

Sefer
Likkutei Amarim

(“A compilation of Teachings”)

Part One

Entitled

Sefer Shel Beinonim

(“The Book of the Intermediates”)

The Alter Rebbe himself wrote the (above) title page¹, and thus gives this holy work the title – “*Sefer shel benoneim*” – “*The Book of the Intermediates*” – for as we will learn later on there exists different ranks and classes within Divine Service (Avodas Hashem). Therefore the Alter Rebbe teaches and clarifies, although not everyone can attain the highest rank of “Tzaddik” (“Righteous”), the rank of “Benonei” (“Intermediate”), however, is attainable by all, every Jew can reach the rank of “Benonei”.

The Alter Rebbe continues:

Compiled from sacred books and from teachers of heavenly saintliness, whose souls are in Eden; based upon the verse² “For this thing is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it³”; explaining clearly how it is exceedingly near, in both a lengthy and short way, with the aid of the Holy One, Blessed be He.

The Alter Rebbe writes – *Compiled from sacred books and from teachers of heavenly saintliness, whose souls are in Eden* – certainly there are novelties (Chiddushim) of the Alter Rebbe herein, however the alter Rebbe humbly writes the above. It is a received tradition by Chassdim⁴ that – ‘*sacred books*’ – refers to Maimonides, Maharal of Prague and the Shaloh. And – *from teachers of heavenly saintliness* – refers to the Ba’al Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezritch⁵.

The Alter Rebbe teaches that the Tanya is founded upon the verse – “*For this thing is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it*” (This verse follows the sequence of verses where Moses tells all the Jews that the study of the Torah and subsequently the fulfillment of all its Mitzvos is “Not in heaven⁶” “Nor is it

¹ See Igros Kodesh of the Rebbe vol. 17 p. 93

² Deuteronomy 30:14

³ כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד בפֿיך ובלבבך לעשותו

⁴ Plural of “Chassid” or “Hassid”.

⁵ See footnote 1

⁶ Ibid 30:12

beyond the sea⁷... rather it is “exceedingly close” and within the reach of all Jews. –compilers note). The need for an explanation is clear, for how indeed is it “exceedingly close” (קרוב עליך)?

The above verse demands the control of the thought, speech, and action of man. This is hinted to in the verse itself: I. “*in your heart*” (ובלבבך) –thought. II. “*in your mouth*” (בפיך) –speech. III. “*to do it*” (לעשותה) –action.

When it comes to the thought, speech and action of man it is ultimately within in his control. After all with (much) effort one can push away a negative or evil thought. Still, this requires an explanation on how it is “exceedingly close”.

However, the word ובלבבך (“*in your heart*”) does not mean “thought”, but rather “*in your heart*” –in other words it is the *feelings* of the heart that one is required to discipline. One is commanded to stimulate a love for G-d and to fear Him, thereby studying the Torah and fulfilling its Mitzvos with these passionate feelings (Ahavas Hashem and Yiras Hashem). How is this attainable by all! Let alone “exceedingly close”?

This Holy Sefer “Tanya” is founded to explain how indeed all the above is קרוב מאוד –“exceedingly close”.

The Alter Rebbe states that the method of this study is –*in both a lengthy and short way*⁸. There are different explanations on the meaning of these words, however the Alter Rebbe certainly was referring to story told over in the Talmud⁹, there the sage Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Chananya relays the following: “one time I was walking along the path, and I saw a young boy sitting at the crossroads. And I said to him: on which path shall we walk in order to get to the city? He said to me: this path is short and long (קצרה וארוכה) and that path is long and short (ארוכה וקצרה). When I approached the city I found that gardens and orchards surrounded it...”

We learn from the above how although the first way was indeed short, it however ended up truly being the longer way, for in the end the path was surrounded and blocked off. The second way however may be longer, but it is the path to *enter* the city. The moral of the above story is as follows:

There are two general paths of Chassidus, both paved by the students of the Ba’al Shem Tov;

- I. **Faith (אמונה)**. As Reb Shloime Karliner said on the verse¹⁰ ‘...the righteous (Tzaddik) shall live by his faith’ –“the righteous (Tzaddik) shall *make others* live by his faith”. The followers of the Tzaddik must only have faith, and rely on the Tzaddik and his lofty capabilities alone, in order to receive the energy required to serve G-d.
- II. In addition to the above, the Alter Rebbe paved a new way. This is the discipline that demands the usage of the intellectual faculties –**Wisdom (חכמה), Understanding (בינה) and Knowledge (דעת)**¹¹ –in Divine service (Avodas Hashem).

The difference between these two paths is like the difference between the two paths recorded in the Talmud. One is “short and long”, and the other is “long and short”. The first way of Chassidus is “short” in the sense that it requires almost not steps, rather only pure faith and connection to the Tzaddik. Yet, in the long run it has its shortcomings, for the faith does not permeate the soul and body. Therefore one may still have underlying negative views in the mind and evil characteristics in the heart even though he has faith. Therefore, along this path he is met with a deterrent, blocking him from entering the Holy city, making the path truly “long” one.

⁷ Ibid 30:13

⁸ בדרך ארוכה וקצרה

⁹ Tractate Eruvin 53b

¹⁰ Habakkuk 2:4

¹¹ חב"ד Forming the famed acronym

The second way however requires one to serve G-d with his intellectual faculties as well, therefore requiring him to refine the thoughts and views in his mind and characteristics in his heart. This is a path that requires many steps and much discipline, making it “long”. However, in truth it is truly “short”, for through this path one allows the faith to permeate his whole being, granting him entry in the “Holy city”.

Seemingly, the first way of Chassidus is not a path at all (for the plain meaning of a “Path” (דרך) is –a way one can walk on), but the first way appears to have no steps at all! In other words, there appears to be no refinement of man. Why then is it called a “Path”?

Truthfully, the first way is also a path. However, it is considered to be a path from above (Milma’alah), while it only affects the person (Milmatah) in a “general” way below. Still, this path allows him to fulfill his Divine service, although there is the blockage of the “details” –the refinement of the mind and heart –along the way.

It is the custom of Chassidim to study the approbations (Haskamos) to the Tanya as well.

The Alter Rebbe had a stipulation upon printing the Tanya, and that was to receive the approbations (Haskamos) of the students of the Maggid of Mezritch before finally printing the Tanya.

*Approbation by the famous Rabbi and Chassid, a G-dly man of saintly renown, our teacher **Rabbi Meshulam Zusil of Anipoli:***

I have seen the writing of this Rabbi and Gaon; this G-dly man, saintly and pure; this luminous lens, He has done well, and G-d in his wonderful kindness has places in his pure heart to do all this (i.e. to write the Tanya) in order to show G-d’s people His holy ways. It was [the Alter Rebbe’s] intention not to publish these writings, for it is not his custom. But because these pamphlets¹² have spread among all Israel in numerous copies by sundry copyists (Sofrim Meshunim), and as a result of the many various transcriptions, the copyists’ errors have multiplied exceedingly, he was compelled to bring these pamphlets to the printing press [it is known that there were those that intentionally made errors, thus “compelling these pamphlets to be brought to the printing press”].

*G-d has aroused the spirit of the [two] partners, the outstanding and distinguished scholar R. Shalom Shachna, son of **R. Noach**, and the distinguished scholar **R. Mordechai**, son of **R. Shmuel Halevi**¹³, to bring these pamphlets to the printing house in Slavita. I congratulate them on this good deed. They were, however, apprehensive of the growing number of printing establishments which are wont to cause damage and ruin to the accredited ones. In view of this, we have resolved to give this approbation so that no man shall lift hand or foot¹⁴ to cause any damage, G-d forbid, to the aforementioned printers by encroaching upon their exclusive right in any manner. It is forbidden to any person to reprint this book without the knowledge of the said printers for a period of five full years from the date below. May he who heeds these words of mine be blessed with good. These are the words of one who demands this for the glory of the Torah, this day, Tuesday –the day on which the creator twice saw that “it is good” –of the weekly portion (Parshas) Tavo, in the year 556 of the [sixth] millennium [פרותיג"ו]. The insignificant **Meshulam Zusil of Anipoli**.*

*Approbation by the famous Rabbi and Chassid, a G-dly man of saintly renown, our teacher **Rabbi Yehudah Leib Hakohen:***

The wisdom of the man illuminates the face of the earth –when one sees hand[writing]s¹⁵ of the author, the G-dly man, saintly and pure, pious and humble, whose hidden [powers] have been revealed long ago when he sat at the seat of wisdom with our lord, master, and teacher, the world Gaon [alluding to the Maggid of Mezritch, the Teacher of the Alter Rebbe], and he drew water from the well of living water [–“מבאר” has the same letters as

¹² The Tanya was first distributed in the form of pamphlets (“Kuntreisim”).

¹³ The first is the Alter Rebbe’s son-in-law and father of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch, the third leader of Chabad (the “Tzemach Tzedek”); the second is R. Mordechai Gorowitz, the printer of Shklov.

¹⁴ Quoting from Genesis 41:44

¹⁵ The original reads, “the hands of” –perhaps a copyist’s error. (–Note by the Rebbe.)

“אברם” –this is an allusion to the son of the Maggid of Mezritch – אברם (Avraham the “Malach”), whom the Alter Rebbe learned with]. *Now Israel will rejoice* [alluding to Reb Yisroel Ba’al Shem Tov] *in his revelation of his holy words which have been compiled in preparation for the press, to teach the nation of G-d the ways of holiness, as anyone can perceive in the inner meaning of [the author’s] words. That which is common knowledge needs no proof, but for the fear of damage, so that no harm be caused to the printers, I hereby sound a firm warning –that no man raise his hand or foot to print (the Tanya) for a period of five years from the date below. May he who heeds these words of mine be blessed with good. These are the words of one who speaks thus for the glory of the Torah, this day, Tuesday, of the weekly portion (Parshas) Tavo, in the year 556 of the [sixth] millennium [תקנ”ו].* **Yehudah Leib Hakohen**

The Friediker records a story¹⁶, how the Alter Rebbe had sent messengers to deliver the Tanya to these two Tzaddikim. R’ Yehudah Leib Hakohen exclaimed: “Tanya is an incense (Ketores) that will break through all spiritual constraints [plagues¹⁷] that exist before the coming of Moshiach”. And R’ Zusia exclaimed: “With this Sefer HaTanya the Jewish nation will greet Moshiach”

Both of the approbations are signed on the same week –the Torah portion of Tavo. The Friediker writes¹⁸ two reasons for: 1. through the study of the Torah one can reveal the true will of the Neshamah (soul). For when one learns Tanya with great studiousness and in depth he reveals the core essence of the Neshamah. This is the connection to the Torah portion of Tavo, for as the portion starts –*and it will be, when you come (Tavo) into the land...’* –והיה כי תבוא אל הארץ. “When you will enter the land...this refers to the entrance to the “Neshamah” (Core soul), for through the study of the Tanya one will find that within the depths of his soul he desires to serve G-d completely. Moreover, the word “land” in the holy tongue –ארץ – is related to the word “will” –רצון [as it says in the Midrash¹⁹: ‘why is it called “land” (ארץ)? Because it desired (שרצתה) to do the will (רצון) of its Creator’].

2. In the Torah portion of Tavo there are curses, and Tanya is the incense (Ketores) that transforms the curses into Brachos.

The year the Tanya was printed (the same year as the above approbations) was 1796 –תקנ”ו [556 years since the start of the sixth millennium (5556 years since creation)]. This date when written in the Aleph Beis [תקנ”ו] is an acronym for –תענוג קטורת נפש ורוח –“pleasure”, “incense”, “soul” and “spirit”. In other words, it is through the Tanya that one can reveal the core will of the soul.

This [תקנ”ו] is the way R’ Yehudah Leib Hakohen spelled the year at the end of his approbation, Just as his exclamation in the story mentioned above: “Tanya is an incense (Ketores) that will break through all spiritual constraints [plagues] that exist before the coming of Moshiach”.

R’ Zusia however spelled it differently –פדותינו –meaning “Redemption” [for this word contains the numerical value of the date 556 as well]. For he was writing the same message as he exclaimed upon first receiving the Tanya –“With this Sefer HaTanya the Jewish nation will greet Moshiach” –the final and ultimate Redemption²⁰.

The next approbation was published by the Alter Rebbe’s sons (first published in the Shklov 5574 (1814) edition of the Tanya):

Approbation of the Rabbis, long may they live, sons of the illustrious author, of blessed memory, whose soul is in

¹⁶ Iggros Kodesh of the Friediker Rebbe vol. 4 p. 266

¹⁷ "מגפות"

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Bereshis Rabbah 5:7

²⁰ Iggros Kodesh of the Friediker Rebbe vol. 4 p. 267

Eden. Whereas it has been agreed by us to grant permission and authorization to bring to the printing press, for a remembrance for the children of Israel the written works uprightness and truth, “words of the living G-d” by our lord, our father, and teacher of blessed memory, recorded personally by his own holy hand in his own saintly expression, whose words are like burning fiery coals, which ignite people’s hearts, to draw them near our Father in heaven.

These discourses are collectively entitled “Iggeres Hakodesh” (“the holy epistle”), being mostly sent by his holy eminence to teach the people of G-d the way by which they should walk and the deed which they should do. Inasmuch as [our father] has made reference, in many places, to his Sefer Likkutei Amarim, and since “the words of Torah are scanty (Ani'im) in one place and ample (Ashirim) in another²¹”, especially also since the [Iggeret Hakodesh] introduces new material (pertaining to Lekukutei Amarim) in the form of a Kuntres Acharon (“Later Boolet”) on certain chapters, which he wrote when he composed the Sefer Likkutei Amarim; the Kuntres Acharon consists of profound discussions and insights in the passages of the Zohar, Etz Chayim, which appear to contradict one another, and in his understanding spirit, [the author] resolves each passage according to its context as explained in Likkutei Amarim. Accordingly, we have deemed it proper to join [the discourses in Iggeres Hakodesh] to the Sefer Likkutei Amarim and Iggeres Hateshuvah of his saintly eminence our lord, our father, teacher and master.

Therefore we hereby place a great fence and the excommunication of the Rabbis for which there is no remedy, that no man lift his hand to print [these discourses] in their present form or one without the other, for a period of five years from the date below. This, however, must be made known: to our misfortune, the manuscripts written by his personal saintly hand, which were composed with great precision without a superfluous or deficient letter, have become extinct. All that has remained from the abundance of material is this small number of writing, which has been collected one by one from the copies spread among the discipline.

*Should, therefore, an error be discovered – “for who can avoid errors?²²” – the obvious error will be identified as deriving from a scribal slip, but the meaning will be clear. Today is the 5th day [Thursday], 22 Iyar, in the year 574 of the [sixth] millennium. Declared by **DovBer**, the son of my lord, father, teacher, and master, Gaon, and Chassid, saint of Israel, our teacher and Master **Schneur Zalman**, of blessed memory, whose soul rests in the hidden treasure houses of heaven. Declared also by **Chaim Avrohom**, the son of my lord, father, and teacher, and master, Gaon and Chassid our teacher and master **Schneur Zalman**; may the memory of the Tzaddik be blessed, whose soul rests in the hidden treasures houses of Heaven. Declared also by **Moshe**, the son of my lord, father, teacher, and master, Gaon and Chassid **Schneur Zalman**, of blessed memory, whose soul rests in the treasure houses of heaven.*

²¹ Paraphrase of Ecclesiastes 12:10

²² Psalms 19:13

Perek 01 part 03

PEREK ALEPH TANYA –CHAPTER ONE, IT IS TAUGHT...

It has been taught (Niddah, end of Ch. 3¹): an oath is administered to him [before birth, warning him]: 'be righteous and not wicked; and even if the whole world tells you that you are righteous –“Tzaddik”, regard yourself as if you were wicked –“Rasha”.'

Before we can even begin to study the life changing lessons the Alter Rebbe teaches herein, we must first decrypt the very first word it opens with –and subsequently the name this holy work has adopted –“Tanya”.

The Alter Rebbe begins by quoting a section in the Talmud tractate Niddah¹, where our sages discuss of a fetus when still in its mother's womb. Whereby the unborn fetus is compelled to make an oath that when its time arrives to descend down from heaven and into the world it will live life as a righteous man, and discard the ways of the wicked. In the words of the Talmud (ibid) *'be righteous ('Tzaddik') and do not be wicked ('Rasha')*.

The sage who taught this adage was an 'Amorah'² named 'Rabbi Simlai', and to those who are familiar with the study of the Talmud know that the word 'Tanya' ("Teaching") is only used when the author is a 'Tanna'³. However, here, despite this very rule, the word 'Tanya' appears. And for that matter within the actual text of the Talmud indeed the befitting term "Dorash" (a "Midrashic exposition") is used. Why then does the Alter Rebbe –who was known for his precise terminology*³ –choose this to be the opening word of this Holy work when it appears to be incorrect, and altogether out of place?

A possible reconciliation can be offered by simply quoting yet another Tractate (Yevamos 71b) where a discussion of an unborn fetus takes place, and there our sages refer to the abovementioned discussion in tractate Niddah. In this section of the Talmud the word 'Tanya' is used at the beginning of the discussion (thereby telling us that its author was 'Tanna'), thus differing from the "Girsa" (textual version) written here in tractate niddah. Therefore the Alter Rebbe uses the word "Tanya", for he sides with the Girsa recorded in another Tractate.

But this would not be sufficient, for it is merely only a technical reconciliation and still lacks a palpable explanation for the exact terminology the Alter Rebbe chooses.

It is quoted in the writings of the 'Arizal'⁴ that there exists a 'klippah' (impure spirit) named "Tanya". Therefore the Alter Rebbe opens with this very word hinting to its very purpose of being authored, and subsequently studied. For through the study of Torah in general, and the study of the inner dimension of Torah in particular, one can, and does, dispel darkness.

Now with the above (albeit, concise) preface we shall continue with the study of this important holy work.

The Rebbe the "Tzemach Tzedek"⁵ explains⁶ that the above Talmudic adage can be reorganized to read –'an (ability) is administered thus *satiating* him..., for the word "משביעים" –'administering an *oath*' –can be read "משביעים" – "Satiation", for both words come to teach the same thing. When the soul is still in heaven it is unaware of the travails of this world, hence it may succumb to the difficulties imposed upon it once clothed in the body.

¹ 30a

² "Amorah" (אמורה) refers to Jewish scholars of the period from about 200 to 500 CE, who "said" or "told over" the teachings of the oral Torah.

³ "Tannah" (תנא) refers to the rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the Mishnah, from approximately 10–220 CE, who "repeated" or "told over" the teachings of the oral Torah.

*³ See Igros Kodesh of the Friediker Rebbe vol. 4 p. 261

⁴ Isaac ben Solomon Luria Ashkenazi (1534–1572) was a leading Rabbi and Jewish mystic in the community of Safed in the Galilee region of Ottoman Syria, now Israel.

