written “And unto Moshe He said: “come up unto the Lord””¹⁰ (those who are below shall ascend on high).

This is obviously puzzling, for even before Mattan-Torah those on high descended to below. In several places in the Torah we find that G-d revealed Himself to Noach and to the Avot; in the same way, we see that those who are below ascend on high – related to Chanoch {who did not die like any other human being. He was one of the few who Gd took away alive}. If so, why does the Midrash state that only at Mattan-Torah was the connection between the higher and lower realms innovated ?

The meaning of this will be inferred from what is explained in Chassidus¹¹, that the connection between and joining of the higher and lower realms which was done at Mattan-Torah (both the descending of the higher to below and the ascension of those below to above), incomparably surpasses that which transpired before Mattan-Torah. The contrast is in both directions – the level of the ‘higher’ as well as the level of the ‘lower’: before Mattan-Torah the connection wasn’t really between the ‘higher’ itself to the ‘lower’ itself; though after Mattan-Torah the epitome of the ‘higher’ connected and joined with the epitome of the ‘lower’.

To further elucidate: before Mattan-Torah the revelation of G-dliness to the creations was from G-d’s perspective, ‘the Higher’, as He contracted, limited Himself, so to speak, related to the creations {Tzimtzum (lit. ‘contraction’); the process of Divine self-contraction

9. Shmos 19,20.

10. Shmos 24,1.

11. See Likkutei Sichos Vol. 15 Sichs on Parshas Lech Lecha paragraph 6, and in several other places.

and self-limitation which makes possible the concept of limited, worldly existence, This is the cornerstone of Lurianic Kabbalah}, and not Ha-Shem Himself; but the novelty of Mattan-Torah was that G-d Himself, in His Essence, was revealed and descended to the creations.

This explains G-d's answer to Moshe Rabbeinu (to his plea: "Why have You harmed this people ?" {Shmos 5,22}. "I appeared to Abraham, to Yitzchak and to Ya'akov with Shin-daled-yud {the name Almighty God, Sha-dai}, but {with} My name Havayah {is the pronunciation used for God's Essential Name spelled with the four letters יהוה (yud, hei, vav, hei). Havayah is the most sacred of the Names of God. Although no name can fully express God's Essence, Havayah refers to God's Essence. For this reason, it is sometimes referred to as 'the Essential Name' (אֵשֶׁת הַיְהוָה), YHWH, the Tetragrammaton}, I did not become known to them."¹²: The terrible suffering that Bnei Yisrael experienced during the Egyptian exile is a preparation for the enormous Divine Revelation of Mattan-Torah, the novelty of this revelation, compared to all Divine Revelations that preceded it, were from G-d as He contracted, limited Himself with His Divine 'Names' (the name Shin-daled-yud, and the name Elokim, which represent Gd's Attribute of Justice and Tzimtzum¹³); whereby at Mattan-Torah G-d was revealed with the Divine Name Havayah {see fn. 19}, - Shem Ha-Etzem¹⁴, which

12. Shmos 6,3.

13. . {What is the meaning of the verses (Bereishis 17,1:) "I am God Almighty [using the Sha-dai name of G-d]" in addressing Avraham Avinu; and in Bereishis 35,11, addressing Ya'akov Avinu ?} The Divine Name Sha-dai literally means: "I am He that said to the world Enough !" {שדי 'Almighty', is explained as a compound of: "ש" 'who (said)', and "די" 'Enough'} (Chagigah 12a) - the process of Divine self-contraction and self-limitation which makes possible limited, worldly existence; and also the Divine Name Elokim indicates G-dliness that is contracted and limited in accordance with the worlds' capacity. As known, the numerical value of Elokim is {86, which also equals} 'hateva' {, the Hebrew word for 'nature'} (see Parde'ss Shaar 12).

14. See Moreh Nevuvhim {"A guide for the Perplexed"} Part 1 Chapter 61.

Kessef Mishneh {Rabbi Joseph Caro (author of the Beit Yosef and SHULCHON

symbolizes God's Etzem {Essence}, that precedes and supersedes how He contracted, limited Himself, related to the creations¹⁵.

To further elucidate: The Divine Name Havayah itself has two aspects (as explained in the Zohar¹⁶): The 'higher level Havayah', {referring to God's Essence as it transcends creation} and the 'lower level Havayah', {referring to His Essence as it manifests itself within creation}. And at Mattan-Torah the higher aspect of the 'higher level Havayah' was revealed¹⁷.

ORUCH) 1488 to 1575}{Rambam Mishneh Torah Sefer Madda (The Book of Knowledge)} Hilchot Avodat Kochavim {The Laws of The Worship of Stars and Their Statutes, on} Chapter 5 Halacha 7.

Parde"ss Shaar 19.

{Sefer Ha}Ikkarim {"Book of Principles", a fifteenth-century work by Rabbi Joseph Albo} Ma'amar 2 Chapter 28.

15. This answers the question posed by the Maharzu {Zev Wolf Einhorn , a scholar who wrote one of the most important commentaries on Midrash Rabbah, Peirush Maharzu, as well as on other Midrashic works}, on that written in the Midrash, that even before Mattan-Torah it is stated: "and Moshe ascended to Elokim" (Shmos 19,3), In that case, what is new about the statement "And unto Moshe He said: 'come up unto the Lord' "{Shmos 24,1} ? This fits in with what was explained above: that the verse, "And unto Moshe He said: 'come up unto the Lord ["**Havayah**"]" uniquely, specifically, uses the Divine Name "**Havayah**" "the Essential Name" (שם הָעֶצֶם).
16. Part 3 (Idra) p. 138a.
17. See: Chasidic discourses by the Rebbe Rashab {acronym for Reb Sholom Ber, the fifth leader of Chabad-Lubavitch, Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn, delivered in year} 5679 (1919 עטר"ת) p. 71: "the word "נודעתי" {Shmos 6,3}, is etymologically related to the word "דעת", which means a drawing down of the internal and Essence...regarding which it is written "but [with] My name Havayah, I did not become known to them.", that the Inner, Essential Divine Name "Havayah" was not known to them; only the external aspect alone". And this also resolves a question posed by the commentaries (on the verse) that G-d did reveal Himself to the Avot using the Divine Name of Havayah, like "Now the Lord appeared to him", {addressing Avraham Avinu} in Bereishis 18,1), and similarly in several other places, so why is it stated that "but [with] My name Havayah, I did not become known to them", the

Moreover, the Divine revelation at Mattan-Torah transcended even the ‘higher level Havayah’ revelation. At Mattan-Torah there was a revelation of “Anochi”, that “Anochi mi sheAnochi” — lit., “I, being Who I am,” {and hence by definition unknowable}. ‘Not an iota of allusion’¹⁸, not even the Divine Name Havayah. Meaning to say, that even the Divine Name Havayah, which symbolizes God’s Shem Ha- Etzem, in the final analysis is a Name; whereas “Anochi” refers to “Me Myself”, the Essence of G-d itself (just like a human being, allowing for the infinite differentiations involved, who says ‘anochi’, means ‘me myself’)¹⁹.