⁵ The third leader of the Chabad Lubavitch dynasty

⁶ See Kitzurim V'Haoros L'sefer Hatanya p.5

Therefore prior to its descent, the soul is administered the above oath insuring the success of the soul, henceforth satiating it. Additionally, continues the Tzemach Tzedek, the word can again be rearranged to convey a third meaning –“שבע”– “Seven”. This refers to the seven powers given to the soul upon the administering of the oath, thus satiating it.

The Alter Rebbe continues:

This requires to be understood, for it contradicts the Mishnaic dictum (Avos ch. 2²) ‘And be not wicked in your estimation’. Furthermore, if a man considers himself to be wicked he will be grieved at heart (Atzev), and will not be able to serve G-d joyfully and with a contended heart; while if he is not perturbed by this self-appraisal, it may lead him to irreverence, G-d forbid.

The above Talmudic adage in Tractate Niddah appears to be problematic. Firstly, this adage would be in contradiction with the Mishnaic dictum in Tractate Avos ‘And be not wicked in your own estimation.’ Secondly, there then exists a paradox. For if one were to consider oneself a Rasha, he will become grieved at heart and depressed, thus becoming incapable of serving Hashem with joy and with a contended heart, something one ought to do. Yet, were one not to consider oneself in such light whatsoever, it can lead to irreverence, G-d forbid, something that will then deviate one from serving G-d altogether.

The reason why the Alter Rebbe continues to ask the second question even though the first question alone requires an explanation, is because the first question is not unanimous. For there are those who explain the Mishnaic dictum in Avos differently³, thus posing no contradiction, and avoiding the first question entirely. Therefore the Alter Rebbe asks the second question, one which poses a unanimous paradox.

² 2:18

³ See the commentary of the Rambam, it is brought in the commentary of the Bartenura there.

Perek 01 part 04

We previously explained how the Alter Rebbe teaches that one must consider oneself a Rasha. However, this then leads to a possible contradiction with a Mishnaic dictum, and a certain paradoxical dilemma in ones divine service. In order to better understand this dilemma the Alter Rebbe will now continue to clarify the status of a Tzaddik and Rasha.

ACH HA’INYAN –HOWEVER, THE MATTER...

However the above matter will be more clearly understood after a preliminary discussion. We find in the Talmud¹ five distinct types –a righteous man who prospers (Tzaddik V’tov Lo), a righteous man who suffers (Tzaddik V’ra Lo), a wicked man who prospers (Rasha V’tov Lo), a wicked man who suffers (Rasha V’ra Lo), and an intermediate one (Benonei). It is there explained that the “righteous man who prospers” is the “perfect Tzaddik” (Tzaddik Gamur); the “righteous who suffers” is the “imperfect Tzaddik” (Tzaddik She’eno Gamur).

In truth, there are not only two categorical levels, but rather five. We find in the first chapter of the Talmud Tractate Brachos², four distinct types, they are: I. ‘Tzaddik V’Tov Lo’. II. ‘Tzaddik V’Ra Lo’. III. ‘Rasha V’Tov Lo’. IV. ‘Rasha V’Ra Lo’. The fifth level of ‘Benonei’ we find in the ninth chapter³ of the tractate. The Talmud interprets each level quite literally. The first, a Tzaddik who experiences only goodness in his lifetime. This is a direct result of his complete righteousness –‘Tzaddik Gamur’. The second, a Tzaddik who experiences some evil in his lifetime, this is a direct result of his incomplete righteousness –‘Tzaddik Sh’eno Gamur’. The third, a Rasha who experiences some goodness in his lifetime, this is a direct result of his incomplete evildoing– ‘Rasha Sh’eno Gamur’. The fourth, a Rasha who experiences only evil in his lifetime, this is a direct result of his complete evildoing – ‘Rasha Gamur’.

The Alter Rebbe continues:

In Ra’yah Mehemna (Parshas Mishpatim⁴) it is explained that the “righteous man who suffers” is one whose evil nature is subservient to his good nature, so on.

The Alter Rebbe now continues to teach how we find another definition of the above levels, and this is the definition of the Zohar (Raye Mehemna, parshas mishpatim) there it is explained that the “righteous man who suffers” (Tzaddik V’ra Lo) is one whose evil nature is subservient to his to his good nature. In other words, the above levels are truly “Titles” (‘Shem Hatohar’), and not names of categorical lifestyles impacted by the consequences of actions (like the Talmud’s definition above). Therefore, the title of ‘Tzaddik’, is given to one whose evil nature is subservient to his good nature (‘Ra Sh’Bo Kafuf L’Tov’). And so too with the title of ‘Rasha’, it refers to one whose good nature is subservient to his evil nature. Hence the subtitles –‘Tov Lo’ (‘Good for him’) and ‘Ra Lo’ (‘bad for him’) –for they are determined based on one’s inner nature.

The Alter Rebbe continues:

In the Talmud (end of ch. Nine of Tractate Brachos⁵) it is stated that the righteous are motivated by their good nature (Yetzer Tov Shoftan), and the wicked by their evil nature (Yetzer Hara Shoftan), while the intermediate men are motivated by both (Zeh V’Zeh Shoftan), and so on.

The Talmud (in the ninth chapter of Tractate Brachos) discusses the three levels of ‘Tzaddik’, ‘Rasha’, and

¹ Tractate Brachos 7a

² Ibid

³ 61b

⁴ Zohar II, 117b

⁵ See footnote 3

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TANYA

“Benonei’. There the Talmud explains their statuses differently than it did in the first Chapter of the Tractate⁶. The ‘Tzaddik’ is one whose good nature dominates and rules. The ‘Rasha’ is one whose evil nature dominates and rules. The ‘Benonei’ however does not experience any single dominant nature, rather there exists an internal shift, where at times his good nature prevails, thus dominating his evil nature and has full control over his conduct, and at other times his evil nature prevails, dominates, and rules.

The Alter Rebbe continues:

Rabbah declared, “I, for example, am a Benonei”. Said Abbaye to him, “Master, you do not make it possible for anyone to live,” and so on.

There in the Talmud, the Amorah ‘Rabbah’ declared ‘I, for example, am a Benonei’. His student ‘Abbaye’ exclaimed in shock (that if this was indeed true) – ‘Master (Rabah) you do not make it possible for anyone to live’ (Meaning that the status of a ‘Tzaddik’ is then nonexistent, for Rabah was extremely righteous).

We must understand the aforesaid, for it poses difficulties. Firstly, what truly is a ‘Tzaddik’ if an extremely righteous person (such as ‘Rabbah’) is only a ‘Benonei’? Secondly, the very fact the Talmud recounts the disputation shows the significance of both parties, for both now become *part* of Torah, the ‘Torah of truth’⁷. This means to say both claims are actually reality, both are true. According to Rabbah, his status was indeed that of a ‘Benonei’, while according to Abbaye, the status of his teacher Rabbah was indeed the status of a ‘Tzaddik’. The question is obvious, how can this be? In reality only one can be correct!

The Alter Rebbe continues:

To understand all the aforesaid clearly an explanation is needed, as also to understand what Job said [Bava Basra, ch. 1⁸] “L-rd of the universe, you have made created righteous men and you have created wicked men etc.” for it is not preordained whether a man will be righteous or wicked.

The Alter Rebbe explains the difficulty of Job’s statement as follows; if G-d truly created man with a predestined nature, how then does man possess the freedom of choice, something in fact we are taught man does indeed possess⁹. Like we see in the Talmud (Tractate Niddah¹⁰), how the angel who is the overseer of pregnancy asks G-d about the future of the Fetus, whether it will be rich or poor, strong or weak, wise or foolish etc. but does not ask if it will be a Tzaddik or Rasha. This, the Talmud continues to explain, is because, ‘All is in the hands of heaven except the very fear of heaven’ (‘Hakol B’yedei Shamayim Chutz M’yiras shamayim’).

This question, teaches the Alter Rebbe, is not a matter of opinion, whereby Job had a different understanding of things. For since the Talmud records Job’s claim it thus validates it, thus becoming part of Torah, ‘the Torah of Truth’. Once again we are left with another apparent paradox within Torah.

The Alter Rebbe continues:

It is also necessary to understand the essential nature of the rank of the intermediate. Surely that cannot mean one whose deeds are half virtuous and half sinful, for if this were so, how could Rabbah err in classifying himself as a ‘Benonei’? for it is known that he never ceased studying the Torah, so much so that the Angel of death could not overpower him; how, the, could he err to have half his deeds sinful, G-d forbid? Furthermore, at what stage can a person be considered a benonei if when a man commits a sin he is deemed completely wicked, [but when he

⁶ See footnote 1

⁷ See Talmud Tractate Brachos 5b. See also Lekuttei Sichos vol. 2 p. 305

⁸ 16a

⁹ For further study see Mishneh Torah Hilchos Teshuva Ch. 5

¹⁰ 16b

REB YOEL’S SHIURIM ON
TANYA

repents afterwards he is deemed completely righteous]? Even he who violates a minor prohibition of the Rabbis (Issur Kal D’rabbanan) is called wicked, as is stated in Yevamot, ch. 2¹¹, and in Niddah, ch. 1¹². Moreover, even he who has the opportunity to forewarn another against sinning and does not do so is called wicked (ch. 6, Shevuos¹³). All the more so he who neglects any positive law which he is able to fulfill, for instance, whoever is able to study Torah and does not, regarding whom our sages¹⁴ have quoted¹⁵, “Because he has despised the word of the L-rd...that soul should be utterly cut off...” it is thus simple that such a person is called wicked, more than he who who violates a prohibition of the Rabbis. If this is so, we must conclude that the “intermediate man” (Benonei) is not guilty even of the sin of neglecting to study the Torah. Hence Rabbah could have mistaken himself for a Benonei.

In order to understand all the above, the Alter Rebbe first goes on to explain the definition of a ‘Benonei’. For the ‘Benonei’ cannot be like the way the Talmud defines it –one whose sins are equal (in amount) to his virtuous deeds. Because like we explained above, Rabbah stated how he was a Benonei, and if the definition of a ‘Benonei’ contains sin, this would in turn mean that Rabbah himself sinned. This cannot be, for it is known how Rabah never terminated the annunciation of Torah study from his lips, so much so that the Angel of Death could not overpower him¹⁶, he certainly did not sin. And to claim that Rabbah erred in his judgement (possibly due to humility) is not logical, for this is not a mistake one can make while at such standards like those of Rabbah¹⁷. Thus we are left with the notion that a ‘Benonei’ is a title befitting one who is of high standards, and *cannot* be attributed to one who has *ever* sinned, let alone sinned multiple times, equaling in quantity to his good deeds.

The Alter Rebbe continues to emphasize the wonder on the Talmud’s definition of a “Benonei” –‘furthermore, at what stage can a person be considered a Benonei if when one sins he is called a Rasha, and when he returns from the sin he had committed (‘Teshuva’) he then is called a Tzaddik...’ –in order to further elucidate the above statement we will bring its lawful ramifications; it states in the Talmud (tractate kiddushin¹⁸) how in a case where one betroths a woman on condition that he is righteous (Tzaddik), the law is that the betrothal is legitimate even though this individual is known to be wicked (Rasha). The rationale of the Talmud is that at the time of the condition the individual may have experienced ‘Thoughts of Teshuva’, hence living up to the said condition, and is actually befitting of the title “Tzaddik”. The reason for this is like we said above, immediately at the time of ‘Teshuva’ one returns from the title “Rasha”, and is classed a “Tzaddik”. Here too, the groom has done ‘Teshuva’ at the time of the betrothal.

Furthermore, the halachic codifier –Or Zarua¹⁹ –explains²⁰ how the individual is not merely a Tzaddik, but a Tzaddik *Gamur* (completely righteous).

So too vice versa, were one to sin violating even a minor prohibition of the rabbis (scribes), he then is called a Rasha. Moreover, even he who has the opportunity to forewarn another against sinning and does not do so is called a Rasha, as stated above in name of the Talmud.

We can uncover a deeper meaning by analyzing the precise wording of the Alter Rebbe. It is noted in the works of

¹¹ 20a

¹² 12a

¹³ 39b

¹⁴ In Talmud Tractate Sanhedrin 99a

¹⁵ Numbers 15:31

¹⁶ See Tractate Bava Metzia 86a

¹⁷ See Igros Kodesh vol.3 p.61

¹⁸ 49

¹⁹ Isaac ben Moses of Vienna, also called Isaac Or Zarua or the Riaz, was among the greatest rabbis of the middle ages.

²⁰ Or Zarua epistle 112

the Rebbe’s father²¹ (titled ‘Lekuttei Levi Yitzchak’), how when the Alter Rebbe writes ‘*even he who violates a minor prohibition of the rabbis (scribes) is called wicked*’ the word “*Mikra*” – ‘*is called*’ (מִקְרָא) is used, denoting the causative connotation of the word. However, when the Alter Rebbe later writes ‘*even he who has the opportunity to forewarn another*’ – the word “*Nikra*” – ‘*is called*’ (נִקְרָא) is used, denoting the Non-causative connotation of the word. The reason being that the former has *actively* done something evil, thus *actively* acquires the title ‘Rasha’, while the latter only neglected to do something, thus only *passively* acquiring the title ‘Rasha’.

The Alter Rebbe then continues to explain further – *All the more so he who neglects any positive mitzvah (law) which he could have fulfilled, for instance, whoever is able to study Torah and does not, is called a ‘Rasha’.*

We observe how Alter Rebbe writes ‘*all the more so (כל שכן וקל וחומר) he who neglects any positive law...*’ meaning, we infer through a **priori** (קל וחומר) how the neglect of any positive mitzvah is below the status of a “Benonei”. Yet, this appears to be unnecessary. For the Talmud (in tractates Shevuos²² and Zevachim²³) discusses whether the sacrifice of the burnt offering (Olah) suffices to atone for the neglect of a positive Mitzvah (Mitzvas Aseh), or whether the holy day of Yom Kippur is required to achieve atonement. Continues the Talmud and asks, were one to return from his sin (‘Teshuva’) then that alone atones, if that is lacking, he then is a Rasha (for the offering of a burnt offering Olah and Yom Kippur cannot achieve atonement without ‘Teshuva’).

We therefore see that the neglect of a positive mitzvah alone causes one to attain the title ‘Rasha’, why then does the Alter Rebbe need to infer through a *priori* that this causes one to become a ‘Rasha’?

The Rebbe²⁴ discusses this and provides two answers: I. in the discussion of the Talmud there in truth exists the neglect of *two* positive Mitzvos. The *first* mitzvah was the initial positive Mitzvah one failed to fulfill, however, he now is required to fulfill a *second* positive mitzvah – ‘Teshuvah’ – (as a result of the neglect) for one is commanded to return from his wrongdoings (Teshuvah), thus ‘Teshuvah’ *itself* is a positive mitzvah. Hence the neglect of *Teshuva* upon the failure of performing a positive Mitzvah is itself the neglect of a positive mitzvah. Therefore the Alter Rebbe writes that we must learn from a *priori* and not from the Talmud, for here the Alter Rebbe is speaking of the neglect of *one* positive Mitzvah.

Although the ‘Minchas Chinuch’²⁵ (a Halachic codifier) maintains²⁶ that the positive mitzvah is the *confession* of the sin (“Viduy”), and not the very “*return*” (Teshuvah) from sin, nevertheless the Alter Rebbe himself maintains²⁷ that the mitzvah is the ‘return’ itself.

Furthermore, even the ‘Minchas chinuch’ would agree that here (in the discussion of the above Talmud) that on the eve of Yom Kippur there is a mitzvah to return from sin – ‘Teshuvah’ – alone. Just as Maimonides rules in his code of law ‘Mishneh Torah’²⁸. Therefore as a result, the Alter Rebbe must infer through a *priori* that the neglect of a positive mitzvah makes one a Rasha, and cannot derive this from the aforementioned Talmud for two reasons: I. there in the Talmud the discussion is regarding the neglect of *two* positive mitzvos. II. The Talmud is speaking of a ‘minor’ Rasha (‘Rasha kal’) while the Alter Rebbe is speaking of a ‘severe’ Rasha (‘Rasha Chamur’).

As a result of all the above, we are now faced with the true standards of a Benonei. The Benonei is one who has never neglected to observe even a positive mitzvah, and has certainly never sinned by violating a negative

²¹ Lekuttei Levi Yitzchak “Ha’aros L’sofer Hatanya” p. 1

²² 12a

²³ 7b

²⁴ Igros kodesh volume 4 p.180 and onward.

²⁵ Joseph ben Moses Babad was a rabbi, posek and Talmudist, best known for his work, the ‘Minchat Chinuch’, a commentary on the sefer Hachinuch.

²⁶ Mitzvah 364. See also, ‘Sefer Hamitzvos’ of the Tzemach Tzedek ‘Mitzvas Viduy U’tshuvah. The commentary of Reb Yerucham Fishel Perlow on sefer Hamitzvos of the Rasag, Parsha 42. The Zohar 3:124a.

²⁷ Iggeres Hateshuvah chapter 1

²⁸ (Hilchos teshuva chapter 2 halachah 7)

Mitzvah. Hence Rabbah could have mistaken himself a ‘Benonei’. (This then answers our above question on Rabbah’s shocking self-evaluation²⁹).

If this is indeed so, what difference exists between the ‘Benonei’ and the ‘Tzaddik’? Both are righteous!

The Alter Rebbe will begin to shed a whole new light on the titles ‘Tzaddik’ and ‘Benonei’, explaining how there truly exists no difference between the two when only observing their conduct alone. Rather, the difference is a deeper one, whereby the ‘Tzaddik’ is complete in his righteousness even in the feelings of his heart, whilst the ‘Benonei’ is not.

²⁹ Compilers note: this too would answer the question on the conflicting views of Abayei and Rabah being recorded in the Talmud thus validating both of them making both the reality of the Torah. For it would appear that Abayei understood the meaning of “Benonei” the way the Talmud defines it –a title given to one whose merits are equal to sins. However, Rabah understood the meaning of “Benonei” the way the Alter Rebbe just explained it to mean –a title given to one who has never neglected to do even a positive commandment.

Perek 01 part 05

We previously explained how both, the Benonei and the Tzaddik, are perfect in their behavior, never deviating from the laws of the Torah and all its Mitzvos. However, the Benonei has yet to refine his inner nature, and still possesses the natural desires of the heart where evil may preside. The Tzaddik however has successfully conquered and disciplined his inner nature, thus in full control of it.

The alter Rebbe now continues to explain and clarify the definition of the Tzaddik and the Benonei by discussing an apparent contradiction from the Zohar.

HAGHA –NOTE:

As for what is written in the Zohar III p. 231: 'he whose sins are few is classed as a "righteous who suffers".'