And the Essence of G-d Himself, the aspect of the “Anochi”, is what G-d put into the Torah and the mitzvot that were given at Sinai. As taught in the Talmud²⁰ that “” Anochi = “אֲנִי” is an acronym for: “Ana [I] Nafshi [of My Soul {of Myself}] Ketivat Yehavit [have written into and inserted into] (the Torah text] “אָנֹכִי כְתִיבָהּ בְּתוֹכָהּ יְהִיבֵתִי”, I wrote and put My Essence into the Torah. This, then, is the novelty that really occurred at the phenomenal revelation at Mount Sinai (regarding the ‘higher’ level): before Mattan-Torah, the descent of the higher realms to below was regarding the perspective of the ‘higher’ realms, as they relate to the ‘lower’ realms, but not the ‘higher’ realms as they themselves are in their essence. The innovation at Mattan-Torah was, that to Bnei Yisrael were given the Torah and mitzvot within which are hidden the Essence of G-d, and from this was given to every Jew the potential capability to connect to the Essence of G-d Himself.

Avot.” ? The answer is that only the “lower level Divine Name of Havayah” was revealed to the Avot, whereas “My name Havayah”, - the ‘higher level Havayah’ — “I did not become known to them.”

18. Likkutei Torah Bamidbar p. 80b. and see Zohar Part 3, p. 257b.

19. And according to this, the order of the things written in the opening passage of the Ten Commandments is in descending order — ‘Anochi’, ‘Havayah’, and ‘Elokecha’.

20. Shabbos 105a (according to the version of the Ein Ya’akov).

The Metaphor of the Rav and the Talmid

B. To illustrate the difference between the two levels (the ‘higher’ realms as they themselves are in essence, or the ‘higher’ realms, as they relate to the ‘lower’ realms), we can use an example of a Rav {teacher} who is learning with his talmid {student}. Although the paired study of the student with his teacher does cause a joining and a connection between the student and the teacher, but this joining is not to the authentic essence of the teacher. The essence of the teacher, his learning is at a very high intellectual level, and when he studies with his student, he is forced to disconnect from his high level, abstract ideas, and to adapt his intellect to the receptive capabilities of this specific student.

In fact, the entire title of ‘Rav’ applies to the rav only when he is relating to the talmid. When he is alone with himself, he is not called with the title of ‘rav’. He is then at a loftier level than that of a rav to the talmid.

Similarly, the symbolism above: the Torah that the Avot learned was compared to the limited intellect that the teacher gives to his student. The Avot joined with G-d as He contracted, limited Himself, related to the creations. The connection was, so to speak, regarding the perspective of the ‘higher’ realms, as it relates to the ‘lower’ realms, not to the ‘Higher’ realms, Ha-Shem, as He Himself is in His Essence.

Moreover, even **the mitzvot** that were before Mattan-Torah, they also did not connect the person fulfilling the mitzvah with the Essence of He Who Commanded the mitzvot. True, regarding the mitzvot there is not a descent nor tzimtzum like in the above-mentioned case where the rav contracts his intellect before transmitting the idea to his talmid; the mitzvot are commandments and instructions. Like a master who gives orders to his servants, who is not required to explain the reasons to them (like the rav who does explain what he says to his talmid) – the servants must obey the orders without any explanation. But nevertheless, the commands are also connected to

a certain degree of descent with respect to the Essence of He Who Commanded the mitzvot.

The master, as he is in his essence, has no relationship with anyone else other than himself. When he does relate to a servant and gives him orders, it means that there is a lowering in relation to his previous essential status (although this is not bone fide tzimzum, like in the case of the rav who teaches his talmid). The more the essence of a person is evident, the less the other person's existence is felt; and vice versa: the more the existence of the other is evident, the less manifest is the essence of the first person²¹. As such, the master, as he associates with a servant and gives him orders, it means that there is a 'lowering' and a deviation in regards to his previous essential status.

Similarly, the symbolism above: the act of commanding by G-d to the creations, indicates that there is a 'lowering' and a bending, figuratively speaking, towards the creations, which does not originate in G-d's real Essence. Therefore, also the mitzvot that the Avot observed generated a connection and joining with a contracted, limited level of G-dliness, and not with G-d as He is in His Essence.

Therefore the Midrash states: "All the hymns (meaning Torah-study) that the Avot chanted before You...(and even) **all the mitzvot** that the Avot performed before You were, so to speak, merely fragrances": not only the Torah studied by the Avot was, so to speak, merely "fragrances" (as in the metaphor regarding the limited intellect of the teacher), but even the **commands** that G-d gave before Mattan-Torah - were, merely "fragrances", and do not originate in His actual Essence. The source of these mitzvot was a level of G-dliness as it is related to the creations ("merely fragrances"²²), and not from G-d Himself. Therefore, by fulfilling them, man did not connect with G-d as He is in His Essence.

21. See above.

22. As below Section 8.

This is the novelty that occurred at Mattan-Torah: at the phenomenal revelation at Mount Sinai, G-d invested His entire Essence in the Torah and mitzvot. In the Torah we study, and the mitzvot we observe, after Mattan-Torah, we truly grasp G-d Himself, as He is above all tzimzum and descent – His actual Essence Itself.