The above appears to be in direct contradiction with the aforesaid definition given by the Alter Rebbe, for according to the Alter Rebbe, the Benonei does not sin at all. Therefore, the “righteous who suffers” (“Tzaddik V’ra Lo”) –he who is likewise classed the “imperfect Tzaddik” (“Tzaddik Sh’eno Gamur”) –certainly does not sin at all. Therefore, the Alter Rebbe clarifies the passage of the Zohar and explains:

This is the query of Rav Hammuna to Elijah. But according to Elijah’s answer [ibid.], the meaning of a “righteous man who suffers” is as stated in Ra’aya Mehemna on Parashas Mishpatim¹ quoted above². And the Torah has seventy facets³.

The Zohar speaks of the query the sage (“Tanna⁴”) Rav Hammuna posed to Elijah, whereby his claim was that a ‘Tzaddik V’ra Lo’ is one who has *few sins*. But according to Elijah’s answer the definition of the ‘Tzaddik V’ra Lo’ is consistent the aforesaid explanation, like the definition of the Ra’ya Mehemna on Parshas Mishpatim.

Yet, we still must understand the very query Rav Hammuna posed to Eliyahu Hanavi, for how could the honorable sage consider classing one who has few sins a “Tzaddik V’ra Lo”, when there are clear sources (quoted above by the Alter Rebbe) that contradict this very notion, and prove how even the *Benonei* has no sins?

The Alter Rebbe thus continues to explain ‘*Shivim Panim Latorah*’ – the Torah has ‘seventy facets’ [modes of interpretation]. This means, although there may be the primary interpretation in a certain portion of the Torah, there still exist other modes of interpretations (Both of them being ‘the true word of the living G-d’ –‘Eilu V’eilu Divrei Elokim Chayim’⁵). As a result, the Sage (“Tanna”) Rav Hammuna had the pretense that one who has few sins is classed “Tzaddik V’ra Lo”.

The Alter Rebbe continues (now in the actual text (“Pnim”) of the Tanya):

As for the well-known saying⁶ that one [whose deeds and misdeeds are] equally balanced is called a Benonei, while [he who has] a majority of virtues is called a Tzaddik, this is only a borrowed term (‘Shem Hamushal’), used in regard to reward and punishment, because one is judged according to the majority [of his deeds], and he is termed “righteous” in reference to his verdict, since he is acquitted at his trial. If, however, we seek to truly define the distinct qualities and ranks of ‘Tzaddikim’ and ‘Benonim’, our sages have remarked⁸ that the righteous are “judged” by their good nature, as it is written⁹, “And my heart is a void within me”, meaning that he (king David, the author of the verse) was devoid of an evil nature, having slain it through fasting¹⁰.

The Alter Rebbe begins to explain the well-known saying of the Talmud (tractate Rosh hashanah) – ‘one whose

¹ Zohar II, 117b.

² See Perek 01 Part 04

³ See tractate Shabbos 88b, Zohar 1:47b, 3:20a, 3:116a, 3:223

⁴ See Perek 01 part 03 footnote 3

⁵ Tractate Eruvin 13b

⁶ See Rashi and Tosfos on Tractate Rosh Hashanah 16b

⁷ See Pirush Milos Zaros in Moreh Nevuchim

⁸ Tractate Brachos 61b

⁹ Psalms 109:22

¹⁰ See Talmud Yerushalmi tractate Sotah Perek 5 Halachah 5, and the Korban Ha’edah there.

deeds and misdeeds are equally balanced (Mechtza al Mechtza) is called a Benonei, while he whose virtues outweigh his sins (Rov Zechuyos) is called a Tzaddik – *is only the figurative* usage of the term (‘Shem Hamushal’) in regard to reward and punishment (Schar V’onesh). This is because he is judged according to the majority of his acts and is deemed “righteous” (Tzaddik) in his verdict. Yet, this is strictly in the lawful sense of the title “Tzaddik” (Likewise is with the figurative use of the term Benonei, who is judged according his equally balanced deeds).

There are two explanations on the meaning of ‘my heart is void (Cholol) within me’. In truth they are two degrees in self-refinement; I. the Yetzer Hara (evil inclination) has been removed. The word "הלל" here does not mean –“slain” – but rather “empty” –הלול, i.e. the Yetzer Hara is no longer effective, and has no pull on one’s behavior. II. The Yetzer Hara has been transformed¹¹. However, the ‘figurative use’ (Shem Hamushal) of the term “Tzaddik” is in no way comparable to the true nature of the attribute (Shem Hatoar) i.e. the “Title” “Tzaddik” etc. For the former speaks of one who has actually sinned, yet, only few in number, whilst the latter speaks of one who has achieved mastery over his nature and inner inclination. And are thus clearly speaking of two very different dimensions of discipline.

The Alter Rebbe continues:

But whoever has not yet attained this degree, even though his virtues outnumber his sins (Rov Zechyos), is not at all at the level and rank of “Tzaddik”. This is why our sages have expounded in the Midrash¹², ‘the A-lmighty saw that the righteous were few, so He arose and planted them in every generation’. As it is written¹³, ‘the Tzaddik is the foundation of the world’.

From the above it is clear, that indeed, the true attribute and quality of “Tzaddik” is exclusively given to he who personifies the aforementioned discipline.

We observe how the Alter Rebbe first quotes the beginning of the Talmudic dictum (in Tractate Yuma) – ‘The A-lmighty saw that the righteous were *few*...’ to serve as evidence that the rank “Tzaddik” is exclusive. But why does the Alter Rebbe then continue to quote the verse the Talmud cites – ‘The Tzaddik is the foundation of the world’? It appears unnecessary. Furthermore, why does the Alter Rebbe write ‘our sages declared in the “Midrash”...’, when in truth, our sages have declared the above in the *Talmud* (in Tractate Yuma)?

We thus far have explained how the title “Tzaddik” can be interpreted in two ways:

- I. The Talmud’s (Halachic) definition¹⁴, which we have classified as the *figurative* use (Shem Hamushal) of the title “Tzaddik”, for it is used regarding reward and punishment. Therefore, he whose virtues outnumber his sins (Rov Zechuyos) is classified “Tzaddik” by the Talmud.
- II. The Zohar’s¹⁵ (and Alter Rebbe’s) definition, which we classified as the *true* rank and actual attribute (Shem Hatoar) of the title “Tzaddik”.

However, in truth, within the Zohar’s definition (the Shem Hatoar) there exists more than one level.

This is why the Alter Rebbe quotes the full Talmudic Dictum, for the beginning – ‘The A-lmighty saw that the righteous were few so he planted *them* in every generation’ – refers to the “lower” level within the Zohar’s definition. Although it is the minority and exclusive in nature, there still exists more than one of them, ranging from different “levels” of ranks.

While the end of the quoted Talmudic dictum – ‘as it is written *the Tzaddik is the foundation of the world*’ – refers to a “higher” level within the Zohar’s definition. This speaks of an exclusive rank, one which exists only *once* in a generation. *He* who is ‘the foundation of the world’¹⁶. The reason why the Alter Rebbe writes “Midrash” instead of “Talmud” would simply be because this section of the Talmud is “Agadeta” (the legends of the Talmud, which unlike most of the Talmud, does not clearly focus on

¹¹ Shiurim B’sefar Hatanya p. 151 footnote 9

¹² Tractate Yuma 38b

¹³ Mishlei 10:25

¹⁴ See Rashi and Tosfos on Tractate Rosh Hashanah 16b

¹⁵ Zohar II, 117b.

¹⁶ Lekutei Sichos vol. 4 p.1236

Halacha) and therefore is referred to as ‘Midrash’¹⁷.

Still, this does not suffice. For the Alter Rebbe then could have then simply written “our sages have said” and the like. Why does the Alter Rebbe specifically write the word “Midrash”, which appears to be out of place, and altogether unnecessary?

Had the Alter Rebbe not written this very word the entire aforesaid explanation would be unclear, The reason is as follows: we have previously explained how there are those sources (such as the Talmud in Tractate Rosh Hashana¹⁸) which define the ranks of Tzaddik and Benonei differently, and are thus considered to be only the figurative usage of the term (Shem Hamushal), as it refers only to lawful reward and punishment (and in no way indicates ones true state of self-refinement).

And the evidence the Alter Rebbe brought to support this explanation was the Talmudic dictum (in Tractate Brachos¹⁹) ‘the righteous is one whose good nature rules’ (‘Tzadikim Yetzer Tov Shoftan’), as it is written in psalms ‘my heart is a void within me. Signifying how a Tzaddik is not merely one who has more meritorious deeds than sins, but rather one who has reached a level where no sin is possible, for there is no longer an evil inclination²⁰.

But who is to say that this particular Talmudic dictum (in Brachos) is more authoritative than the other Talmudic dictum (–in tractate Rosh Hashana, which defines a Benonei and Tzaddik by their virtuous acts)? How could the Alter Rebbe therefore teach such a *novel* definition of the rank ‘Tzaddik’ and ‘Benonei’ and then accredit it as the *only* true attribute and rank (Shem Hatoar) of the term, while the other is only figurative, only by choosing one Talmudic dictum over the other?

The explanation is as follows: the Zohar²¹ teaches how within the Torah there exists two (general) dimensions, the “inner” (‘Pnimityus’ –Esoteric) dimension, and the “outer”, revealed (‘Nigleh’ –Exoteric) dimension. However, they do not conflict. The “inner” dimension of the Torah is likened to the soul, whilst the “outer” dimension is likened to the body. Therefore, the former relates more to the soul of the student who studies the Torah, and the latter more to his body. Thus, both are relevant and true, only the *approach* differs. This is a fundamental rule, which sheds light on various apparent inconsistencies between these two dimensions throughout the whole Torah.

An example; it is taught in Chassidus²² that one does not achieve purity through the immersion in a ‘Mikvah’ (ritual bath) without concentrating his mind upon the correct spiritual significance of the ‘Mikvah’ –which is ‘Bitul’ – “self-abnegation” and subservience. For both “immersion” –טובל, and “abnegation” –בטול, have the same letters, thus through rearrangement they spell the same word, which denotes their true oneness. Thus teaches Chassidus, one who immerses in the Mikvah without the intention of ‘Bitul’ fails to completely achieve purity through his immersion in the Mikvah, and remains, in a sense, impure. Now, the Chassidic teaching appears to be in direct contradiction to the Halachic rulings regarding the immersion in the ‘Mikvah’, for Halacha²³ speaks nothing of such required concentrations when immersing in the Mikvah.

Rather, it is like we said. These are two dimensions within the Torah, and each approach the matter differently. Therefore they do not contradict, for they are not dealing with the same aspect of the matter. Thus as a result, the failure to fulfill the ‘inner’ dimension of the mitzvah does not holdback ones fulfilment of doing as the divine will dictates in Halacha.

Hence, the same applies here. The very definition of the term “Tzaddik” and “Benonei” (as well as the other ranks) have an “inner” and “outer” dimension. Thus, according to the Talmud (in tractate Rosh Hashana), which deals with the Halachic (lawful) ramifications of the matter, the definition of the Tzaddik and Benonei is weighed in accordance to an individual’s virtuous acts (For Halacha (law) is primarily quantifiable, dealing with the material, and “outer” reality of any matter). However, according to the Zohar and the “Midrash”, the definition of the term “Tzaddik” and “Benonei” is based upon an individual’s achievements in the discipline of their inner of nature (for the Zohar and the

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ See footnote 14

¹⁹ 61b

²⁰ See Ma’rei Mekomos Hagahos V’ha’aros Ketzeros of the Rebbe on this Talmudic Dictum in the beginning of the Perek.

²¹ Vol. 3 152a. For more on this see Sefer Ma’amarim Melukat Hey p.272

²² Siddur Im De’ach p.159 (end of “Kavanos Hamikvah). See also Likkutei Sichos vol.12 p.65

²³ See Yoreh De’ah Chapter 201

Midrash deal primarily with the inner (mystical) esoteric dimension of all matter).

This is why the Alter Rebbe teaches that the Talmud’s use of the ranks are only figurative, while the Zohar and Midrash’s definition are accurate. For the Talmud’s focus is on reward and punishment, while the Zohar and Midrash’s focus is on the true attribute of its nature.

However, according to the Zohar and the “Midrash” –in this case the “Agadeta²⁴” section of the Talmud –the definition of “Tzaddik” and “Benonei” are classed in accordance to the individual’s *inner* self-refinement. For the Zohar and the Midrash deal primarily with the “*inner*” spiritual dimension of all matter.

The Alter Rebbe, who in Tanya focuses on the inner reality of the soul’s nature, focuses on the Zohar’s and Midrash’s definition, stating that it *alone* is the *true* nature of the attribute and quality of the various degrees and ranks of the “Tzaddik” and the “Benonei”. For here we are dealing with the inner dimension of the Torah (Pnimiyus Hatorah).

The Alter Rebbe now continues to explain the (spiritual) inner nature of man.

ACH BIUR HA’INYAN –THE EXPLANATION...

However, the explanation of the matter, is to be found in the light of what Rabbi Chayim Vital wrote in Sha’ar Hakedusha²⁵ (and in Etz Chayim, portal 50, Ch. 2) that in every Jew, whether righteous or wicked, are two souls (‘Neshamos’ –נשמות) as it is written²⁶ ‘the Neshamos which I have made’, alluding to the two ‘Nefashos’ (souls).

We observe how the Alter Rebbe changes from the word written in the verse, as well as the word found in the interpretation of the verse by Rabbi Chayim Vital –‘Neshamos’ –and instead interprets the verse (ibid) using the word ‘Nefashos’.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains²⁷ the above as follows; in truth there exists five “levels” in the soul, they are (from lowest to highest) I. ‘Nefesh’ II. ‘Ruach’ III. ‘Neshamah’ IV. ‘Chayah’. V. ‘Yechidah’. Therefore the Alter Rebbe clarifies that even in the *lowest* level of the soul –‘*Nefesh*’ –there exists *two* souls. In other words, there are different stages within the soul. 1. The soul as a separate entity –prior to its entry into the body – which functions in a higher plain, or “level”. 2. The soul as a single unit with the body –which functions in a lower plain, or “level”.

Therefore, one may understand the verse, and its respective interpretation (in Etz Chayim), to mean that only whilst the soul exists independently on a higher level, it is a dual soul, comprised of two souls. However, on a lower level it is only one. Henceforth, the Alter Rebbe interprets the verse to mean ‘Nefashos’, in order to clarify that even when the soul does indeed enter the body, now becoming one entity –existing on a lower plain of ‘Nefesh’ –does it remain two souls.

The Alter Rebbe continues to teach how one soul is an animalistic and material soul –‘Nefesh Habahamis’, and the other a G-dly and spiritual soul –‘Nefesh Elohis’.

The reason why the Nefesh Habahamis is written first is because it is the soul that enters the body first.

[The Alter Rebbe will continue to explain these two souls and their functions over the course of study in this holy work ‘Lekutei Amarim Tanya’ –compiler’s note]

²⁴ See Lekutei Sichos vol. 2 p.785

²⁵ Vol. 1 portal 1-2

²⁶ Isaiah 57:16

²⁷ Igros Kodesh vol.22 p.360. see also Shiurim B’sefer Hatanya p.14

Perek 01 part 06

We previously explained how there are two definitions of the ranks ‘Tzaddik’ and ‘Benonei’, which are classed to man based on different degrees of self-discipline and advancement in his Divine service. One definition (Halacha) focuses on the lawful “outer” achievements, and the other (Zohar), the spiritual “inner” nature. We concluded by stating how in truth there exists two souls (‘Nefashos’). The Alter Rebbe will now continue to explain the makeup and function of the soul.

ACH BIUR HA’INYAN –HOWEVER, THE EXPLANATION...

However, the explanation of the matter, is to be found in the light of what Rabbi Chayim Vital wrote in Sha’ar Hakedusha¹ (and in Etz Chayim, portal 50, Ch. 2) that in every Jew, whether righteous or wicked, are two souls (‘Neshamos’ –נשמות) as it is written² ‘the Neshamos which I have made’, alluding to the two ‘Nefashos’ (souls). These are two “Nefashos”. One soul originates in the Klippah and Sitra Achara. It is this Nefesh (soul) that is clothed in the blood of a human being, giving life to the body, as it is written³, ‘for the Nefesh of the flesh is in the blood’.

Like we previously said, the paradoxical dilemma discussed in the beginning of this chapter⁴ can be explained by understanding what is written in Etz Chayim.

There are two ‘Nefashos’ –souls. One soul originates in the ‘Klippah’ and ‘Sitra Achara’ – ‘Klippah’ literally means ‘shell’ or ‘peel’, just like the peel of a fruit whereby it covers and conceals the desired item, so too here, the term ‘Klippah’ refers to matter that covers and conceals G-dliness⁵. ‘Sitra Achara’ literally means ‘the other side’. This refers to anything which is ‘other’ than holiness and sanctity (‘Kedusha’) (These two concepts will be discussed later on in Chapter 6). This soul is clothed in the blood of a human being, giving life to the body.

The Alter Rebbe continues:

From this Nefesh stems all the evil characteristics, deriving from the four evil elements⁶ (Arba’ah Yesodos Ra’im) within it. Namely: anger and pride emanate from the element of Fire, which rises upward; the appetite for pleasures emanates from the element of Water, for water promotes the growth of all kinds of pleasurable things; frivolity and scoffing and idle talk emanate from the element of Air; and sloth and melancholy emanate from the element of Earth.

The reason why these evil characteristics emanate from different evil elements are due to their similarities within their inherent nature:

- I. Anger and pride –emanate from the element of Fire (Eish), which has the inherent nature to rise upwards. The reason is quite straightforward, for the nature of these two evil characteristics are similar to the “heightened” nature of the flame;
- II. The appetite for pleasures –emanate from the element of Water (Mayim). For it is like the inherent nature of water whence it has seeped into soil, as it then sprouts all kinds of enjoyment;
- III. Frivolity and scoffing, boasting and idle talk –emanate from the element of Air (Ruach). Here the comparison appears to be a bit unclear, for why are these evil characteristics similar to the nature of air? A possible explanation: 1. these evil characteristics – like Air –are empty, whereby there exists no “real”

¹ Vol. 1 portal 1-2

² Isaiah 57:16

³ Leviticus 17:11

⁴ see Perek 01 part 03

⁵ See Torah Or 61:4

⁶ For further study see ‘Torah Shleimah’ on genesis 1:2 paragraph 331. (For more on this see Mishnah Torah Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah chapter 4. There it explains how these four elements are the makeup of all created matter – compiler’s note)

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substance. Another explanation: 2. the Friediker Rebbe (lit. the ‘previous Rebbe’) explains in a Chassidic discourse as follows; all the evil characteristics don’t have any ‘substance’ (‘Tochen’) and are therefore “empty”, this being the case, why then do *only* Frivolity, scoffing etc. stem from the element of Air? The Friediker Rebbe answers, indeed, all of them are empty and meaningless. However, one who currently portrays such characteristics does not see this. In his eyes they appear meaningful, or at least worth something. The true reality of course is that they are worthless and empty. But in the case of Frivolity etc. even *he* who *currently* portrays them realizes how they are worth nothing, much like Air. Nevertheless it does carry sense of “hot aired” pleasure (Geshmak), therefore ultimately one succumbs to it.