[Although for the Torah that was given at Sinai understanding and comprehension are also pertinent, it is explained in Chassidus²³, that the source of this Torah is (not a contracted level of G-dliness as it descends and is related to the creations (vis-a-vis Mattan-Torah), but rather) the actual Essence of G-d Himself. Since G-d is **completely Boundless**²⁴, He invested His Entire Essence into the limited, contracted intellect of the Torah. This is the profound innovation that took place at Mattan-Torah: That even into the Torah as it is limited according to the intellectual capability on the creations, G-d invested His actual Essence.

And similarly, with the mitzvot: their source is in G-d's actual Essence²⁵. In the mitzvot that are after Mattan-Torah, the command is not a disconnection in respect to G-d's actual Essence. G-d invested His Exaltation and His Essence, which is higher than commanding and relating to the creations.

23. See: Chasidic discourses by the Rebbe Rashab delivered in year 5666 (1906) from p. 22.

Chasidic discourse "Ve'eeleh Hamishpatim" in SEFER HAMA'AMORIM MELUKOT (Of the REBBIE Zy"ta) (volume 3 of the 4-volume edition printed in 2002) section 3.

24. As is known, G-d is "נמנע הנמנעות", which means: "the One for Whom impossibilities are impossible" (It's used to describe Ha-Shem's ability to reconcile opposites and perform an act that is logically, conceptually impossible.) He Himself is beyond infinite and finite, and therefore can harmonize the two. See Responsa of the RASBA Part I, Siman 418.

25. As was explained at length above, the source of the mitzvot is – via the Free Choice of Ha-Shem which originates in His Actual Essence, see there in depth.

Despite the fact that the Torah deals with finite, physical matters, and the mitvot are commands and instructions for performance of physical, finite activities, all this is merely an external ‘covering’. The true quintessence of the Torah and mitzvot is – the G-dliness that is above any type of descent and tzimzum. G-d as He is in His Essence.]

In Order To Be Connected One Must Be A ‘Talmid’

C. Until now, we have dealt with the difference between the descent of the higher-level realms that occurred before Mattan-Torah and that after Mattan-Torah, focusing on the perspective of the ‘higher’ that descends to the ‘lower’. However, as mentioned above, there is also a distinction in the level of the ‘lower’ to which the ‘higher’ descends.

We will also be able to understand this issue via the parable of the intellectual influence from the rav to the talmid: just like there are two levels in the rav – his essence, and how he relates towards the talmid, likewise in the talmid there are two levels – the talmid as a person himself, and the talmid as he relates to the rav. The appellation ‘talmid’ expresses an additional aspect to the basic existence of the person – it’s a psychological attribute of the person characterizing how he relates and is receptive to his superior.

Similarly, the symbolism above: before Mattan-Torah the connection of the ‘Higher’, i.e. G-d, with the creation, wasn’t with the creation himself, as he is on his lower level, but rather only with that level of the creation as it relates to G-dliness, which is higher than his existence. The novelty that occurred at Mattan-Torah is, that the joining is with the creation as it is at its essence level, i.e. with the creation as it is at its own level.

This difference manifests itself in that, the main focus of the mitzvot after Mattan-Torah is the physical fulfillment of the mitzvah, the actual action; as opposed to the focus of the mitzvot that were before Mattan-Torah which was the spiritual side of the mitzvah, the intent and the mental/psychological content therein²⁶.

Of several possible aspects of this, two examples are presented:

I. Some of the mitzvot, their observance by the Avot was different from our observance of them. For example, the Admoor Hazaken {Alter Rebbie the founder and first leader of Chabad-Lubavitch, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745–1812), author of the Tanya and SHULCHON ORUCH (Code of Jewish Law) HaRav} writes in his Torah-Ohr²⁷, that we cannot say that the Avot fulfilled the mitzvah of tefillin in an identical fashion as we do. In our tefillin there are four Torah portions, containing references to the Exodus from Egypt, and it's impossible that Avraham Avinu donned tefillin containing references to the Exodus from Egypt, despite the fact that the Egyptian exile hadn't even begun...

And it is explained in the Zohar²⁸, that by engaging in peeling the rods while he was with Laban {the Aramean}, Ya'akov Avinu fulfilled the mitzvah of donning tefillin. With his physical activity of making

26. It is known that each mitzvah has its spiritual subject matter that should be borne in mind. Starting with the intent of the mitzvah stated in the halacha. (for instance, the mitzvah of putting on the tefillin, the spiritual significance is, to submit our soul which is in the brain, as well as the desires and thoughts of our heart, to G-d {i.e. to His service}.), and continuing to the deep, inner, kabalistic understanding of each mitzvah.

27. P. 11d.

Also see p. 41b.

And in a comparable fashion regarding the mitzvot of eating matzah, Sukka, and others, see: Chasidic discourses by the Rebbe Rashab delivered in year 5654 (1894) p. 199.

28. Part 1, p. 162a.

the rods, he accomplished the ‘elicitation’ of the abstract, spiritual, significance normally brought about by donning the tefillin.

[Regarding these mitzvot, the explanation {of the statement in the Gemara that} “Avraham Avinu observed the entire Torah” {despite the fact that it was given to Bnei Yisrael only centuries later}, is, that their fulfillment was in a different manner than our fulfillment after Mattan-Torah].

II. Even those mitzvot that the Avot fulfilled in the exact same manner as we do, there is a big difference between their performance by the Avot before Mattan-Torah, and our fulfilling them after Mattan-Torah. By them, even the physical activities that they did, the main focus was – the underlying spiritual content inherent in it and not the physical fulfillment.

Action as an Expression of Emotion

D. This point, that even a physical activity’s main focus could be the underlying spiritual content inherent in it, will be better understood via a case in point. The difference between a happy person and one who is sad, is also evident in his physical body language. The facial expressions of a happy person are totally different from the facial expressions of a sad person; the physical wrinkles are different.

Moreover, the expression of happiness isn’t only evidenced in the facial wrinkles. An incomplete happiness doesn’t exude so much, and it will only be visible on the person’s face; whereas when a person is truly happy, he will burst out singing and his feet will spontaneously begin to dance. Although this is a physical activity, it’s only an expression of the soul’s immense happiness.