- IV. Sloth and melancholy –emanate from the element of Earth (Ofor). This too is straightforward, for these evil characteristics are “heavy” like earth.

The Alter Rebbe continues to explain:

From this soul stem also the good traits inherent in every Jew's (Yisroel) character. Such as compassion and benevolence. For in the case of the Jew, this soul of Klippah is derived from “Klippas Nogah” (–lit. “Bright shell”), which also contains good. This Klippah originates from the esoteric “tree of knowledge [which is comprised] of good and evil” (Eitz Hada’as Tov V’ra).

Although “Klippah” itself means a “shell” and thus inherently conceals good, here however, the ‘Klippas Nogah’, contains goodness within itself, thus being given the name “bright shell”. Therefore it too is the root of good characteristics in the Jew, in *addition* to the good characteristic a Jew innately possesses deriving from his G-dly soul. Thus, a Jew innately contains good characteristics deriving from both his souls –I. The Nefesh Habahamis, and II. The Nefesh Elohis⁷.

We observe how when the Alter Rebbe lists the good characteristics of a Jew, *two* are written. However, the Talmud⁸ discusses the qualities of the Jewish nation as a whole, and there it lists *three*: mercy, benevolence, and *bashfulness*. Why then does the Alter Rebbe choose to leave out one of the three characteristics?

The ‘Maharsha’⁹ (a Talmudic commentator) comments on this Talmudic adage, and explains how truthfully the Jewish nation is considered mighty amongst the nations, stubborn and firm in their stance. This apparently would be contradicting the Talmud (here) which states that they are bashful. Continues the Maharsha and explains; the Jews are indeed inherently mighty as a nation¹⁰, but when they arrived at Sinai and received the Torah, they then changed, transforming from mighty and firm, to bashful and subservient¹¹.

Therefore, the Alter Rebbe leaves out the characteristic of bashfulness. For here, the Alter Rebbe lists the characteristics the Jew contains innately, stemming from his soul. This is true only with the characteristics of benevolence and mercy, bashfulness however, was only attained once they received the Torah at Mount Sinai.

The Alter Rebbe continues:

The souls of the nations of the world (goyim), however, emanating from the other, impure Klippas – ‘Shalosh klippas Hatemeos’, which contain no good whatsoever, as is written in Etz Chayim, portal 49 Ch. 3, that all good that the nations do, is done out of selfish motives¹². Compare to what is written in the Talmud¹³ on the verse¹⁴, “the kindness of the nations is sin”, for all the charity and kindness done by the nations of the world is only for their self-glorification etc.

⁷ See part IV of Tanya “Iggeres Hakodesh” epistle 12

⁸ Tractate Yevamos 79a

⁹ Shmuel Eidels (1555 – 1631) (Hebrew: שמואל אליעזר הלוי איידלס Shmuel Eliezer HaLevi Eidels) was a renowned rabbi and Talmudist famous for his commentary on the Talmud, “Chiddushei Halachot”. Eidels is also known as Maharsha (מהרש"א, a Hebrew acronym for "Our Teacher, the Rabbi Shmuel Eidels")

¹⁰ See Tractate Beitza 25b and the commentary of Rashi there.

¹¹ See Tractate Nedarim 20a

¹² Tikkunei Zohar Tikkun 6

¹³ Tractate Bava Basra 10b

¹⁴ Proverbs 14:34

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The Alter Rebbe explains this concept further in his ‘Siddur’¹⁵, there the Alter Rebbe explains that the righteous amongst the nations of the world (‘Chasidei Umos Haolam’) actually possess a soul unlike the rest of the nations. Their soul originates from ‘Klippas Nogah’, which like we said, contains good as well.

Yet, this all appears to be contradictory. For we explained in the beginning of this chapter¹⁶ how the angel who is the overseer of pregnancy asks G-d whether the fetus will grow to be many a thing, but however does not ask whether it will grow to be a ‘Tzaddik’ or ‘Rasha’. Because, like the Talmudic dictum¹⁷ goes –‘all is in the hands of heaven except the fear of heaven’. Yet, the Alter Rebbe here teaches, at the end of this very chapter, how the soul of the nations of the world contains no good whatsoever, thus making them incapable of choosing their destiny freely, and thus in the hands of heaven and not in their own?

The explanation, albeit short, is as follows; everyone has free choice –‘Bechirah Chafshis’¹⁸, and no one is robbed of this. However, there are those that have a natural inclination pulling them closer to one direction over the other – this is the case of the Jew, who possesses a soul originating from ‘Klippas Nogah’, and are thus more inclined to the side of holiness and good. Still, notwithstanding their natural inclinations, the gentile can choose his destiny freely.

This is only the offshoot of the entirety of the matter. For like we have mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, there exists within the Jew a good inclination –‘Yetzer tov’, and an evil inclination –‘Yetzer Hara’. We must understand the difference between these inclinations –‘Yetzaros’ (the plural of ‘Yetzer’) and the two ‘Nefashos’ (souls) which the Alter Rebbe also teaches exist in every Jew.

To preface, we must remember that the Tzaddik and Benonei do not differ in their wholesome service to G-d, for they both are complete in their performance of the Mitzvos, and their divine service as a whole. Rather their ranks differ according to their achievements within the discipline of the heart.

We can now better understand the function of the Yetzer Tov and the Yetzer Hara. For the above discipline of the Tzaddik is not merely the “location” one focuses the feelings of the heart, but the dominance of inclinations (Yetzaros) themselves. The ‘Tzaddik’ unlike the ‘Benonei’ is one who has mastered his evil inclination making it subservient to the good inclination, his heart thus becomes “hollow”¹⁹.

‘Nefashos’ (souls), however, are much more. Unlike “Yetzarim” –which are merely inclinations –Nefashos are actual ways of life. This means to say, they are life itself. There is an unholy life, and a holy life. Each originate from one soul. Yet, only one of them is truly legitimate, being the true source of life, and subsequently the true path one ought to pursue. This is the “Nefesh Elokis” –the “G-dly soul”, a soul only the Jew has. This is true by *all* Jews – whether he decided to pursue a righteous life, and thus conquers and dominates his animalistic soul (Nefesh Habahamis), and receives the class ‘Tzaddik’, or whether a Jew who chooses to pursue a wicked life, thus allowing his animalistic soul to dominate his G-dly soul, and receives the class ‘Rasha’²⁰.

Furthermore, even he who chooses the pursuit of an unholy life, nevertheless receives vitality solely from the G-dly soul. This is hinted to in the words of the Alter Rebbe ‘דלכל איש ישראל אחד צדיק ואחד רשע’ –‘that in every Jew, *one* who is righteous, and *one* who is evil’ –meaning, in every Jew there is only ‘one’ soul that really exists and gives vitality, this is the Nefesh Elokis (G-dly soul).

{Thus, whether naturally holy or not, there is the ability, and thus the responsibility to change for the better. It is incumbent upon man to do good for he possesses freedom of choice. This is called ‘Avodas Hashem’ –working in the divine service. –compilers note}

¹⁵ See ‘Lekkutei Biurim’ of R’ Hillel of Paritch on Kunteres Hispa’alus (printed in the Chassidic Discourses of the Mitteler Rebbe named ‘Kuntreisim’ p. 144) –which is based on what the Alter Rebbe writes in the Siddur (explained above in the text) ‘Sha’ar Chag Hamatzos’. See also the Zohar 2:95b

¹⁶ see perek 01 part 04

¹⁷ Tractate Brachos 33b

¹⁸ See Mishneh Torah Hilchos Teshuva Chapter 5

¹⁹ Tractate Brachos 61b. See Perek 01 Part 04/05.

²⁰ See Perek 01 Part 03

Perek 02 part 01

In the previous chapter the Alter Rebbe explained how there exists a paradoxical dilemma in man’s divine service. For we are taught one should consider oneself a Rasha, something that will lead to the grievance of heart, and yet, at the same time, one is commanded to serve Hashem with joy. The Alter Rebbe continued to explain how there truly exists five ranks, explaining then various definitions of the ranks. The two ranks of ‘Tzaddik’ and ‘Benonei’ were the main focus of the chapter afterward. The Alter Rebbe then clarified that the true nature of the aforementioned titles are indicators of man’s inner self-discipline over his evil nature. At the end of the chapter the Alter Rebbe begins the explanation of our unresolved dilemma, teaching how in truth there exists two souls (Nefashos) within each Jew. The Alter Rebbe then explains the makeup of the first soul, how it originates from the ‘Klippos’ and ‘Sitra Achara’, and how it gives life to the body, together with the evil characteristics to stem from it. Now the Alter Rebbe begins to explain the second soul:

PEREK BEIS V’HANEFESH HASHENIS B’YISROEL –CHAPTER TWO, THE SECOND SOUL IN A JEW...

We observe already how the Alter Rebbe calls this soul (Nefesh Elohis) “the second soul”, implying that the soul focused upon at the end of the previous chapter (Nefesh Habahamis) is the “first”. The reason for this is because the Nefesh Habahamis enters the body right at the time of birth, and the G-dly soul does not enter right away, rather at a later time, hence achieving its name “the second soul”.

However, this proves to be difficult, for we already stated how every Jew has two souls. Therefore, to say that at the time of birth a Jew contains only one soul would be weakening this very statement. Rather, in truth the meaning of the title “the second soul” is due to its *concealed nature*. For in truth¹ (like we said in the first chapter) every Jew has *two* souls, this is true even from the time of birth. But because the Nefesh Habahamis has a *revealed* nature, it is therefore felt consciously in the body from birth, and is active from the beginning. Thus as a result, it is called “the first” soul. However, unlike the Animalistic soul, the G-dly soul is felt within the body only later on, and is called “the second” soul therefor.

The Alter Rebbe continues to explain the origin of this second soul that exists in all Jews:

This soul is truly a part of G-d² above (‘Chelek Eloka Mima’al Mamash’), as it is written³ ‘and He (Hashem) breathed into his nostrils the breath of life’, and ‘you have breathed it [the soul] into me’⁴.

The terminology used by the Alter Rebbe is a quote from the verse in job⁵ (iyov), here however, the Alter Rebbe adds the word –‘Mamash’ (ממש) –‘actual’ (truly). The Alter Rebbe writes this in order to explain the true essence of this soul. The Alter Rebbe does so by quoting the verse⁶ describing the creation of Adam –‘Vayipach B’apav Nishmas Chayim’ –‘and He (Hashem) breathed into his nostrils the breath of life’. The significance of this verse (here) is it’s description on *how* Hashem created man, it was done through blowing life into his nostrils. This is different than the way all other matter was created, which was that G-d uttered ten utterances⁷, and thus they came to be.

In truth, both are the product of breath, for speech is also through breath. The difference however is in the *transmission* of the breath. Indeed when one speaks it is accomplished through breathing, however the breath is not the focus, rather the

¹ The previous explanation is truthful as well. However, it does not explain the true reality of the matter, for although the G-dly soul is only *active* at the age of thirteen [or according to some opinions earlier on (See Shulchan Aruch Harav Mahadura Basra end of chapter 4. See also Lekutei Sichos vol.3 p.763).] yet it was already there from the time of birth, albeit concealed, and therefore inactive. For further study see Midrash Koheles 4:13. Also Tractate Nedarim 32b.

² Study Sha’ar Ruach Hakodesh 5b (the Jerusalem 1974 edition).

³ Genesis 2:7

⁴ See Tractate Brachos 60a

⁵ Job 31:2

⁶ See footnote 3

⁷ See Avos 5:1

formation of different syllables –formulating a comprehensive sentence – is the focus. Thus the breath exhausted through speech is “extraneous” – “Chitzoniyus” –it is not the desired result.

When one exhales on the other hand, the breath exhausted is the very focus. Thus it is an innermost –‘Pnimiyus’ action –it is the desired result.

Thus in the morale, regarding the creation of man over all other created matter –all matter was created through extraneous (Chitzoniyus) forces of G-dliness. Man however was created through an innermost (Pnimiyus) force of G-d.

The Alter Rebbe continues to explain the above concept:

it is written in the Zohar⁸, ‘He who exhales, exhales from within him’, that is to say, from his inwardness and his innermost being, for it is something of his internal and innermost vitality that man emits through breathing out with force.

The Alter Rebbe teaches that in addition to the Pnimiyus force used when exhaling—for it is the breath that is the focus of man, and it is the objective he seeks alone –there exists another quality, reaching further inward. This is the manner *how* one exhales. One can simply exhale without any effort, this is more casual, and therefore does not reach so much his ‘innermost vitality’. Another way is through blowing out air with effort, this is more intensive, and thus reaches further within his ‘innermost vitality’.

Like the Zohar teaches, the breath is from ‘his inwardness and innermost’, it is his ‘innermost vitality’. In other words, G-d, so to speak (Kaviyochol), *blew* a breath of life from his inwardness and innermost energy, into man, thus creating him.

Furthermore, there exists another difference in the creation of man over all other created matter.

It is written⁹ regarding the first day of creation, ‘and G-d said there should be light and there was light’. We observe how there is a cause and then an effect that follows. There is the utterance of G-d, and then the effect of it –the creation of light. Therefore, the utterance, and the creation, are not fully united.

However, we see by the creation of man that the breath –the very *means* of his creation –and his *actual* existence –the actual beginning of his being, are united as one, as it is written³ ‘and He (Hashem) breathed into his nostrils the breath of life’, It is thus the very “breath” of G-d that is the life of man.

This is why the Alter Rebbe adds the word ‘Mamash’ (actually), for the *creation* of man is the breath of *life* itself, and is an actual part of G-d above (‘Chelek Eloka MIma’al Mamash’) therefor.

The Alter Rebbe continues:

So too, allegorically speaking, have the souls of Jews risen in the divine thought¹⁰, as it is written¹¹ ‘My firstborn son is Israel’, and ‘you are children unto the Lord your G-d¹²’. That is to say [the creation of the soul is] just as a child is derived from his father’s brain.

The difference between speech and thought is similar to the difference (explained above) between speaking and exhaling. Regarding emitting a breath –speaking is an extraneous (Chitzoniyus) method, and exhaling is an innermost (Pnimiyus) method. So too is with regards to speech and thought –Speech is a *vehicle* for the transference of thought. This means that through the vehicle of speech, one can now give someone *else* access to his own *inner* perspectives –which are stored in thought. Without speech however, no one else could ever gain access. Thought, on the other hand, is the very consciousness of the soul. It is *nothing* but the life of the *soul*, for it is the *activity* of the soul itself. Therefore, speech is extraneous to the soul, for it is for the surroundings (‘Zulas’), and not necessary to for the function of man alone, thus as a result, one ceases to speak. Thought, however, is the inner activity of the

⁸ It appears that this is not found in the Zohar nor the Tikkunei Zohar in front of us. But this is to be found in the works of the Kadmonim (medieval scholars). See ‘Shefa Tal’ in the preface. See also Nachmanides on genesis 2:7, and the ‘Bachye’ on Parshas Yisro (exodus 20:7) [footnote from Igros Kodesh of the Rebbe volume 20 p. 131]

⁹ Genesis 1:3

¹⁰ See Bereshis Rabah ch.1. See also Likkutei Torah (17:3 and onward) on the verse in Shir Hashirim starting with the word ‘Yonasi’.

¹¹ Exodus 4:22

¹² Deuteronomy 14:1

soul, and therefore continuously flows as long as the soul is clothed in the body, never ceasing.

Another detail we observe when meticulously observing the terminology the Alter Rebbe uses, is the emphasis on the word ‘*Olu B’machshava*’ – ‘*risen in thought*’. With this the Alter Rebbe refers to the *essence* of thought, whereas it is not only innermost *relative* to speech¹³, but rather the essence of thought itself. It is the very pinnacle of thought. For here we are speaking of the deepest thought, penetrating to the core.

An example to clarify the above: were one to find himself in a life threatening situation, he is now tasked with survival, and therefore must think how to find a way to survive, these thoughts are the furtherance of his life. Now these thoughts are not merely activity, but the very *life* of the soul. Here too, the thought of the Jew has *risen* in the divine thought, reaching the depths.

To explain this concept further we will bring a concept discussed in elsewhere in Chassidus; it states¹⁴ ‘great is the power of the son over his father’¹⁵, the question that arises is straightforward, how can the son – a product of the father – be superior? The explanation given is as follows: there exists within each soul ‘revealed faculties’ (‘Kochos Hagluyos’) and ‘hidden faculties’ (‘Kochos Hanistaros’). Therefore, it is possible for the son to be superior to his father because the son is a biological product of his father, created from a drop of semen which developed into a child through pregnancy. The drop of semen comes from the father’s brain, and therefore, the son has now been given revealed faculties, and hidden faculties, *all* that is contained in his father’s brain (psyche). Hence, when the son now shows extreme talents, unknown to be amongst his father’s capabilities, it poses no question, for the father had contained them all along, yet it was only hidden and unconscious. The son, however, has now successfully brought them out from his hidden faculties to his revealed and conscious faculties, thus receiving the praise ‘great is the power of the son over his father’.

Thus the Alter Rebbe continues;

So –to use an anthropomorphism (‘Al Derech Mashal’) –the soul of each Jew is derived from G-d’s (blessed be he) thought and wisdom.

This means to say, just as the son is from the ‘Atzmiyus’ – ‘core essence’ of his father (like explained above), so too anthropomorphically, each Jew is derived in the same way. This clarifies what we explained earlier, how man is created in a manner unlike any other creation, for man is derived from the innermost thought (like explained above).

Yet, the Alter Rebbe writes that the soul is derived from ‘G-d’s thought and wisdom’, this is unlike the child who is derived from his father’s actual essence – ‘Atzmiyus’ (for the son is a biological product of his father¹⁶), why then does the Alter Rebbe say that they are same – ‘just as a child is derived from his father’s brain, so –to use an anthropomorphism –the soul of each Jew is derived from G-d’s thought and wisdom’ –they aren’t the same! Furthermore, this would mean something contrary to what the Alter Rebbe teaches at the beginning of the chapter – ‘The second soul of a Jew is truly [actually] *part* of G-d above’, however, here it appears the second soul of a Jew is only derived from G-d’s thought and wisdom?

Therefore, the Alter Rebbe continues and explains:

For He (Hashem) is wise –but not through a knowable wisdom¹⁷, because he and his wisdom are one.

Thus, the ‘thought and wisdom’ of Hashem do not mean what we (mortals) think it means. The thought and wisdom of Hashem are unlike that of man. Rather, Hashem and his wisdom are entirely one. Henceforth, the second soul of the Jew is an (actual) true part of G-d above, and at the same time, deriving from G-d’s thought and wisdom.