Sometimes, the physical action doesn’t result from an expression of an existing internal feeling, but rather as something that awakens the internal {soul} emotion. A person’s activities have the potential

to awaken his emotions and to arouse the person's feelings. Someone who sings and dances, with the intention of becoming happy, in the end result, will indeed become happy.

The common denominator of these two ways is, that the physical activity is not an end in and of itself. The purpose is – awakening of feelings, whereas the activities are manifestation of or simply an awakening of the internal soul-feeling.

With respect to this aspect was the mitzvah-observance of the Avot: the physical activities that the Avot performed were only an expression of the intention of the soul. Their physical body was totally subservient to the G-dly soul within it, and all their actions were expressions of what the neshama sought. The actions of Ya'akov with the rods were, so to speak, a manifestation in the physical world of the spiritual content of the mitzvah of tefillin²⁹.

Even those mitzvot that they physically fulfilled exactly as we do after Mattan-Torah, the main focus was - the spirituality of the mitzvah. The physical action in and of itself has no significance, and was only a manifestation or an awakening of the spiritual content.

Based on this principle, something else becomes clear. As known, the three Avot, Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov, correspond to the three higher sefirot {spheres. One of the Divine attributes or emanations which are the source of the corresponding ten faculties (kochot) of the soul; (the word 'sefira' literally means 'count', a reference to the Counting of the Omer).} Chesed {means kindness or benevolence. It denotes the unbounded loving-kindness with which Gd created the worlds and with which all of creation is permeated}, Gevurah {means restrictive power. Since the infinite and unlimited Chesed of Gd is intended for finite creatures unable to absorb infinite kindness and yet

29. See: Chasidic discourses by the Rebbe Rashab delivered in year 5654 (1894) *ibid*;

Chasidic discourses by the Rebbe Rashab, delivered in year 5665 (1905) p. 220. *Likkutei Sichos* Vol. 3 Sichas on Parshas Yisro.

remain in physical existence, the attribute of Chesed is controlled and limited by the aspect of gevura. Gevura means the power to limit and conceal the Infinite Light so that each creature can receive according to its capacity} and Tifferet {merges / blends chesed and gevura, so that a proper mixture of the two can produce a bearable revelation of chesed to finite created beings}. As expounded upon in the holy kabbalistic texts, the central activities of each and every one of the Avot corresponded to his specific spiritual trait: Avraham's primary occupation was with deeds of lovingkindness – chesed; Yitzchak's main focus was digging wells, activity related to the trait of gevurah; and in relation to Ya'akov the main characteristic of his engagement with the rods was a paradigm of the trait of tifferet. And ostensibly, after Mattan-Torah why don't we also find these kinds of distinctions amongst the Jewish people, but rather we all perform the mitzvot the same way ?

However, according to the above explanation, this becomes easily understood. Since the main focus of mitzvah-observance by the Avot was spiritual, and the actions were just a manifestation of such, we find differences in their actions, corresponding to their spiritual focus in Divine worship. (and as far as the 'hitkalilut hamidot' {interaction among the various sefirot}, each one of the Avot 'drew down' the inner content of all the mitzvot via his action); whereas after Mattan-Torah the main focus is on the palpable action, and with respect to this everyone is equivalent³⁰.

Did Avraham Err in False Discernment?

E. This principle can be found in several places. For example: the halacha "Hospitality to guests is greater than welcoming

30. See: Chasidic discourses by Rebbe Rashab delivered in year 5654 (1894) *ibid*.

the presence of the Shechinah” is derived in the Talmud³¹ from the narrative of Avraham Avinu and the angels at the beginning of the Torah portion of “Va’eira” {Bereishis 18,1}. In spite of the fact that he experienced a Divine Revelation, {for it is written,} (“G-d appeared to him” {Bereishis 18,1}), nevertheless, when he saw three men standing, he ran towards them, invited them into his home, and served them food and drink.

This requires explanation: these visitors were none other than angels in the guise of people. In that case, truth be told, Avraham did not fulfill the mitzvah of Hospitality to wayfarers. The angels only appeared to be eating and drinking, {but did not, in reality, do so}. He did not really give them anything, nor did they receive anything. So, in fact, the halachic permissibility to ‘abandon’ G-d’s revelation to run and bring them into his abode, was based on the false impression that they were mortals, and he is thereby performing a mitzvah, but in reality, it was not a mitzvah, so it turns out that he ‘abandoned’ G-d’s presence unnecessarily ! Is it possible for us to say that from Heaven it was arranged to cause Avraham Avinu to err in such a matter, G-d forbid ?!

But since this occurred before Mattan-Torah, there is no shortcoming. The mitzvah of hospitality to guests before Mattan-Torah bears no semblance to the mitzvah of hospitality to guests after Mattan-Torah.

The focus of the mitzvot that preceded Mattan-Torah was {the spiritual side of the mitzvah,} the intent and internal feeling {mental/psychological content therein}.

The mitzvah of gemilut chassadim {the performance of loving-kindness}, is that the trait of chesed in the soul of the person will be exhibited visibly. In respect to this aspect, the need for an **act** of doing chesed is in order that the trait become apparent, revealed, and manifest. As long as the chesed only remains inside the person’s heart and doesn’t become palpable via an individual deed, the completeness of the chesed is lacking. (Much the same, the proof that a person is

31. Shabbos 127a.

totally happy is precisely when he automatically starts dancing.)

That being the situation, when angels approached Avraham resembling guests, and this aroused within him his innate trait of *chesed*, to the extent that he ran towards them, ritually slaughtered three calves, in order to feed them three tongues with mustard, etc. – by virtue of this, the trait of *chesed* became manifest at the practical level, thereby revealing his trait of *chesed* to its full extent (as opposed to what would have been the case if these ‘guests’ had not arrived, then his inborn trait of *chesed* would have remained dormant in his soul and would not have been vivified).

And since before Mattan-Torah this is the purpose of the mitzvot – awakening the intent and internal emotion – so Avraham Avinu did fulfill the mitzvah of hospitality to guests in a perfect manner; even in the situation where the guests only **appeared to him** as human beings³².

On the other hand, after the Giving of the Torah the main focus of the mitzvot is the actual performance of an action. Therefore nowadays, if the carrying out of the act is missing (as in the above example, where the guests were not people, but angels) – so despite the fact that the emotion was awakened and completely, fully revealed, the person did not fulfill the mitzvah.