The Alter Rebbe continues to explain, further elucidating this concept:

And as Maimonides (the Rambam) says¹⁸ that ‘He (Hashem) is the knowledge (‘Mada’) and the knower (‘Yodeah’),

¹³ Like we explored above

¹⁴ See Tractate Shevuos 48a and references there

¹⁵ יפה כח הבן מכה האב

¹⁶ For further study see ‘Yonas Eilem’ beginning of chapter 2. Tosfos beginning with the word “Mikami” on Tractate Yevamos 3a. Rashi beginning with the word “K’ba’al” on Tractate Kesubos 92a

¹⁷ Quoting from the preface to ‘Tikkunei Zohar’

¹⁸ The quote of the Alter Rebbe here is not the exact terminology of Maimonides, but rather quoting from three different works of Maimonides I. Mishneh Torah Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah Ch. 2 Halachah 10. II. Ibid Hilchos Teshuvah Ch. 2 Halachah 5. III. The end of ‘Shemoneh Perakim L’Harambam’. See also Moreh Nevuchim vol. 1 Ch.

etc., and this is not within the power of any man to comprehend clearly, ' etc.

This ability of Hashem is beyond man entirely. When one knows something, the knowledge of that object exists independently, and the mind (man) that has gathered this knowledge of that object, exists independently. Therefore, the knowledge (the object), and the knower (man) are separate. However, Hashem is the knower *and* the knowledge, for there is nothing other than him (Hashem).

The ‘Maharal’¹⁹ however argues with Maimonides²⁰, stating that Hashem is above all limitations, therefore, above any definition or title (for they are all limited), and cannot be called “the Knower” or “knowledge” therefor. Yet, the Alter Rebbe quotes Maimonides, and even writes (as we will see shortly) in a note (Hagha), how all the Kabbalists agree with Maimonides. Yet, the claim of the Maharal is legitimate! G-d is above all titles and definitions, how then can we attribute the title of “knower” and “knowledge” to G-d?

It is explained elsewhere in Chassidus, that both claims (of the Maharal and Rambam) are correct. Hashem is above all created limitation, thus –‘Kadosh U’muvdal’ –‘Holy and separate’ from the world, proving the Maharal’s view.

Yet, Hashem is constantly creating and conducting the world, by means of many ‘Tzimtzumim’ –‘contractions’ and ‘Yeridas Hamadregos’ –‘descent of levels’ (this concept will be explained later on²¹), thus ‘clothing’ his power in the attribute of wisdom (Sefiras Hachachma) and subsequently, in the world. Thus Proving Maimonides view –‘He (Hashem) is the knowledge and knower etc.’, for in truth both are attributed to G-d, for there is nothing –even *material* –but him (Hashem).

HAGHA (NOTE):

The Alter Rebbe continues to explain (that majority of kabbalists have sided with the view of Maimonides):

And the sages of Kabbalah have agreed with him (Maimonides), as is stated in ‘Pardess’²² of Rabbi Moses Cordevero²³. Even according to the Kabbalah of the Arizal (Rabbi Isaac Luria²⁴) Maimonides statement stands. This is so only when applied to the mystic principle of the “Clothing of the Light” (Hislabshus Ha’Or) of the “En sof” (infinite), blessed be he, through numerous contractions (Tzimtzumim) within the vessels (Keilim) ChaBaD (acronym for ‘Chochma’ –wisdom, ‘Binah’ –understanding, and ‘Da’as’ –knowledge) of the world of emanation (‘Olam Ha’atzilus), but no higher than Atzilus.

The Rebbe the Tzemach Tzedek explains the reason why the Alter Rebbe writes ‘also according to the Kabbalah of the Arizal...’ singling him out from amongst the Kabbalists, is because the Arizal teaches the wonder (Hafla’ah) of the infinite power of Hashem more than any other kabbalist, hence, one would assume the Arizal would side with the Maharal’s view, opposing the view of Maimonides. Therefore, the Alter Rebbe emphasizes how even according to the Kabbalah of the Arizal, the view of Maimonides is correct. For according to the Arizal’s mystic principle of “Clothing of the Light” of the En Sof (infinite) in the vessels of ChaBaD, this would be defining (somewhat) the “infinite light” (Or En Sof), which is now clothed within the faculties of Wisdom, understanding, and knowledge much like Maimonides, who states that the title “knower” and “knowledge” is indeed befitting to G-d.

However, this is only the *result* of the numerous contractions the infinite light went through, for only when clothed and contained in the faculties of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge (in the world of emanation) would it become befitting to give the title “knower” and “knowledge” to G-d, for there he has contracted his infinite light to become

68, and Vol. 3 Ch. 20 and 21.

¹⁹ **Judah Loew ben Bezalel** (Hebrew: יהודה ליווא בן בצלאל; between 1512 and 1526 – 17 September 1609), also known as **Rabbi Loew**, the **Maharal of Prague** (hebrew מַהַרַּ"ל מִפְּרָגּ), or simply **the Maharal** (the Hebrew acronym of "*Moreinu ha-Rav Loew*", 'Our Teacher, Rabbi Loew'), was an important Talmudic scholar, Jewish mystic, and philosopher who, for most of his life, served as a leading Rabbi in the cities of Mikurov in Moravia and Prague in Bohemia.

²⁰ In the preface of his work titled ‘Gevuros Hashem’

²¹ See the second volume of the Tanya ‘Sha’ar Yichud V’haemunah’. And is explained briefly in Perek 04 Part 02 on Chapter 4 of Likkutei Amarim.

²² ‘Sha’ar Atzmus V’keilim’ Ch. 4

²³ Moses ben Jacob Cordevero was a central figure in the historical development of Kabbalah, leader of a mystic school in 16th century Safed. He is known by the acronym the “Ramak” (רמ"ק).

²⁴ See Perek 01 Part 03 footnote 4.

contained in such definable faculties.

Yet, this is only in the world of emanation, whence there exists such contractions, producing such definable faculties. However, ‘G-d himself is exalted above all’ –which is the aspect the Maharal focuses upon. Therefore, the Alter Rebbe now continues to explain the perspective of the Maharal:

for, as is explained elsewhere²⁵, the ‘En sof’(Hashem), Blessed be he, is infinitely exalted over, and transcends, the essence and order of ChaBaD, which in relation to Him are material action (Asiyah), as is written²⁶ ‘You (Hashem) have made them all with wisdom’.

The Alter Rebbe continues (in the main Text (“Pnim”) of Tanya):

And this (how G-d is the “knower” and “knowledge”) is not within the power of any man to comprehend clearly etc.²⁷. As it is written²⁸, ‘can you by searching find G-d?’, and it is also written²⁹, ‘for my thoughts are not your thoughts’, etc.

Like we said, the inability of man to comprehend such a thing, is because the object of knowledge, and the knowing of man, are separate, whilst by G-d they are one.

We thus are left with an apparent dilemma. For we previously have explained the statement of the Alter Rebbe how the Jewish soul is truly a part of G-d above. And yet, the origin of the soul is derived from the thought and wisdom of Hashem. Yet this is not a contradiction, for He (G-d) and his wisdom are one.

However, the Alter Rebbe now explained (in the Note) how the title “knower” and “knowledge” are the result of the numerous contractions etc. , while G-d alone is exalted over, and transcends, the essence and whole order of these intellectual faculties. This then would mean, the thought and wisdom of G-d are *not* G-d himself. Henceforth, although He and his wisdom are one, still, thought and wisdom are the *contracted power* of G-d, and in no way G-d himself (heaven forbid). Therefore, the Jewish soul which is derived from G-d’s thought and wisdom cannot be a truly a part of G-d above?!

The Alter Rebbe in ‘Lekuttei Torah’³⁰ asks this question and gives two explanations:

I. Indeed, the Jewish soul is derived from the thought and wisdom of Hashem. Yet, since Hashem and his wisdom are one. The soul, in turn, is also one with G-d. Just as a child is derived from his father’s *brain*, and yet is the very biological product of his father, not only deriving from his father’s intellectual faculties, but a part of the essence of the father *himself* (Atzmiyus), so –to use an anthropomorphism –this is the case with the Jewish soul, it too is from the essence of G-d (Atzmiyus). II. The soul, as we explained, is made up of five “levels”. The lower three –‘Nefesh’, ‘Ruach’ and ‘Neshama’, are derived from G-d’s thought and wisdom. However, the higher two – ‘Chayah’ and Yechidah’, which are the core of the soul, is truly a part of G-d above, and derives not from G-d’s thought and wisdom, but G-d himself (Atzmiyus) (so to speak)³¹.

²⁵ See Sha’ar HaYichud VeHaemunah (Tanya part II) ch. 9.

²⁶ Psalms 104:24

²⁷ Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah Ch. 2 Halacha 10

²⁸ Job 11:7

²⁹ Isaiah 55:8

³⁰ Parshas Vayikra

³¹ See ‘Hayom Yom’ entry for 13 kislev –compiler’s note

Perek 02 part 02

We previously explained, how the second soul is truly a part of G-d above, and is derived from G-d's thought and wisdom. G-d contracts the 'Or En Sof' –infinite light, thus enabling it to become clothed and contained in the limiting faculties of wisdom. Although G-d is infinitely exalted over, and transcends, the essence and order of the faculties of wisdom, nevertheless, G-d and His wisdom are one. Thus, the second soul is truly a part of G-d above.

The Alter Rebbe now continues to explain the soul itself:

V'AF SH'YESH RIVAVOS –AND THOUGH THERE ARE MYRIADS...

We are now left with a dilemma. For if all souls are an actual part of G-d, all deriving from G-d's thought and wisdom, why then do we find different grades of souls amongst the Jewish nation? We clearly observe greater levels of spirituality and purity in one individual over another. If all souls derive from the same source, all should be equal!

Henceforth the Alter Rebbe continues and explains:

And though there are myriads of gradations of souls (Neshamos), rank upon rank, ad infinitum, as with the superiority of the souls of the Patriarchs (Avos) and of Moses our teacher (Moshe Rabbeinu) above the souls of our own generations who live in the period preceding the coming of the Messiah¹ ('Ikvesa Dimeshicha'), which are the very soles of the feet compared with the brain and head (the figurative comparison to the leading souls of the Jewish nation, such as the souls of the Avos etc.) so in every generation there are the leaders of the Jews, whose souls are in the category of "head" and "brain" in comparison with those of the masses and the ignorant. Likewise are there distinctions between 'Nefashos' and 'Nefashos' (amongst the Jewish nation), for (like we explained) every soul consists of 'Nefesh', 'Ruach' and, 'Neshamah'. Nevertheless, the root of every Nefesh, Ruach and Neshamah, from the highest of all ranks to the lowest that is embodied within the simple folk ('Amei Ha'aretz') and the most religiously irreverent people ('Kal Sh'bekalim'), all derive, as it were (kaviyochol²), from the supreme mind ('Moach Ha'elyon'), which is supernal wisdom ('Chochmah Ila'ah').

We observe how the Alter Rebbe writes 'from the highest of all ranks to the lowest' –מראש המדרגות עד סוף כל דרגין– deviating from strictly using the language of the Holy tongue (Loshon Hakodesh), and incorporating the Aramaic word "דרגין" –"level". The reason for this is of course with a hidden intention. As in general, the holy tongue is superior over all other languages, while Aramaic serves as an interpretive translation, clarifying the cryptic style of the holy tongue for the general masses, henceforth an extraneous language to the Holy Tongue³. Therefore, when explaining how all Jewish souls no matter the level or rank, all derive from G-d's wisdom, the Alter Rebbe uses the Aramaic word –a lower level in within languages –for "level", emphasizing the equality of all Jewish souls, from the highest rank to the lowest.

The Alter Rebbe now continues to resolve the aforementioned query:

the manner of the soul's descent is analogous to that of a son who is derived from his father's brain, in that even the nails of his feet come into existence from the very same drop of semen, through it being conditioned for nine months in the mother's womb⁴, descending degree by degree, changing continually, until even the nails are formed from it⁵.

This means to say, all the limbs of the child were once undistinguishable, all existing potentially in a single drop of semen. Thus, there truly is no difference in the origination of the head over the nails of the body, both are equal in origin, they both derive from the exact same source –'the very same drop of semen' –'מט"פה זו ממש'.

However, this is only regarding their *origin*, but once the fetus grows and becomes fully developed, there indeed exists a great distinction between the head and the nails. Thus the above appears to be insufficient of an explanation to

¹ See Tractate Sotah 49b

² For commentary on this word, see Rashi and Tosafos Yom Tov on Tractate Megillah 21a see also Rashi on Tractate Yoma 3b

³ See Lekutei Sichos vol. 5 p. 201. And See Lekutei Sichos vol.11 p.76 footnote 25

⁴ For more on this see Biurei HaZohar of the Mitteler Rebbe p.117a. See also 'Pirush Hamilos' of the Tzemach Tzedek on the verse "Hashem Hoshea" (printed in the additions to 'Yahel Or' on psalms 20:10 [p. 619])

⁵ See Talmud Tractate Yevamos 80b

our aforementioned query (for there then truly exists a difference between souls, thus impossible for there to be true equality).

In order to avoid such a misconception the Alter Rebbe continues to explain:

yet after all this process (of development during pregnancy) it is still bound and united with a wonderful and essential unity (B’yichud Nifla V’atzum) with its original essence and being, which was the drop as it came from the father’s brain. And even later, in the case of the son, the nails receive their nourishment and life from the brain that is in the head.

For as matter of fact, every part of the child’s body functions through the child’s brain, no matter whether it is the consciousness of the mind itself, or the growth of the nails. Henceforth, all body parts are still united with their origin –the father of the child. For it is clearly observable how the mind of the son is similar to the mind of his father, therefore signifying (through the essential dependency of the son’s whole body upon the son’s brain) the unity of all body parts (even the nails), with the brain of the father.

The Alter Rebbe continues:

As is written in the Talmud (Niddah, ibid⁶), ‘from the white of the father’s drop of semen are formed the veins, and the bones and the nails.’ [And in Etz Chayim, Sha’ar Hachashmal⁷, it is likewise stated, in connection with the esoteric principle of Adam’s garments in the Garden of Eden, that they [the garments] were the “nails” [derived] from the cognitive faculty of the brain.]

With the above explanation the Alter Rebbe clarifies two points within the aforementioned analogy: I. the nails and head of a human both originate from the exact same source, the very same drop. However, the reason why they then take the form of two very different and incomparable body parts, is due to the development throughout pregnancy, where the drop is now removed from its place of origin and “lowered”, as it were, to another location, thus changing, becoming ‘Mayim Chodoshim Be’veeten Ha’em’ –lit. ‘New waters in the mother’s womb’, in other words becoming something else, something new. II. Once it indeed becomes developed, and now incomparable to its former state, they both are still united with their first essence and being.

So too with the Jewish soul and its maker –‘you are children unto the L-rd your G-d⁸’–both a spiritually high ranking soul and a low ranking one, derive from the same source, the wisdom of G-d.

The explanation to our initial dilemma is now complete, for the “rank” of the soul is analogous to the “rank” of body parts, whereby I. the result of spiritual greatness in one soul over another is due to it being “lowered” from its original state (–submerged in the supernal mind as it were (kaviyachol)), and now descending and becoming something else. II. Even after the descent, both the higher and lower ranking soul are united with their first essence and being.

The Alter Rebbe now explains the descent of the soul in detail:

So, as it were (kaviyachol), is it actually true of the root of every Nefesh, Ruach, and Neshamah in the community of Israel on high, descending degree by degree, through the descent of the worlds (Hishtalshelus Ha’olamos) of ‘Atzilus’ (Emanation), ‘Briah’ (Creation), ‘Yetzirah’ (Formation) and ‘Asiyah’ (Action)⁹, from His blessed wisdom, as it is written¹⁰ ‘you (Hashem) have made them all with your wisdom’, where from [also] the Nefesh, Ruach and Neshamah of the ignorant and unworthy originate.

The ‘Descent of the worlds’ –‘Hishtalshelus Ha’olamos’ is a fundamental concept in Chassidus and Kabbalah. The word ‘Hishtalshelus’ means “chain”. Whereby, just as the lower link of a chain is linked to the link above it, so too, as it were, are the worlds positioned and evolve from each other like links of a chain, whereby each world is “linked” to the one above it. Yet, they all derive from the same source, the wisdom of G-d. As it is written ‘you (Hashem) have made them all with your wisdom’, meaning, even the making of the world of Action is with the Wisdom of G-d. In other words, even within the lowest of the worlds does the wisdom of G-d dwell. The above concept (regarding the different ranks of souls) is further clarified through the explanation of the descent

⁶ 31a

⁷ Sh’ar 41 end of ch.1

⁸ See Perek 02 Part 01

⁹ For further study see what is written later on in chapter 39 of Tanya, and in the fourth volume of Tanya (Iggeres Hakodesh) Ch.25

¹⁰ Psalms 104:24

of the worlds, given here by the Alter Rebbe, for the descent of the soul is comparable to the descent of the worlds. Whereas all are derived from the wisdom of G-d, but yet change through being conditioned during their descent. Henceforth, upon the soul’s complete descent into the body, after it has already been conditioned, it then receive a certain rank. Nevertheless, at the source, all souls are equal.

Still, the soul itself is classed with a certain rank, for it is taught that there exists souls from the world of Atzilus, and those from the world of Briah etc. prior to the soul being clothed in the body (although even within the body the soul retains it’s pristine. The extent however, is dependent upon the refinement of man). If so –that the origination of the soul varies –the soul indeed is superior over another soul *prior* to its conditioning (through its completion of its descent)! How can we then say that all souls are equal, and it is only the descent that changes them?

The explanation is to be found in the note (Hagha) written earlier in this chapter. There the Alter Rebbe explains how G-d is infinitely exalted over the essence and order of the faculties of wisdom (ChaBaD), yet G-d contracts his ‘Or’ (light) to be contained in such faculties. This is the beginning of the descent, as the faculty of wisdom – ‘Chochma’ is the first in the faculties of wisdom. The ‘Or’ then continues to descend into the next faculty and so forth etc., so too with the descent of the soul, it descends in a systematic order, beginning with the highest faculties in the descent of worlds (dimensions), until reaching the body within this world. Thus, although all souls descend through the same system, some spend more time in higher worlds (dimensions), some in Atzilus and others in lower worlds etc., thus becoming conditioned differently as a *result*. This is analogues to the biological development of the fetus, whereas through the pregnancy it is slowly conditioned, thus only after a full pregnancy will the fetus have been fully developed from head to toe nail.

It therefore follows how one soul receives the rank of a “soul from the world of Atzilus” –being a “spiritually higher soul”, and another a “soul from the world of Briah” etc., for it is determined based on the world (dimension) the soul has been conditioned in (most).