So, we see, that although intentions for the mitzvot are listed in sacred writings (both literal level intentions, for instance, regarding the mitzvah of tefillin, to submit our soul and the desires and thoughts of our heart to His service; as well as intentions brought down in the kabbala), nevertheless, the whole topic of intentions while performing mitzvot is mentioned only very briefly in the Code of Jewish Law, whereas regarding the performance of the mitzvot there is a tremendous quantity of halachot.

This illustrates that the primary focus of the mitzvot after the Giving

32. See Likkutei Sichos Vol. 8 Additions to Parshas Vayera from Paragraph 18.

of the Torah is the actual performance. For if the performance is only a manifestation or arousal³³ of the inner spiritual content, why is so much emphasis placed on the details of the performance; the main focus should have been on the intentions and spiritual content of the mitzvah, and not on the physical expression of it?!

This can be compared to a person who wants to become happy, and the only thing he's preoccupied with is arranging his facial features like those of a happy person.... it's clear that someone who wants to arouse within himself a happy frame of mind, his main focus has to be instilling in his heart the suitable emotions, whereas facial features are only an expression of the inner, happy feeling.

Furthermore, imagine a situation where a Jew is in prison and does not have tefillin. Even if he were to focus his thoughts on all the intentions related to the mitzvah of tefillin, both literal level intentions, and even on those intentions brought down in the kabbala – he did not fulfil the performance of the mitzvah. It is clear that he will not be liable for this, because it was beyond his control {sheer accident}, and “the Divine Law prescribed exemption in cases of accident”³⁴. Notwithstanding this rule, - “we don't say that in the case of accident, it is still considered as having been done”³⁵. On the other hand, if he actually performed the mitzvah according to all the details required by halacha, but for some reason he did not have the proper intention – he did fulfill the mitzvah, and makes the blessing “Who has sanctified

33. This aspect of the mitzvot (that they awaken the intention of the person), do exist also in the mitzvot after the Giving of the Torah, as stated in {The **Sefer**} HaChinukh (“Book of Education”){, an anonymous work written in 13th-century Spain that clearly details the 613 commandments and explains the reasons behind them),} related to many mitzvot (see for instance Mitzvah 16) “Man acts according to his actions (i.e. our actions influence how we behave). It is self-evident that this is not the most important aspect of the mitzvot, as explained above, in the text.

34. Bava Kama 28,2.

35. See Jerusalem Talmud Kiddushin Chapter 3 Halacha 2.

us with His commandments, and commanded us to put on tefillin". The spiritual sanctity of the mitzvah of tefillin, is drawn down in its entirety as a result of the act performed (certainly there is also a necessity to have intention for the mitzvah, and "a mitzvah without intent is like a body without a soul"³⁶, but despite this – "practice is the essential thing"³⁷).

This is the difference between before Mattan-Torah and after Mattan-Torah regarding the 'lower' level: before Mattan-Torah, the descent of the higher realms to below was only regarding the perspective of the 'lower' realms, as they relate to the 'higher' realms, the spiritual part that is in the creations. Physicality, the act itself, was only an expression of the inner, spiritual emotion. But after Mattan-Torah, the epitome of the 'higher' joined and connected with the epitome of the 'lower'. The focus is on the deed itself.

So we see that the difference between the descending of the higher realms to below that was after Mattan-Torah, and that which transpired before Mattan-Torah, is twofold: a. the level of the 'higher' that descends to below (before Mattan-Torah this was only regarding the perspective of the 'higher' as it relates to the 'lower'; though after Mattan-Torah the epitome of the 'higher' joined and connected with the epitome of the 'lower');

b. in the level of the 'lower' to which the 'higher' descends to below (before Mattan-Torah this was only regarding the perspective of the 'higher', as it relates to the uppermost level of the 'lower'; though after Mattan-Torah it {the epitome of the 'higher'} descended, {joined and connected with the epitome,} with the essence itself of the 'lower')³⁸.

36. See Likkutei-Torah of the Ari z"l beginning of Parshas Eikev.

37. See Pirkei Avot Chapter 1 Mishna 17.

38. In a like manner there is a difference regarding the raising of the lower level to a higher level: when Chanoch ascended on high he turned into an angel. He was nullified and relinquished his previous lower-level status. As opposed to Moshe {Rabbeinu}, who, when he ascended {Mount Sinai} to Ha-Shem, he went up with his actual, physical body.

Metamorphosis in the Physical Reality

F. Thus far we have dealt with the distinction between mitzvah-observance before Mattan-Torah and that after Mattan-Torah, related to the **performance** of the mitzvot themselves. But there are also differences in regards to the results {i.e. the impact, the after-effects} of what the mitzvah-observance **effects**.

After Mattan-Torah, observing a mitzvah using a physical object, changes its status to a holy object. The item with which the mitzvah was performed changes from being a mundane object to a holy one. Indeed, there are varying levels to this – Torah scrolls, tefillin and mezuzot are “actual items of holiness”³⁹; a mantle of the sefer Torah, leather straps of tefillin, enter into the category “accessories of holiness”; whereas tzitzis {tzitzit are specially knotted ritual fringes, or tassels, attached to the four corners of a garment} (for example) is considered at even the lesser level of “accessories of religious observances {[when disused] are to be thrown away}”⁴⁰, but the idea is the same for all the mitzvot – for all of them, by the act of performing the mitzvah, G-dly holiness which is totally above {and disassociated from} the world, is established in the physical item with which the mitzvah was done.

Even more so, the flesh-and-blood arm that had the tefillin on it, becomes internally refined, and becomes transformed from what it was before the mitzvah was performed.

Similarly, with respect to study of Torah: by means of a Jew learning Torah, his physical brain becomes connected and attached to the Essence of G-d that resides in the Torah, to the point where they

39. See SHULCHON ORUCH ORACH CHAIM Siman 42 paragraph 3, and in the Magen Avraham siman katan 6.

40. See Megilla 26b.

SHULCHON ORUCH ORACH CHAIM Siman 154 paragraph 3. Siman 21 paragraph 1.

become one {united} entity – G-dliness actually dwells within the grey-matter of his brain.