Henceforth in conclusion; I. every Jewish soul is derived from the same source, the wisdom of Hashem. II. Even upon entry within the body, at the completion of its descent and subsequent conditioning, does the soul remain united with its first essence and being, the wisdom of G-d. And since ‘G-d and his Wisdom are entirely one¹¹’, thus each soul is entirely one with G-d.

¹¹ See Perek 02 Part 01

Perek 02 part 03

We have previously explained the origin of the soul, and its developmental descent through the spiritual dimensions. The Alter Rebbe has thus far elucidated two points: I. all souls, no matter the life it has been journeyed along, are derived from the same source. II. Even after it has begun the human life it remains continuously bound to its first essence and being. Now the Alter Rebbe will elucidate a third point.

V'IM KOL ZEH –WITHSTANDING ALL THAT IS MENTIONED ABOVE...

The analogy previously given emphasizes three points in total; I. the child's nails derive from the core of his father just as the head does. II. Once the fetus has been fully developed, comprised of all the body parts, from head to toe, nevertheless the bond with its first essence and source (the father) is intact. III. The “lower” body parts function through the child's brain.

So too within the moral –the descent of the soul –does there exist these three points; I. the soul originates from ‘Chochma Ila’ah’ –G-d’s wisdom. This is the source of all souls alike, the difference of rank is only the result of the descent of the soul from its source. II. Once conditioned and now at the completion of its descent, the soul remains united to its first essence and being (G-d’s wisdom). However, this now leads us to the third point, for how in fact is this “lowered” soul still united with its origin? It has been lowered!

Thus the Alter Rebbe explains a third point:

For the nurture and life-force of the Nefesh, Ruach and Neshamah of the simple folk are drawn from the Nefesh, Ruach and Neshamah of the righteous and Sages, the “Heads” of Israel in their generation.

III. The “lower” soul contained by the simple folk are united to its origin through the “higher souls” of the righteous leaders of the generation. Just like the “lower” body parts receive sustenance from the brain, so too –to use an anthropomorphism –the souls of the majority of the Jewish nation, likened to the very soles of the feet, receive sustenance from the divine through the righteous leaders of the Jewish nation –the head (a direct recipient of the vitality emitted from the soul, for the body to function).

The Alter Rebbe continues:

This explains the comment of our sages¹ on the verse² ‘And to cleave unto him’ (U’ledavka Bo) – ‘He who cleaves unto a scholar of the Torah is deemed by the Torah as if he had become attached to the very Shechinah³ (Divine Presence).’ For, through attachment to the scholars, the Nefesh, Ruach and Neshamah of the ignorant are bound up and united with their original essence and root –the Supernal Wisdom.

Yet, we can ask the following: the ignorant are merely attaching themselves to the wise (the Torah scholars), who study G-d’s wisdom, thereby in turn, attaching themselves to the *Wisdom* of G-d. Why then do our sages teach that he is deemed by the Torah as ‘if he had become attached to the very *Shechinah*’ itself?

Henceforth the Alter Rebbe continues:

He (Hashem) and His wisdom are one, and He is the Knowledge etc.

Thus through the attachment to the Torah scholars, who study the wisdom of G-d, the ignorant attach themselves to G-d alone.

The Alter Rebbe continues:

¹ For the source of this concept, and not the origin of the exact terminology used here, see Tractate Kesubos 111b. Rashi on Deuteronomy 11:22. Mishneh Torah Hilchos Deos Ch.6 Halachah 2.

² Deuteronomy 30:20

³ For more on this see what is written later in chapter 41, and 52, see also Lekutei Torah on Shir Hashirim P.8b

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As for them who willfully sin and rebel against the sages, the nurture of their Nefesh, Ruach and Neshamah comes from hind-part (“behind the back”) – ‘Achoraim’ – as it were, of the Nefesh, Ruach and Neshamah of the scholars.

The reason why these individuals still receive nurture from the scholars, even though they rebel against them, is because all Jewry forms one single communal body. And just as any biological body part cannot receive nurture from anywhere else but the head, so too with the Jewish communal body. Therefore, it is only the way the ignorant receive the nourishment that changes. Therefore, the rebel’s soul will still receive its nourishment through the Torah scholars, albeit, from “behind the back” of the scholars, instead of the direct manner.

The Alter Rebbe now explains the reason why a soul may descend to a “lower” spiritual dimension, and another, a “higher” one:

As for what is written in the Zohar⁴ and in Zohar Chadash⁵, to the effect that the essential factor is to conduct oneself in a holy manner during sexual union, which is not the case with the children of the ignorant, etc., it is to be understood as meaning that since there is not a Nefesh, Ruach and Neshamah which has not a garment (Levush) of the Nefesh, Ruach and Neshamah of its father’s and mother’s essence (Atzmus), (moreover) and all the Mitzvos that it fulfills are all influenced by that garment (Levush), etc., (and to the point that) even the benevolence that flows to one from heaven is all given through that garment (Levush) – hence, through self-sanctification, one will cause to descend into the Neshamah of one’s child a holy garment; and however great a soul it may be, it still needs the father’s sanctification, etc. But as for the soul itself, it sometimes happens that the soul of an infinitely lofty person enters to become the son of a despised and lowly man, etc.

Seemingly, the above concepts seems to be out of place. For the ‘Levushim’ (garments of the soul) – are only the tools the soul uses to express itself with, however, the soul alone is above its Levushim, transcending them. Why then, does the Alter Rebbe explain how the soul acquires its garments whence here we are discussing the rank of the soul *itself*?

Obviously, a simple explanation would be as follows: the Levushim of the soul effect the very soul itself (As the Alter Rebbe writes just above – ‘and all the Mitzvos that it fulfills are all *influenced* by that garment etc.’), hence the Alter Rebbe explains here, how the very soul acquires its respective garments.

However, this explanation remains insufficient, as this does not answer why the Alter Rebbe chooses to teach the abovementioned specifically in this section of Tanya, where it speaks of the soul itself⁶.

Rather, the explanation is as follows: the Alter Rebbe is emphasizing how the essence of the soul is *unaffected* and untouched by the conduct preformed in this world. For like the Alter Rebbe teaches in the beginning of this chapter – ‘The second soul of the people of Israel is truly a part of G-d *above*’ – the soul is a part of “above” – not this world. In other words, the conduct preformed in this world will only reach the *Levushim* of the soul, but not the soul itself. Thus writes the Alter Rebbe – ‘The soul of an infinitely lofty person enters to become the son of a despised and lowly man’, disregarding the neglect of the ignorant parents to sanctify themselves during sexual union. This is because the essence of the soul is unaffected by the conduct preformed in this world.

⁴ Vol.1 112b and vol.3 49b

⁵ 11a

⁶ See the beginning of Perek 01 part 03

Perek 02 part 04

We previously explained how the lower ranking souls of the ignorant receive nurture from the high ranking souls of the righteous leaders of the generation. Were one to rebel against the leaders, one would thereby cause a shift in the transference of nourishment, changing the way their soul would receive nourishment from the soul of the leaders, thus receiving it from “behind the back”. Yet, the transference of nourishment will never be terminated, just as the foot cannot receive nourishment from anything but the head. The Alter Rebbe concluded by explaining how the essence of the soul can never be affected by the conduct preformed in this world.

We will now delve deeper into the last few lines of this chapter, in order to further clarify the intended lesson hinted therein.

U’MA SH’KOSUV B’ZOHAR- AND AS TO WHAT IS WRITTEN IN ZOHAR...

The Alter Rebbe explains how the teaching of the Zohar –‘*the essential factor is to conduct oneself in a holy manner during sexual union...*’ –refers only to the ‘Levushim’ (garments) of the soul, whereby the misconduct of the ignorant affect the state of the Levushim, but can never affect the essence of the child’s soul. For the rank of the soul itself is decided upon above –ממעל.

Henceforth, the Alter Rebbe derives three lessons (in total) from the verse¹ ‘הלך אל-ה ממעל (ממש)’ –‘truly a part of G-d above’: I. the *essence* of each Jewish soul is the same, each are ‘truly a part of G-d above’. II. The descent of each soul –lowered from its first essence through the descent of the worlds (Seder Hishtalshelus), starting with the attribute of Wisdom (Chochmah), and continuing “downward” to the next dimension, thus becoming conditioned and receiving a “spiritual rank” –is decided upon from *above* (ממעל), and is undeterred by the conduct preformed in this world. III. The rank of the soul upon entering the body, at the *completion* of its descent, is decided upon from *above* as well.

Therefore, it would appear that the intention of the Alter Rebbe –when quoting the abovementioned teaching of the Zohar –is to portray a question: why must one then conduct oneself in a holy manner, if the soul is unaffected by conduct preformed in this world? The *soul* (itself), its rank upon *descent*, and its rank upon entering the *body*, are all decided upon from above! Yet, according to the Zohar, the case with the children of the ignorant is that they receive their soul from an unholy place (Sitra Achara)?

Thus, the Alter Rebbe continues to explain how the conduct of the child’s parents effect only the *Levushim* of the soul, causing the Levushim to be derived from an unholy place (Sitra Acharah), not the rank of the soul itself.

Yet, the Rebbe² does not suffice with such an explanation. For the Alter Rebbe mentions nothing of an ‘unholy place’ (Lit. ‘other side’, opposite of Kedushah)–‘Sitra Acharah’. Therefore, to base the entire interpretation on the words of the Alter Rebbe upon this concept (how the souls of the ignorant receive energy from ‘Sitra Acharah’) – seems to be highly improbable, for the Alter Rebbe writes nothing of ‘Sitra Acharah’ here (Ikar Chosor Min Hasefer). [The word “etc.” that the Alter Rebbe writes at the end of the quote of the Zohar cannot suffice for the *fundamental* words ‘Sitra Acharah’ upon which we base the *whole* interpretation]

Therefore, the Rebbe explains the above differently: The Alter Rebbe quotes the Zohar not to portray a question. The Alter Rebbe quotes the Zohar in order to emphasize how the soul is unaffected by the conduct preformed in this world. For even the misconduct of the child’s ignorant parents only affects the Levushim. Hence, everything performed by man in this world reaches only so far as the Levushim of the soul. However, the essence of the soul, and its rank both prior and upon entry into the body, are decided upon from above, independent from the actions of man.

The reason why the conduct of the parents have any pull whatsoever is because ‘*there is not a Nefesh, Ruach and Neshamah which has not a garment of the Nefesh, Ruach and Neshamah of its father’s and mother’s essence...*’ – therefore teaches the Alter Rebbe, that the conduct during sexual union effects the Levushim of the child’s soul. Additionally, ‘*all the Mitzvos that it fulfills are all influenced by that garment, etc., and even the benevolence that*

¹ Job 31:2. See Perek 02 Part 01

² See Tanya printed with sources and explanations of the Rebbe (printed by Kehot publication society p.98)

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flows to one from heaven is all given through that garment’.

The Tzemach Tzedek³ translates the above and explains that the ‘Levush’ –‘garment’ mentioned here by the Alter Rebbe refers to the ‘Nefesh Hasichlis’ –‘the rational (intellectual) soul’.

Throughout Chassidus it speaks of three souls: I. the ‘Nefesh Habahamis’ –the animalistic soul. II. The ‘Nefesh Elokis’ –the G-dly soul. III. The ‘Nefesh Hasichlis’ –the rational (intellectual) soul. In the first chapter of Tanya the Alter Rebbe speaks of the first two. The Tzemach Tzedek teaches that in the second chapter of Tanya the Alter Rebbe alludes to the third soul as well when speaking of the soul’s ‘Levush’.

The Alter Rebbe writes –*however great a soul it may be, it still needs the father’s sanctification etc.* –for like we said, the conduct of the parents has an effect on the Levushim, even of a great soul.

There is a legend that further elucidates the above concept: it is told over how there was once a Tzaddik who had a simple father, and on one occasion said “if my father had immersed in the Mikvah (ritual bath) even one time before my conception, I would be a totally different person than who I am today”.

Yet, this is all regarding the Levushim of the soul, however, the Alter Rebbe continues to teach:

It sometimes happens that the soul of an infinitely lofty person enters to become the son of a despised and lowly man, etc. All this has been explained by Rabbi Issac Luria, of blessed memory (Arizal), in ‘Likkutei Torah’, on Parshas Vayikra, and in ‘Ta’amei Hamitzvos’ on Parshas Bereshis⁴.

We observe how the Alter Rebbe writes –‘*it sometimes (לפעמים) happens that the soul of an infinitely lofty person...*’ –this is because this phenomenon is *uncommon*, for normally the rank of a child is in accordance to that of his parents.

If this is indeed so, the parents then do have an effect on the essence of the soul of their child, contrary to what was explained previously at length!

This can be resolved by quoting what the Alter Rebbe teaches later on in chapter eighteen. There the Alter Rebbe explains how the abovementioned is not a *direct* result of the parent’s spiritual status, but rather, like we explained, chosen from *above*. Nevertheless, Hashem selects the soul to be born to parents *befitting* its rank. Thus consistent to what we have explained –the soul of a Jew is chosen from *above*.

³ See Kitzurim V’ha’aros of the Tzemach Tzedek on Tanya p.6

⁴ Mitzvah ‘Pru Urvu’

Perek 03 part 01

We previously explained how each and every Jew has two souls. The first soul is the ‘Nefesh Habahamis’ (animalistic soul), and the second, the ‘Nefesh Elohis’ (G-dly soul). The Nefesh Elohis was the focus in the previous chapter, where the Alter Rebbe explained that it receives the name “second soul” as it is concealed by the Nefesh Elohis, therefore “second” in the awareness of man. And yet it nevertheless is a literal part of G-d above. The Alter Rebbe continued to explain that the Jewish soul is equal amongst all Jews in its origin, deriving from the wisdom of G-d, who is entirely one with His wisdom, therefore deriving directly from G-d himself (so to speak). The Alter Rebbe concluded by explaining how the Nefesh Habahamis is always united with its first essence and being, even upon entry into the body, and throughout the lifetime of man. For the G-dly soul derives from, and is constantly united, up above, independent and unaffected by this world.

The Alter Rebbe now will explain the “anatomy” of the G-dly soul:

PEREK GIMMEL –CHAPTER THREE

Now, each distinction and grade of the three –Nefesh, Ruach and Neshamah –consists of ten faculties – ‘Bchinos’, corresponding to the Supernal ten ‘Sefiros’¹ –Divine manifestations, from which they have descended, which are subdivided into two general categories, namely, the ‘Shalosh Imos’ –lit. Three “mothers” and the ‘Shiv’ah K’fulos’² –lit. Seven “doubles”, they (the first category, the three mothers) are: I. ‘Chochmah’ –wisdom. II. ‘Binah’ – understanding. III. ‘Da’as’ –knowledge; and (the second category, the seven doubles) the ‘Shiv’as Yemei Habinyan’ –lit. “Seven days of creation”, they are comprised of: I. ‘Chesed’ – ‘Kindness’. II. ‘Gevurah’ –Severity (power). III. ‘Tifferes’ –Beauty, etc.

The reason why the second category is named “Seven days of creation” is because it is with these attributes that G-d created the world. For He did so using his attributes of (characteristics (Middos)), so that on the first day it was with Chesed, and the second day with Gevurah etc.

The difference between the two general categories is as follows: the first category –Chochmah, Binah, and Da’as – comprise of the three attributes of intellect (Mochin), and the second category –Chesed, Gevurah, Tifferes etc.(Netzach, Hod, Yesod and Malchus) –comprise the seven attributes of character (Middos).

The Alter Rebbe continues:

Similarly is it with the human soul [and its ten faculties], which is divided into two –I. ‘Sechel’ –intellect. And II. ‘Middos’ –characteristics [emotional attributes]. The intellect includes Chochmah, Binah and Da’as (ChaBaD)³, whilst the Middos are love of G-d (Chesed), dread and awe of him (Gevurah), glorification of him (Tifferes) etc. ‘ChaBaD’ [the intellectual faculties] are called “mothers” (Immos) and the source of the Middos, for the latter are “offspring” (Toldos) of the former.

Although similar to the Supernal ten attributes, the ten faculties of man are different when it comes to the distinction between the two categories of intellect (Mochin) and characteristics (Middos). For when it comes to man’s Middos, they become dependent on what lays beyond man. This means to say, the Middos of man are dependent on the existence of a social society (“Zulas”).

For example, love can only be felt when there is something *else* to love. Man, were he to be truly alone⁴, cannot feel love. However, when it comes to man’s faculties of intellect (Mochin), they function independently, requiring nothing else. However, all the *ten* Supernal attributes are independent, requiring nothing else to exist. Yet they are similar to the faculties of man. For the divine attributes of character also resemble the Middos of man (characteristics). The divine attributes of character function for society (‘Zulas’), this means to say, G-d contracted

¹ See also part IV of Tanya (Iggeres Hakodesh) Ch.15 and 25

² This is the terminology of Sefer Yetzirah 1:8

³ See also part II of Tanya (Sha’ar Yichud V’Haemuna) Ch.8

⁴ If there truly were to exist nothing else around him.

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His ‘Or’ (light) to take form of the attributes of character (Middos), in order to create the world, so that there can exist society. Just like the characteristics of man that have descended from it (the Supernal Middos).

We observe how the Alter Rebbe lists all the three faculties of intellect (ChaBaD), but does not do so with the Middos, but rather mentions only the first three and suffices with “etc.” to include the rest. The reason for this is as follows: it is taught throughout Chassidus how the primary Middos (Ikhar Hamiddos) are Chesed, Gevurah and Tifferes, however, the other four are like offshoots of these primary Middos. Yet, all Middos, including the primary Middos are “offshoots” (Toldos) of the Mochin (the intellectual faculties), which is why the intellectual faculties are named the “three mothers”, and the characteristics “offspring”.

U’BIER HA’INYAN –AND TO FURTHER EXPLAIN THIS CONCEPT...

The Alter Rebbe will now explain these faculties in more detail, starting with the faculties of intellect. For in order to understand the system of faculties, and how the intellect stimulates the characteristics, and so on, we must first understand the faculties of intellect *individually*:

The explanation of the matter is as follows: that intellectual faculty of the rational (intellectual) soul – ‘Nefesh Hasichlis’ that first conceives any matter is given the appellation of Chochmah [which is composed of two words] – כח מה the potential of “what is”. When one brings forth this concentrated idea from the potential (כח) into the actual (פועל) that is, when one cogitates with his intellect in order to understand a matter full well –and delves into it its very depths as it evolves from the concept which he had conceived in his intellect, this is called ‘Binah’.

The explanation of the matter is as follows: the intellect (of the rational (intellectual) soul –‘Nefesh Hasichlis’–) is split up into three faculties; I. wisdom –Chochmah. II. Understanding –Binah. III. Knowledge –Da’as. Practically, in order to fully comprehend the system of the ten faculties, and how they connect to each other, we must first understand the difference between the three faculties of intellect, for what defines ‘Chochmah’ as wisdom, and ‘Binah’ as understanding etc.?