In addition, regarding the study of Torah, not only does it affect the person who is studying, but also the world around him: when a Jew walks in the street and meditates Torah-thoughts, this causes a refinement on the place upon which he treads.

As opposed to this, before the Giving of the Torah the deeds performed by the Avot indeed brought down holiness into the world, but the holiness remained in the spiritual sphere of the world. It remained abstract, and did not become attached or established, nor did it effect any change in the object itself.

The difference in regards to the **results** {i.e. **the impact, the after-effects**} of the mitzvah depends on the manner of **performance** of the mitzvah that was explained above: since before Mattan-Torah G-d chose to yearn for the spiritual side of the mitzvot, and the physical act was merely an offshoot of the spiritual content, this in itself indicates that the physical act is not an end in and of itself, and if that is the case, why should such an act effect an inherent change in the physical matter?

However, after Mattan-Torah, Ha-Shem chose to desire the physical act. Such that the mitzvah does have the potential the effect an inherent change in the physical matter itself.

[An exception to this rule was the mitzvah of mila {circumcision}, which also by the Avot effected a change in the object upon which the mitzvah was carried out. This is the content of {the mitzvah of} mila – “My covenant shall be in your flesh”⁴¹, covenant and a sign in the physical flesh itself.

So, along the same lines, it will elucidate why, when Avraham Avinu wanted to make Eliezer swear, he instructed him “place your hand

41. Bereishis 17,13.

under my thigh {to swear an oath}”⁴². Ostensibly, this is the opposite of modesty ? But since an oath must be done by holding a holy object, and before Mattan-Torah the only holy object that existed in the world was the mila, so Avraham {specifically had no other possible choice and therefore} said “place your hand under my thigh {to swear an oath}”.

Nonetheless it is explained, that even the mitzvah of mila before Mattan-Torah does not affect the physical as does mila after Mattan-Torah. This is also evident from what is written above (in paragraph A.) quoting from the Rambam in his Peirush Hamishneh referring to the mitzvah of mila. But this is not the place to get into a lengthy exposition about this topic⁴³].

THE NEWNESS OF MATTAN-TORAH

G. From all that was explained above, we discern that there are two distinctions between the mitzvot before Mattan-Torah versus the mitzvot that are after Mattan-Torah relating to the ‘lower’:

a. Regarding the **act** of the mitzvah: before Mattan-Torah the focus was the spiritual content of the mitzvah, and the physical action was just a ‘tool’ for use by the spiritual aspect, whereas after Mattan-Torah the focus shifted to the physical act.

b. Relating to what is **effected** via {performance of} the mitzvah: before Mattan-Torah the mitzvah did not effect any change in the physical item with which the mitzvah was performed, whereas after Mattan-Torah, the mitzvah does effect a change in the physical object with which the mitzvah was performed and imbues it with holiness.

42. Bereishis 24,2.

43. See Likkutei Sichos Vol. 5 Sichas on 20 MarCheshvan.

According to normal human logic, the manner of mitzvah-observance before Mattan-Torah is much more comprehensible. Regarding these mitzvot, we can comprehend meaning. When a person awakens the innate, good, traits that he has, thereby awakening in his soul a spiritual cleaving, this is an important advantage. What requires explanation is the manner of performing mitzvot after Mattan-Torah – what's paramount about doing physical acts in and of themselves, even without any spiritual awakening of the soul ? And following the imagery mentioned above: the facial expression/wrinkles without the inner feeling of happiness doesn't have any significance whatsoever !

If so, explanation is required, what indeed is important about the manner of fulfilling the mitzvot after Mattan-Torah ?

Likewise, regarding the result, the effect: the fact that before Mattan-Torah holiness was not established in the physical matter, does not require elucidation. It's self-evident that there is no connection between physical matter and abstract, spiritual holiness. Any rational person won't question why one cannot explain an intellectual idea to an inanimate stone, for it's crystal-clear that there's no connection between a profound idea and a rock. So much more so, when we are dealing with Divine Holiness, which is totally disconnected from any semblance of the creation, such that there is no connection between it and the physicality of the world, so it's no wonder that it doesn't affect or modify it.

What does require elucidation is, how do the mitzvot after Mattan-Torah have the power to effect a change in the physicality of the world ?

The explanation is latent in what's written above (paragraphs A-B), in the difference between the level of the 'higher' from whence emanates the Torah and mitzvot that were before Mattan-Torah, and that that is after Mattan-Torah:

Before Mattan-Torah, the connection between the 'Higher', G-d,

with the creations was from the aspect of the 'higher' as it relates to the 'lower'. The Torah that they learned was similar to the rav that contracts his intellectual level according to the intellectual level of the talmid. And even the mitzvot, whose whole essence is command and instruction without any tzimzum, they also emanated from the level of the 'higher' as it relates to the 'lower'. As in the example of the master who instructs his servants, that even though there is no real tzimzum (as there is in the case of the rav who teaches his student), however the mere fact that he relates to the servants indicates that there is a 'lowering' and a 'bending', {figuratively speaking} from the essence of the master.

Since these Torah and mitzvot came from the level of G-dliness as it relates to the creations, indicating that their source is at that level where the creations are relevant. This raises two points: a. the joining that comes about via this Torah-study and these mitzvot being observed is only with this level, the level of G-dliness at the level of the creations; b. the joining only connects at the uppermost level of the creation, the spirituality in it.

This matter will also be understood from the parable of the influence of the rav to the talmid: on the one hand, since the intellectual level of the talmid is lower than that of the rav, he must contract his intellect according to the talmid's intellectual level. If so, the talmid is only connecting with the contracted intellect of the rav. On the other hand, after all the contractions of the rav, there is a basic condition in order to allow there to be intellectual influence at all - the talmid has to be a 'talmid'; an intelligent person who is interested to receive from and understand what the rav says. Something that isn't 'a receptacle' which is receptive to intellectual ideas, like an inanimate object, has no significance whatsoever in relation to the rav. This being the case, only the 'higher' part of the talmid, his intellect, connects with what the rav says⁴⁴.

44. Also with the example of the master who commands his servant, the servant

Similarly, the symbolism above: when the connection with the 'higher' is from the perspective of G-dliness that relates to the 'lower', meaning to say, the level of G-dliness that from its perspective it relates to the creations, so, on the one hand, the connection is not with the 'higher' as it is in its essence, but only as it descends and relates to the 'lower'; and, on the other hand, the connection is only with the level of the 'lower' that has a proximity and can relate to the 'higher' (i.e. the spiritual part of the creation), whereas the level of the 'lower' which is not 'a receptacle' which is receptive to receive the 'higher' (the physicality of the creation), does not connect to the 'higher'.

Therefore, before Mattan-Torah, when the Torah and mitzvot were from the aspect of G-d as He relates to the creations, the utmost importance was given to the spiritual intention, whereas to a physical action in and of itself, there was no importance. So, there was also no possible way that performance of a mitzvah could effect a change in the physical existence in which it is performed; there is no reason that in materiality will be established G-dly holiness.

QUINTESSENCE OF BOUNDLESSNESS

H. All this is when we are speaking of the situation as it was before Mattan-Torah. At Mattan-Torah began a new situation in which the Torah and mitzvot were given from G-d Himself as He is in His Essence. From the perspective of G-d Himself {at this level}, the creations have absolutely no significance whatsoever, and just

has to be in a somewhat 'receptive mode' to accept the command. Meaning: commanding the servant indicates the authority the master has over the servant; and the servant fulfilling the command shows the subservience of the servant towards the master. This relationship can only exist amongst humans, as opposed to something which cannot be termed subservient/receptive, like an animal, towards whom it is not relevant to speak of this kind of relationship.

like the physicality of the creations have no value, the same goes for the spirituality of the creations. Physicality and spirituality are totally equivalent in relation to this level of G-d.

We can illustrate this with an example from mathematics. Compared to a million, the number one hundred thousand is far away, but still has importance and value; whereas the number one is insignificant.

All this is correct when comparing a finite number, even a million, but in relation to an infinite number it cannot be said that one hundred thousand or even a million is closer to infinity than one is. Just like the distance between one to infinity is infinite, such is the distance between a million and infinity infinite. In other words, if we add a million to the one, it won't get us any closer to infinity.

Similarly, the symbolism above:

We are used to evaluating things as they are defined according to our conception of them. From our definition of hierarchy of importance, spiritual intention and emotional cleaving have value and importance, whereas physical deeds do not.

This line of reasoning held true before Mattan-Torah, when G-d's revelation wasn't from His Essence, the aspect of "Anochi", but rather as He contracted and limited Himself in relation to the world. Since at this level there is already an allowance for the world to exist, for limitation, such that the number one-hundred thousand is significant while the number one is not; spirituality is considered important, but physicality isn't.

But after Mattan-Torah a substantive change occurred. At Mattan-Torah there was a revelation of G-d as He is in His Essence, the aspect of "Anochi". Regarding G-d Himself, heaven and earth, physicality and spirituality, are totally equivalent. Related to His Essence, just like a physical act (in and of itself) isn't relevant to Him and doesn't connect us to Him, exactly so spiritual cleaving is irrelevant to Him and doesn't connect us with Him.

The level of G-dliness that the creations can 'grasp' via their spiritual efforts is only the level within which they exist, the level where they are found, but G-d Himself cannot be grasped by virtue of any act or human effort. The only way to connect to the Essence of G-d is - those ways that **He Himself** chose with His Free Choice. The only way that it is possible to connect with G-d is to follow the route that He Himself paved.

On the other hand, since at this level the connection is from the viewpoint of the 'Supreme Will' exclusively (and not from the value of, or the closeness of the 'lower'), therefore, by virtue of G-d being totally Boundless, He has the capability to reveal and invest Himself anywhere and any way He wishes, into physicality or to spirituality⁴⁵.

And since "the Holy One, blessed be He, wished to have an abode in **the lower worlds**"⁴⁶, G-d inserted His Essence specifically into the Torah which is en clothed in physical things and into the mitzvot whose context is physical actions.

That is to say, from the perspective that G-d's desire is to be in the 'lower' world, and that His blessed Holiness be established in physicality, that's why He gave His Torah and His mitzvot to Bnei Yisrael, here in this world, that within them He Himself can be found,

45. That is to say, that when the connection is from the perspective that the '**lower**' is significant, then since only the spiritual side within it is significant, the connection will only be with this part. At this level, it's unlikely that physical deed will hold any significance. But when the joining isn't according to the value of the 'lower', since the 'lower' from its own perspective (even the spiritual side in it) has no value related to the 'higher', such that on this level, the joining is not from the perspective of the closeness of values that exist between them, but rather, only because the 'higher' is totally boundless, and has the capability to choose whatever He wants – even something physical.

46. Midrash Tanchuma {Parshas} Nasso 16.

And see Tanya Chapter 36 (explained below).

and only via them Bnei Yisrael connect with G-d Himself and establish His dwelling place in the world.

In the words of the Admoor Hazaken in the Book of Tanya⁴⁷: G-d from His Own perspective “no thought can grasp Him at all”⁴⁸ – and when can we possibly grasp Him ? – only when He is apprehended and enclothed in the Torah and its mitzvot, then the soul ‘grasps’ them and is enclothed, {so to speak,} in G-d’s actual Essence, “because The Torah and the Holy One, blessed is He, are entirely one” {Tanya Chapter 4 brought from the Zohar}.

From here it is evident that when the connection is from the perspective of the ‘higher’ as it relates to the ‘lower’, then the connection is with the ‘lower’ only inasmuch as it relates to the ‘higher’; and only when the connection is with the essence of the ‘higher’, then it has the capability of connecting with the essence of the ‘lower’.

[From here we discover the immense value of the practical mitzvot. From time to time, thoughts like ‘doing this mitzvah is nothing but a technical act’, ‘the act doesn’t have a lasting impact’, ‘what’s the big deal ?’, ‘who needs to be so meticulous about each detail ?’ come to mind. This applies both to the person who is performing the mitzvah, as well as relating to exerting influence upon another person: sometimes we make light of the value of performing a seemingly ‘minor’ mitzvah with a fellow Jew who is not {yet} mitzvah-observant. When it comes to bringing him to an interesting Torah class – we think - this could possibly influence him. He’ll enjoy it, and will return for other classes until he’ll become a full-fledged ‘returnee’; as opposed to a dry, ‘just plain and simple’, like a quick, one-time wrapping tefillin, or giving a coin to tzedakah (and anything similar), superficially, nothing will be affected within the person. He’ll go through the motions, sometimes

47. Chapter 4.

48. Based on the language of the Tikkunei Zohar in the discourse “Passach Eliyahu” {recited as part of the Mincha prayer for Erev Shabbat (p. 149 Siddur TEHILLAT Ha-Shem)}.

even without any intention, and then he immediately returns to his daily affairs !!