To further delve into this study we will use an analogy: let us say one were to study a certain portion of the Talmud, he now arrives at a difficult section, thus unable to study further and comprehend. The student therefore ponders, straining his mind to decrypt the meaning of this difficult piece. Finally, the student has an epiphany, the locked portion of Talmud has now been unlatched, he feels the message the Talmud is relaying, yet, it is still unclear. At this point, the student has successfully used his faculty of ‘Chochmah’. ‘Chochmah’ is the faculty that conceives anything, it is named – חכמה “Chochmah” –because the word is truly made up of two words – “ko’ach” and “Mah”, which translates into English as the “potentiality” of “what is”. For this is exactly how this faculty of wisdom functions, this is when the concept is still *in potentia*, and thus perceived only generally. Therefore, simply put, ‘Chochmah’ is when a concept is still only understood generally (Bichlolus), and Binah, the next stage, is when the concept is perceived in all its details (Biprotiyus).

Thus, in the intellect of the rational soul (Nefesh Hasichlis) there are two stages [faculties]; I. when a concept is perceived in a general way, where everything connects but is still unclear and “foggy”. Where from the “כח” – potential intelligence –he asks “מה” –“what”. Even though in truth all the details are there, already existing in the premature stage of ‘Chochmah’, nevertheless they are still unclear, thus requiring the next stage. Thus leading us to the second stage [faculty] II. when one brings forth this power from the potential (כח) into the actual (פועל), that is when a person cogitates with his intellect in order to understand a thing truly and profoundly as it evolves from the concept which he has conceived in his intellect while still in the premature stage of ‘Chochmah’, and now through contemplation (Hisbonenus) extends the premature concept into a full bodied logic. This is achieved through thinking over and pondering each and every aspect of the concept, allowing one to achieve full clarity in the matter.

Throughout Chassidus there is a certain passage in the Zohar frequently quoted, whereby the Zohar explains the abovementioned concept by way of a metaphor; ‘Chochmah’ is likened to a well-spring (Ma’yan), which is a narrow stream of water that is shot up from the depths, whereby it eventually collects in one location, thus forming a wide river (Nohor). The well-spring is Chochmah, and the river Binah, for Chochmah is the conception of an idea, still “narrow” and undefinable (Nekudah Klalis), therefore, perceived only generally, for it is still premature. In order for the concept to become developed it must be “collected”, this is the function of Binah likened to that of a river, whereby it gathers the narrow stream of consciousness (Chochmah) and broadens it until it is fully developed.

The Alter Rebbe continues:

They [Chochmah and Binah] are the very “father” –‘Av’ and “mother” –‘Eim’ which give birth to love of G-d

[Ahavas Hashem] and awe [Yir’ah] and dread [Pachad] of him.

Although as a whole, the category comprising ‘Mochin’ (faculties of intellect) are these three –Chochmah, Binah and Da’as—are called the “three mothers” (‘Shalosh Imos’), however, individually, Chochmah is named ‘Av’ –“father”, and Binah –‘Eim’ –“mother”. This can be further understood through observing its resemblance in nature to a biological birth; a child is conceived through the unity of two entities, namely, the father and mother, the father provides the drop of semen which includes the full child *in potentia*, with all the limbs. It then becomes a new entity within the mother (Tipah Chadashah B’veten Ha’em), and during the duration of pregnancy is conditioned until fully developed. The difference between the function of the father and the mother, in general, is simple, the father provides a premature and all-inclusive drop (Inyan Klali), and the mother, a detailed and developmental incubation (Inyan Prati). And so is the function of Chochmah and Binah.

[After explaining the primary faculties of intellect, and how they function, the Alter Rebbe continues to teach about the ‘Middos’ (characteristics) which are stimulated through the intellect. The Alter Rebbe will teach the device used to intercede between the two categories as well.]

The same way a father and mother contribute different qualities, and thus through uniting produce offspring. So too with the intellectual faculties of the rational (intellectual) soul –‘Chochmah’ and ‘Binah’ –by means of deep contemplation, thus immersing itself exceedingly in the greatness of Hashem.

The Alter Rebbe continues:

For when the rational (intellectual) soul deeply contemplates and immerses itself exceedingly in the greatness of G-d, how he fills all worlds (Mimaleh Kol Almin), and he encompasses all worlds (Sovev Kol Almin), and how in his presence all is considered naught –the Middah (characteristic) of awe for the Divine Majesty will be born and aroused in one’s mind and thought, to fear and be humble before his blessed greatness, which is without end or limit, and a dread of G-d in his heart. Next, his heart will glow with an intense love (of G-d) like fiery flames, with a passion, desire, and longing, and a yearning soul⁵ toward the greatness of the blessed Ein Sof⁶. This is ‘Klos Hanefesh’ – “expiration of soul”, as is written⁷ “My soul longs [for you]; indeed it faints..., and “My soul thirsts for G-d⁸ ..., and again “My soul thirsts for You⁹...”

The Alter Rebbe has thus far explained how through three methods of contemplation one can arouse feelings in his mind and heart; these methods were: I. contemplating how Hashem gives vitality and energy (Chayus) to every creature –‘Mimaleh Kol Almin’ –lit. “Fills all worlds”. This method of contemplation is a *detailed* one, whereby one concentrates on the micro, contemplating how Hashem provides for every detail in creation, giving each creation the energy it *uniquely* requires. II. The contemplation on how Hashem gives vitality to all worlds and its subsequent creatures *equally* – ‘Sovev Kol Almin’ –lit. “Encompasses all worlds”. This method of contemplation is a *general* one, whereby one concentrates on how all created matter receives vitality and energy from Hashem equally. For all created matter must equally be given vitality and energy constantly¹⁰. III. contemplating how in truth Hashem is infinitely exalted over and transcends all created matter entirely –‘Kula Kamei Klo Mamish Choshivei’ –lit. “In the presence of whom everything is considered as nothing¹¹”. This method of contemplation is unlike the other two, for here created matter is not the object of concentration, but on the contrary, it the very perception one desires to uproot.

In other words: The first two methods of contemplation man accepts the notion of created matter, however, he delves deeper into the origin of created matter, tracing its source. But, in the first method man contemplates the micro, concentrating upon the divine energy filling all matter individually. While in the second method, man contemplates

⁵ See Psalms 107:9

⁶ See Lekutei Torah Parshas Pekudei [7b]

⁷ Psalms 84:3

⁸ Ibid 42:3

⁹ Ibid 63:2

¹⁰ For more on this see chapter 1 of Tanya part II [Sha’ar Hayichud V’haemunah]

¹¹ These are titles of the Zohar for different methods of contemplation. For example see Zohar vol.3 225a. for more on this see what is written later on in Ch.20. however for the first method specifically see Ch.51 and for the second see Ch.48. see also part 2 of Tanya (Sh’ar Yichud V’Haemuna) end of Ch.7

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the macro, concentrating upon the equal necessity of divine energy within all created matter. Yet both are with the preconceived notion that created matter is indeed reality. Unlike the first two methods of contemplation, the third negates the whole notion of created matter altogether, contemplating solely the absolute reality, one where there is G-d and no other.

The Alter Rebbe continues:

This (loving) thirst is derived from the element of Fire, which is found in the G-dly soul (Nefesh Elohis), so too with the source of the element of water and moisture which is in the brain, which is explained in Eitz Chayim, portal 50¹², to refer to the faculty of Chochmah, called “the water of the Nefesh Elohis”.

We observe how the Alter Rebbe describes the emotions stemming from the characteristics of Chesed (kindness) and Gevurah (severity) but what about the other five? The Alter Rebbe therefore continues and explains:

The rest of the Middos are all offshoots of fear and love and all their derivations, as is explained elsewhere. Meaning, Chesed and Gevurah are the primary Middos, while the rest are merely offshoots. Therefore the Alter Rebbe describes only the primary Middos.

We observe yet again how the Alter Rebbe explains the first two intellectual faculties, but what about the third faculty of Da’as (knowledge)?

Henceforth the Alter Rebbe now continues to address this third faculty of intellect:

Da’as, the etymology (Lashon) of which is to be found in the verse¹³ ‘And Adam knew Eve¹⁴’, this implies attachment and union; this means to say, it is this faculty which binds one’s mind with a very firm and strong bond to, firmly fixing one’s thought on the greatness of Hashem in his infiniteness, without diverting one’s mind from Him. Thus Da’as is the faculty that connects one’s feelings to his intellect, essentially accomplished through connecting one’s very self to an intellectual concept, this is the faculty of Da’as.

But as we have previously explained, the Middos are stimulated through the “three mothers” comprised of all three faculties of intellect. However, here the Alter Rebbe explains how this is accomplished through the two faculties of Chochmah and Binah alone, thus named “father” and “Mother”(see above), accomplishing the stimulation of feelings without the third faculty of Da’as?

Therefore the Alter Rebbe continues and explains:

For even one who is wise and understanding [thus successfully using his faculties of Chochmah (wisdom) and Binah (understanding)] of the greatness of G-d’s infinite power, will not create in his soul true love and fear, but only vain fancies, unless he binds his knowledge and fixes his thought with firmness and perseverance [activating his faculty of Da’as]. It contains Chesed and Gevurah, this is to say love with its offshoots and fear with its offshoots

It is therefore through Da’as that one can successfully concentrate his whole being unto his intellect, thus uniting himself with his mind, and allowing true stimulation of feeling [Middos] such as love and awe. Henceforth, Da’as is the *basis* of the Middos and the *source* of their vitality, it contains Chesed and Gevurah, this is to say love with its offshoots and fear with its offshoots¹⁵, for all other Middos are included within the two primary Middos of Chesed and Gevurah.

¹² See the beginning of Ch.1

¹³ Genesis 4:1

¹⁴ See also Eitz Chayim Sha’ar 48 chapter 2

¹⁵ “Ahavah” (Love) and “Yir’ah” (Awe) is the *inner* dimension, and “Chesed” (kindness) and “Gevurah” (severity) is the *extraneous* dimension. See Tanya part IV (Iggeres Hakodesh) Epistle 15.

Perek 04 part 01

In the previous chapter the Alter Rebbe explained the faculties of the soul, teaching how there exists two general categories –‘Mochin’ and ‘Middos’, totaling in ten faculties. This, teaches the Alter Rebbe, corresponds to the ten ‘Sefiros’ from which they have descended. Throughout the chapter the Alter Rebbe defines each of the intellectual faculties (Mochin), and explains how they evolve from each other and how together they bring to the fruition of intellectually stimulated feelings [Middos]. It is the soul itself that is comprised of these ten faculties, thus essentially, the faculties are the “anatomy” of the soul.

Now in this chapter, the Alter Rebbe will continue to explain another, more external, dimension of the soul.

PEREK DALED –CHAPTER FOUR

In addition, every divine soul [Nefesh Elohis] possesses three ‘Levushim’ –lit. “Garments”, they are; thought, speech and action, expressing themselves in the six hundred and thirteen Mitzvos of the Torah.

Before we continue to explain the function of the ‘Levushim’ we must first understand the essential difference between the ‘Levushim’ and the ‘Bechinos’ [faculties] of the soul.

We can achieve this by way of an example; one who loves G-d does not need to constantly create the feeling of love, rather he naturally has a passionate feeling of love in his heart. In other words, the love is stimulated naturally, for it is the very state of the soul itself expressed in conscious feelings –it is in love. This is the nature in all the Middos [characteristics] of the soul, they are nothing more than the emotional state of the soul itself.

The same is with the Mochin [intellectual faculties] of the soul, for example; one who has come to the understanding that the only absolute reality is G-d, and the world we live in is the very handiwork of G-d – has now acquired a new perception of the world, and thus sees the reality of things in this manner. He does not need to fight his old perception of the world in order to view the world the way he currently does, but rather naturally perceives the world in a new way. It is therefore understood how the faculties of the soul are one with the soul, and not independent.

The ‘Levushim’ by contrast are activated through conscious efforts. The ‘Levush’ (singular form of ‘Levushim’) of ‘Ma’aseh’ –“action” requires the active effort of the soul. For example; the Mitzvah of Tefillin requires the soul to actively preform an action, i.e. wrapping the Tefillin around ones bicep. In this way we see how there exists differences within the nature of the fulfillment of Mitzvos. There are Mizvos such as Tefillin, that require an action, and therefore are vulnerable to opposition, for one cannot fulfill the Mitzvah automatically but rather must actively preform the mitzvah with the soul’s instrument [Levush] of ‘Ma’aseh’ (action), thus subject to the opposition of the evil inclination (Yetzer Hara). The Mitzvah of Torah Knowledge on the other hand that does not (in essence) require action, or for that matter the usage of any Levush. For the Mitzvah is the very knowledge of the Torah, and is fulfilled through the intellectual faculties of the soul [Mochin] alone, without the (constant) usage of the Levushim. Because once the knowledge of Torah has been acquired through the Levush of ‘Machshavah’ –“Thought” it no longer requires any Levush, but rather it is naturally stored in the faculties of the soul itself. Therefore this Mitzvah in essence is not subject to opposition, for like we explained above, once an idea has been conceived and subsequently comprehended, it has now become the automatic view of the individual, thus independent of any conscious efforts and Levushim, henceforth free of opposition.

The essential difference between the Bechinos (faculties) of the soul and the Levushim is now understood, the Bechinos are the soul’s activity, and the Levushim are the soul’s *modes of expression*. Thereby the Bechinos are ‘Pnimi’ –“Inner” dimension of the soul, and the Levushim are ‘Chitzoni’ –“External” dimension of the soul.

Yet, in truth, the Bechinos are not entirely one with the soul, this means to say that it is still something “other” than the very soul itself. Evidence to this would be the phenomena observed during study, whereby sometimes effort is

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required to understand the matter at hand, for the concept does not automatically become accessible to the soul, and requires the soul’s conscious efforts when activating its faculty of understanding [Binah]. Still the faculties of the soul are the “inner” dimension of the soul, for after all it is “I” who understands the idea, and it is “I” who loves another. Meaning, although the faculties are not the core soul itself, they are however nothing other than the soul’s activity. Nevertheless, even though the Levushim are external, nevertheless they are “garments” the soul “clothes” itself in, and therefore reveal the soul’s inner capabilities (Kochos Pnimiym)¹.

The Alter Rebbe now continues to explain this phenomenon:

when a person actively fulfills all the positive Mitzvos, and with his power of speech he occupies himself in expounding all six hundred and thirteen Mitzvos and their practical application, and with his power of thought he comprehends all that is comprehensible to him in the ‘Pardes’ [acronym for ‘Pshat’ –Literal, ‘Remez’ –Allusion, ‘Drush’ –Homiletic and ‘Sod’ –Esoteric, dimensions] of the Torah –then the totality of the “organs” [‘Eivarim’] of his soul are clothed in the six hundred and thirteen Mitzvos of the Torah. Specifically: the intellectual faculties in his soul [ChaBaD] are clothed in the comprehension of the Torah, that which he comprehends in ‘Pardes’ (of the Torah), to the extent of his mental capacity and the supernal root of his soul² [‘Shoresh Nafsho Lema’alah’].

This means that through the usage of thought one can clothe his soul’s intellectual faculties in the Torah, for when studying Torah one must use his Levush of Machshava (thought). By doing so one then activates the soul’s intellectual faculties, causing them to become clothed within the Levush of thought, thus submerging the soul’s intellectual faculties in the Torah itself. For the usage, and subsequent submergence of thought, in the study of the Torah “below”, causes the submergence of the intellectual faculties of the soul “above”.

The Alter Rebbe now continues to explain the function of the Levushim within the characteristics [Middos] of the soul; *and the Middos, namely, fear and love, together with their offshoots and ramifications, are clothed in the fulfillment of the Mitzvos in deed (Ma’aseh) and in word (Dibur), namely, in the study of Torah which is “the equivalent of all the Mitzvos³”.*

Seemingly, when it comes to the Middos of the soul, there appears to be an unclear connection between the Middos and the instruments [Levushim] one must use to preform them. The intellectual faculties, in contrast, clearly must become clothed in the Levushim, for one cannot consciously use his intellectual faculties if not by way of thought. For it is essentially the Levush of thought that is the medium between the intellectual faculties of the soul and the actual performance of the Mitzvah. However, when it comes to the characteristics of the soul, namely, love and fear, it is not understood why they become clothed in the action or speech used when preforming the Mitzvah, for it can be performed without the soul’s Middos.

Therefore the Alter Rebbe clarifies:

for love is the root of all the two hundred and forty eight positive Mitzvos⁴, all originating in it and having no true foundation without it, inasmuch as he fulfils them in truth who truly loves the Name of G-d and desires to cleave to him in truth; for one cannot truly cleave to him except through the fulfilment of the two hundred and forty eight Mitzvos which are the “two hundred and forty eight organs of the king”, as it were, as is explained elsewhere.

And therefore it is only with the soul’s Middos, namely, Love, that one can truly fulfill all the positive Mitzvos, for without it the Mitzvah cannot be fulfilled completely, because the positive Mitzvos are derived from love itself, and like we said it is the very root of all the positive Mitzvos. Moreover, without love, the fulfillment of the Positive Mitzvos will not last, for the passionate energy behind the performance of the Mitzvah is lacking. Henceforth, the soul’s characteristics are indeed required to become clothed in the deed, word or thought of the Mitzvos, thereby uniting the soul with the actual Mitzvah one preforms.

¹ In other words, the ‘Bechinos’ are the design (Tziyur) of the soul, and the ‘Levushim’ the soul’s instruments of expression. Therefore neither are separate from the soul, but rather the soul in a heightened state.

² See Torah Or 98:3

³ Tractate Peah 1:1

⁴ See Hilchos Talmud Torah of the Alter Rebbe 4:6. See also the “Pirush” on Mishneh Torah Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah 2:1

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The Alter Rebbe continues:

Whilst fear is the root of the three hundred and sixty five prohibitive Mitzvos⁵, fearing to rebel against the supreme king of kings, the Holy one, blessed be He. There is a still deeper fear [Yir’ah Pnimis] than this [a sense of awe] – when a man feels ashamed in the presence of the Divine greatness to rebel against his glory and do what is evil in his eyes, namely, any of the ‘abominable things hated by G-d’⁶, which are the Klippos and Sitra Achara, which draw their nurture from man below and have their hold on him through the three hundred and sixty five prohibitive Mitzvos [that he violates].

It is only with a true feeling of fear and awe that one can truly fulfill all the three hundred and sixty five prohibitive Mitzvos, without it one does not entirely fulfill the Mitzvah, just like we explained above regarding the positive Mitzvos.