But the fact of the matter is, that the value of these acts is not measured according to our logic. As explained above, the true value of the mitzvah is not related to the loftiness of the deed itself, but rather from the perspective of the Divine Will {that is en clothed} within it. The Divine Will is what endows the mitzvot with their worth, and from this perspective every last one of the mitzvot (even those that appear like ‘minor’ acts) connect the Jew with the Essence of G-d, and ‘draws Him down’ into this world. A Jew that stands on a street corner donning tefillin, ‘draws down’ upon himself and upon the place that he treads an amazing Divine Holiness.

So, despite the fact that after the act of putting on tefillin the person continues with his regular routine, via the performance of the action of the mitzvah he connected with G-d!

Namely: the mitzvot are not a means to an end in any way, shape, or form; the mitzvot are an end in themselves.

Basically the drawing down of the Holiness via mitzvah-performance even effects a change in the person and elevates him. As our Sages, of blessed memory, have stated⁴⁹ “for one mitzvah brings about another” – the enormous amount of holiness from the mitzvah, effects a massive connection between the person who performs it and G-dliness, and this bond creates an inner luring to fulfill an additional mitzvah. Despite the fact that it’s possible the person may not have any inkling where this internal urge is coming from.]

49. Pirkei Avot Chapter 4 Mishna 2.

“FRAGRANCES” VERSUS “OIL / OINTMENT”

I. In summary: there are three differences between the Torah and the mitzvot that were before Mattan-Torah and those that are after Mattan-Torah:

a. Regarding the ‘higher’ – if it’s the ‘higher’ as it relates to the ‘lower’ or the ‘higher’ as it is in its essence.

And two additional differences from the perspective of the ‘lower’:

b. Related to the act of the mitzvot – before Mattan-Torah the focus is the spiritual and the emotion of the soul (much as the act simply serves as an expression of the spiritual content), yet after Mattan-Torah the focus is on the physical action in and of itself;

c. Regarding what is accomplished by the mitzvot – preceding Mattan-Torah there was no change in the material itself, albeit after Mattan-Torah, the Torah and mitzvot have the capacity to effect a change in the physical sphere.

These three topics are hinted to in the words of the Midrash that the Torah and mitzvot that the Avot performed “were, {so to speak,} merely fragrances, but for us, Your Name is an ointment poured forth”⁵⁰.

The distinction between fragrance and ointment is also threefold: a. the ointment is a substance, yet fragrance is only something that emanates from an object; b. oil is something that the body can benefit from by being ingested, whereas fragrance is something that only benefits the soul; c. the person gets long-lasting benefit from the oil he ate; the oil enters his body and is converted to his own flesh and blood (to the extent that the characteristics of food can be reproduced

50. See related to this topic: Chasidic discourses by the Rebbe Rayatz, delivered in year 5706 (1946) “Hemshech Ma’amarei Shavuot”. Chasidic discourse “Vayidaber Elokim” SEFER HAMA’AMORIM MELUKOT (Of the REBBIE Zy”a) (volume 3 of the 4-volume edition printed in 2002) section 7.

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 8 Sichs 3 on Parshas Nasso paragraph 11.

in the person's behavior. As the Ramban {Rabbi Moses ben Nachman – 'Nachmanides' 1195-1270} wrote in his commentary on the Torah⁵¹, that the reason the Torah forbids certain foods, is so that certain undesirable character traits won't be duplicated in the person), unlike the benefit a person gets from a fragrance which is merely temporary and transient, and the fragrance itself quickly passes and expires, without leaving a trace.

The latter two distinctions, hint to two differences between the situation as it was before Mattan-Torah to that after Mattan-Torah related to the 'lower':

The detail that the fragrance only benefits the soul, hints at the mitzvot as they were before Mattan-Torah, where the main focus was in the spiritual realms; versus oil, from which the physical body can also derive benefit, hints to the mitzvot after Mattan-Torah, where the focus is on the action.

The second detail about fragrance, that quickly passes and expires, without leaving a trace, hints at the mitzvot before Mattan-Torah which did not establish holiness in the physicality of the world; whereas oil, that becomes part and parcel of the person himself, and influences the character traits of the person, hint to the mitzvot after Mattan-Torah, which do have the capacity to effect a change in the physicality of the world, and so to speak change its characteristics (the physical parchment of the tefillin becomes holy).

These two distinctions emanate from the third difference: the fragrance, which is merely something that is emitted, hints to the fact that the root of Torah and mitzvot that were before Mattan-Torah is from the level of G-dliness as it relates to the creation, which is **an emanation** of the G-dliness; unlike the Torah and mitzvot after Mattan-Torah where the root is in "Anochi" in G-d Himself, as in the example of the oil which is tangible (and not just an emanation).

51. Vayikra 11,11.

The bottom line is that in the comparison that the Midrash compares Torah and mitzvot after Mattan-Torah to “Your name is an ointment poured forth”, is concealed the profound innovation that took place at the giving of the Torah at Sinai:

Firstly, on this occasion G-d imbued His Essence into the Torah and mitzvot that He gave to Bnei Yisrael, and thereby enabled the possibility of connecting to Him; secondly, by virtue of this the Torah and mitzvot have the potential to convert and change the physicality of the world and establish it as His, may He be blessed, dwelling place in the lower spheres.

According to this, we clearly understand the significance of what the Rambam said, that our performance of the mitzvot must be because of the command that was given at Sinai: these mitzvot are immeasurably higher than those before Mattan-Torah. By fulfilling them, the Jew connects with the Etzem of G-d which was revealed at Mount Sinai and G-d ‘infused’ His Essence into these mitzvot, and thereby he makes Him, may He be blessed a dwelling place in the lower spheres.