It is now understood how the Levushim –an external “garment” or “instrument” at the soul’s disposal, can nevertheless express the faculties of the soul itself. The Alter Rebbe explained this by analyzing the fulfillment of a Mitzvah, where within the performance of the Mitzvah –whether it be in deed, word or thought –the soul must clothe itself, thus achieving complete fulfillment of the Mitzvah. This relationship between the Levushim and the soul’s faculties is not in a way of “cause” [Sibah] and “effect” [Mesubav], but instead it is the actual submersion of the soul into the Levush, like a person wearing clothes.

The above is understood when it comes to the Levush of Machshavah (thought), for the only way to consciously understand anything is through the medium (Levush) of thought, and therefore the soul’s faculty of understanding is clearly clothed in the thought. However, one may ask what the direct relationship exists between the Levush of Dibbur (speech) and Ma’aseh (action) and the other faculties of the soul, seemingly the love is independent from the actual deed or word of the Mitzvah that one performs?

Rather it is like we said, the Mitzvos alone require the love (or fear etc.), and cannot be completely fulfilled without it. It is not that the love merely indicates the sincerity of the Jew who performs the Mitzvah, but is the vitality of the Mitzvah itself, hence, the love is not independent from the deed or word but the very completion of it. This can be illustrated by an analogy; when one speaks about something meaningful his tone is entirely different than when he speaks about something random, here there is passion and feeling in every word he utters. This is the submersion of the soul’s faculties in the Levushim.

⁵ See previous the footnote

⁶ Deuteronomy 12:31

Perek 04 part 02

We previously explained how the Levushim (Lit. “Garments”. i.e. “Instruments”) express the soul’s faculties. The Alter Rebbe elucidated this concept by teaching the proper way to fulfill Mitzvos, and that is with the passion of the soul that becomes clothed within the act, word or deed of the Mitzvah. Now the Alter Rebbe will explain the quality of the Levushim themselves.

V’HINEI SHLOSHA LEVUSHIM –NOW THESE THREE GARMENTS...

Now these three Levushim – “garments”, deriving from the Torah and its Mitzvos, although they are called “garments” of the soul – ‘Nefesh’, ‘Ruach’ and ‘Neshamah’, their quality, nevertheless, is infinitely higher and greater [‘Gavha V’gadlah Ma’alasan L’ein Keitz’] than that of the Nefesh, Ruach and Neshamah themselves, as explained in the Zohar¹, because the Torah and the Holy One, Blessed be He, are one.

The above appears to be incomprehensible, for like we explained in the beginning of this chapter, the Levushim are merely “garments” in relation to the soul itself, and are at the disposal of the soul to be used like an instrument. How then can the Levushim be infinitely higher and greater than the soul itself? The ‘NaRaN’ (‘Nefesh, Ruach and Neshamah’) of the soul, is the soul itself (Pnimi), and the Levushim are something extraneous [Chitzoni] to the soul²!

The Alter Rebbe therefore emphasizes that here we are speaking of the Levushim of the Torah and Mitzvos, which are entirely different from the regular and mundane Levushim at our soul’s disposal. For like the Zohar states, the Torah and Hashem are entirely one.

The Alter Rebbe continues to explain:

the meaning of this is that the Torah, which is the wisdom (Chochmah) and will (Ratzon) of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His glorious Essence (Bichvodo U’veatzmo) are one, since He is both the Knower (Yodeah) and Knowledge (Mada) etc. as is explained above in the name of Maimonides.

The Alter Rebbe is referring to what was taught in the second chapter of Tanya, there the Alter Rebbe was explaining how the souls of all Jews are derived from the supernal wisdom of Hashem (Chochmah Ila’ah), whereby there then appears to be a contradiction to what was taught at the beginning of the chapter – “the second soul of the people of Israel is truly a part of G-d above” –therefore the Alter Rebbe continued to explain how G-d and his wisdom are one, just as the Rambam writes “He is the Knowledge and the Knower”, hence there is no contradiction³.

This being so, how are the Levushim of Torah and its Mitzvos “infinitely higher and greater” than the soul (NaRaN) itself, for like we have learned, both the soul and the Levushim are derived from the Wisdom of G-d which is entirely one with his glorious Essence?

There are two explanations that can be given to explain the above dilemma:

I. like we said in the beginning of chapter two ‘the second soul...is truly a *part* of G-d above’ –this tells us how the soul is literally G-dliness, which is a clear quality in the soul. However, this tells us something else as well, the soul is only a ‘part’ of G-d above, this means that it is incomplete. Because when the soul is “hewed” from its sublime state within G-dliness, and lowered into this world, it then changes, and becomes a “Nivra” – “creation”, and thus

¹ See beginning of the Zohar

² See Perek 04 Part 01

³ see Perek 02 Part 01

lacks its full quality. The Torah however does not change upon its descent into the world, it remains the same wisdom of G-d as it were before its descent. This is the (esoteric) reason why the Talmud teaches⁴ that the Torah cannot contract impurity, for it is unfazed by our materialistic world. As a result, the Torah, and subsequently the Levushim of the Torah and Mitzvos (i.e. the thought, speech and action of man used when studying the Torah and performing its Mitzvos), are infinitely higher and greater than the soul (NaRaN) itself.

II. [The second explanation is in truth quite long and profound, but briefly] in ‘Likkutei Levi Yitzchak⁵’ it is explained as follows; we observe how the Alter Rebbe changes the order of words when quoting the statement of the Maimonides. Here the Alter Rebbe writes –‘He is the Knower, and the Knowledge’ –whereas in the second chapter where the Alter Rebbe writes it for the first time, it appears differently –‘He is the Knowledge, and he is the Knower’. The reason for this is because the Alter Rebbe is discussing two different levels within the unity of G-d. In the second chapter the Alter Rebbe discusses the lower level of unity, whereby there indeed appears to be an independent existence –‘knowledge’ –yet in truth it is really united with G-d –the ‘Knower’. However, in this chapter the Alter Rebbe discusses the higher level of unity, whereby there does not even appear to be an independent existence –‘knowledge’ –which would require explanation as to how it is truly united with G-d –‘Knower’, rather it is entirely perceived as one being, G-d, –‘He is the Knowledge, and He is the Knower’. It is thus understood how the Levushim of the Torah and Mitzvos are greater than the soul. For in the chapter discussing the soul (chapter two) the level of unity is lower, and in the chapter discussing the Levushim of Torah and Mitzvos the level of unity is higher.

We have now come to a better understanding in the quality of the Levushim of the Torah and Mitzvos. However a question arises; what purpose is there in the power and quality of the Levushim if we cannot comprehend G-d? This is what the Alter Rebbe will now continue to explain:

And although the Holy One, Blessed be He, is called ‘En Sof’ (infinite), and ‘His greatness can never be fathomed⁶, and ‘no thought can apprehend Him at all⁷, and so too are his will and wisdom, as it is written⁸: ‘there is no searching of His understanding, and ‘can you by searching find G-d⁹?’ and again¹⁰: ‘for my thoughts are not your thoughts’ –nevertheless, it is in this connection that it has been said¹¹: ‘Where you find the greatness of the Holy One, Blessed be He, there you will find his humility’. For the Holy One blessed be He, has compressed (Tzamtzem) His will and wisdom within the six hundred and thirteen Mitzvos of the Torah, and their practical application, as well as within the combination of the letters of the Torah, the books of the prophets and the writings, and in the exposition thereof which are to be found in the ‘Agados’ and ‘Midrashim’ of our Rabbis of blessed memory. All this in order that each Neshamah, or Ruach and Nefesh in the human body should be able to comprehend them through its faculty of understanding, and to fulfill them, as far as they can be fulfilled, in action, speech and thought, thereby clothing itself with all its ten faculties in these three garments [Levushim].

The Alter Rebbe explains that although G-d is beyond our comprehension entirely, nevertheless, G-d “compressed” by way of ‘Tzamtzum’ (“contraction”) his aloof will and wisdom allowing them to be accessible in these very Levushim of the Torah and Mitzvos. Hence, the Levushim provide us with the access to the will and wisdom of G-d, therefore, like we explained above, they are infinitely higher and greater than the soul itself, for the soul without the Levushim cannot comprehend G-d whatsoever.

We observe how the Alter Rebbe writes –‘the Holy One, blessed be He, has compressed (Tzamtzem) his will and wisdom within the six hundred and thirteen commandments of the Torah...’ –this indicates how the Torah and Mitzvos are complete and unchanged even when “lowered” into the world. For in general the word “Tzamtzum” – “contraction” –implies alternation. For example; a teacher who might want to convey a profound idea to his student would need to “contract” the idea, thus altering the way it exists in his own mind, and then reconstruct it in a manner suitable for the student’s understanding. Here, however, the term “Tzamtzum” refers its other function –

⁴ Tractate Brachos 22a

⁵ Likkutei Levi Yitzchak on Tanach p.118

⁶ Psalms 145:3

⁷ Tikkunei Zohar 12a

⁸ Isaiah 40:28

⁹ Job 11:7

¹⁰ Isaiah 55:8

¹¹ Tractate Megillah 31a

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“compression”. This means that there are no alternations, the product is complete and unchanged, yet, it is now rearranged to “fit” in a “narrower” dimension. In other words, the Torah and Mitzvos –the will and wisdom of G-d – descend into the world unchanged, in spite of the unfamiliar materialism our world is made of. This is because G-d “compressed” them entirely into the “lens” of materialism, thus enabling mortal man, through his Levushim [instruments] to come into contact with the will and wisdom of G-d. It is for this reason that the Alter Rebbe will continue to explain how Torah is similar to water.

Perek 04 part 03

We previously explained the true quality of the Levushim of the Torah and Mitzvos and their superiority over the soul (NaRaN). Now the Alter Rebbe continues to explain the nature of Torah and Mitzvos, and their unity with Hashem.

V'LOCHEN NIMSHELAH –THEREFORE THE TORAH HAS BEEN COMPARED...

Therefore the Torah has been compared to water¹, for just as water descends from a higher to a lower level, so has the Torah descended from its place of glory, which is His blessed will (Ratzon) and wisdom (Chochmah); for the Torah and the Holy one, Blessed be He, are one and the same; no thought can apprehend Him at all (Leis Machshava Tfisa Bei Klal). Then the Torah has progressively descended through hidden stages, stage after stage (Mimadreibah Lemadreibah), with the descent of the worlds (Hishtalshelus Ha'olamos), until it clothed itself in corporeal substances (Dvarim Gashmi'im) and in things of this world (Inyanei Olam Haze) compressing most and all (Rubo Kekulo) of the Mitzvos of the Torah, their practical applications (Halachos), and in the combinations of material letters (Tzirufei Osiyos), written with ink in a book, namely, the twenty four volumes of Torah, prophets and scriptures (TaNaCh).

With this analogy, the Alter Rebbe clarifies the meaning of 'Tzimtzum' used here. For like we explained previously, the Torah and Mitzvos remain the very same will and Wisdom of G-d, unaltered, this is true during their descent into this world, and even whilst in it. This is because the method used to "lower" them is similar to the flow of water, whereby the water travels from a high plain to a lower one without any alternation, it remains the same body of water in the lower plain just as it were in the higher plain. This method of 'Tzimtzum' (compression) is unique, for the product is transferred and contained in a foreign atmosphere, and nevertheless remains intact.

In contrast to this method of compression, is the method of 'contraction'. This can be explained by way of another analogy: the body of the sun emits many rays, each ray is nothing but the radiance of the body, yet, the sunray can in no way be compared to the body of the sun itself. This is because here 'Tzimtzum' functions differently, it is the method of contraction, where the product is nothing other than the sun, but it is contracted and becomes only a glimmer (Ha'arah) of it, undergoing extreme alternations, and henceforth it cannot be compared to its original essence. So too with the analogy of the transference of intellect from the teacher to student. Like we mentioned before, the teacher must contract the idea, thus weakening the powerful intelligence within it, and then rearrange it in a way that will suit the student's understanding.

Here, however, the definition and method of 'Tzimtzum' is different than the above, common, usage of the word. Although the Torah and Mitzvos do indeed descend from their spiritual state, and are lowered through the 'descent of worlds' –'Seder Hishtalshelus', thus becoming clothed in material matter, appearing in the familiar form of a Mezuzah, Tefillin, Shofar, Lulav etc., nevertheless the very will of Hashem that they were before they took material form, is the exact same will after they took material form. This is clearly evident from the blessings we recite upon the performance of the Mitzvos – אשר – קידשנו במצוותיו –'He has sanctified us with His commandments'.

We can recite this blessing upon the performance of the physical act of the Mitzvah because the Mitzvos remain the very same command of Hashem even after their descent in this world, for Hashem continues to will the performance of the Mitzvah. So too with the study of the Torah, although it descends in Seder Hishtalshelus as well, taking the form of the written word, ink on paper, nevertheless, the Torah remains the same wisdom of Hashem. This is also evident from the blessing we make upon the study of Torah – ונתן לנו את תורתו – 'and He gave us His Torah'. We can recite this blessing before we study the Torah because it remains the very same Torah as it were in its prior spiritual state, for it is still the wisdom of Hashem.

The Alter Rebbe continues:

¹ See Tractate Taanis 7a

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thus, since the Torah and its Mitzvos “clothe” all ten faculties of the soul with all its six hundred and thirteen organs from head to foot, it [the soul] is altogether truly bound up in the bundle of life² with G-d (Tzerurah Bitzur Hachaim Es Hashem Mamash), and the very light of G-d envelops and clothes it from head to foot, as is written³, ‘G-d is my rock, I will take refuge in Him’, and it is also written⁴, ‘with favor (Ratzon-will) You compass him as with a shield’, that is to say, with His blessed will and wisdom which are clothed in His Torah and its Mitzvos.

For when a Jew studies Torah or preforms a Mitzvah, the act, word or deed performed by him then clothes all his ten faculties, binding his very soul with G-d. This is achieved through the Levushim he uses to study Torah, or to perform a Mitzvah, thus signifying their superior quality, for now the soul can be bound to G-d in a way it couldn’t before. For no matter how high of a level the soul is, it nevertheless remains a soul, and like we said before, this means that it is a creation, thus changed and incapable of full unity. But once enveloped by the Levushim of the Torah and Mitzvos it then transcends above itself, so to speak, and is bound with G-d in a bundle of life.

This strengthens our prior understanding of the superior quality of the Levushim over the soul, as it is to the soul’s bond with G-d that is dependent on it. However, there appears to be a contradiction. For the Alter Rebbe explained in the beginning of this chapter⁵ how it is love that is the root of all two hundred and forty eight positive commandments, and it is fear that is the root of all the three hundred and sixty five negative commandments, to the point that without the love and fear of the soul’s characteristics none of the Mitzvos can be performed completely and do not last. If so, it is then the Mitzvos that are dependent on the soul, thus contradicting what the Alter Rebbe explains here, that the soul is dependent on the Mitzvos!?

The explanation is straightforward, when the Alter Rebbe explains in the beginning of this chapter about the necessity of love and fear when preforming Mitzvos, it is regarding the state of man, not the state of the Mitzvah. This means, without love and fear, the performance of the Mitzvah remains mechanical, and therefore does not envelop all ten faculties together with the soul, for they are not being used in the performance of the mitzvah. Henceforth, in relativity to man the Mitzvah is incomplete, for it is *his* performance that is lacking and therefore it does not bind his soul with the will and wisdom of G-d. The Torah and Mitzvos however remain the complete will and wisdom of G-d, independent man’s love and fear. This is clarified here, when the Alter Rebbe explains how it is through the performance of the Mitzvos and the study of Torah that the ten faculties of the soul become clothed by the Levushim from head to foot, for it is through the Torah and Mitzvos that one becomes bound to G-d, and like the Alter Rebbe explains earlier, this must be done through love and fear.

² Samuel I 25:29

³ Samuel II 22:3. Psalms 18:3

⁴ Psalms 5:3

⁵ see Perek 04 Part 01

Perek 04 part 04

We previously explained how only through the study of Torah and the performance of Mitzvos one can truly bind his soul to G-d, for the soul alone is unable to bind itself to G-d due to its descent into this world, causing it to become deficient. Now the Alter Rebbe continues to explain the great quality and opportunity in fulfilling the Torah and its Mitzvos.

V’LOCHEN OMRU –HENCE IT HAS BEEN SAID...

Hence it has been said¹: ‘Better is one hour of Teshuvah and good works (Ma’asim Tovim) in this world than the whole life of the world to come.’ For, the world to come is that state where one enjoys the splendor of the Divine presence², which is the pleasure of comprehension, yet no created being—even celestial—can comprehend more than some reflection (Ha’arah) of the Divine light (Or Hashem); that is why the reference is to ‘Splendor of the divine presence (Ziv Hashchinah)’. But as for the Holy One Himself, blessed be He, no thought can apprehend Him at all, except when it apprehends, and is clothed in, the Torah and its Mitzvos; only then does it truly apprehend, and is clothed in, the Holy One, blessed be He, inasmuch as the Torah and the Holy One, blessed be He, are one and the same (D’oraisah V’kudshah Brich Hu Kula Chad).

The world to come is where the soul enjoys the splendor of the Divine presence (Shchinah), yet the presence of G-d perceived there is incomplete, for no created being can apprehend him, G-d is above apprehension. It is only a “Ha’arah” –a “Reflection” or “Ray” of G-d’s presence, so to speak, and not an actual apprehension of G-d. However, in this world, when the soul is clothed in the body, it can fully apprehend G-d. This is accomplished through the Torah and Mitzvos, for it is through their fulfillment that the soul can truly apprehend and become clothed in G-d, becoming bound as one.

However this appears to be unclear, for we have already explained how the Torah and Mitzvos have been “lowered” to become clothed in material matter. If so, how can it be that through the study of the material Torah and the performance of the physical Mitzvos that one can fully apprehend G-d, who is immaterial? Even the Mitzvos such as ‘Ahavas Yisroel’ –the commandment to love a fellow Jew³– which dictate emotional, psychological or even spiritual conduct, are nevertheless within the human being, and therefore are bound to the material physicality that is our world. Therefore there exists materialism in every Mitzvah [the same is with the study of Torah, whereby the topics are often materialistic. In addition to the fact that it is studied with a human mind –I.e. mortality], if so, how can the material study of the Torah and performance of its Mitzvos, bind us to G-d entirely, surpassing even the bond of the entirely spiritual state of the souls in the world to come?

The Alter Rebbe therefore continues; *for although the Torah has been clothed in lower material things, this is by way of illustration, like embracing the king. There is no difference, in regard to the degree of closeness and attachment to the king, whether while embracing the king the latter is wearing one robe or several robes, so long as the royal person is in them. Likewise, when the king, for his part, embraces one with his arm, even though it is dressed in his robes; as it is written⁴ ‘and His right hand embraces me’, which refers to the Torah which was given by G-d’s right hand⁵, which is the quality of Chessed and water⁶.*

This means that although the Torah And its Mitzvos have indeed been clothed in material matter, they nonetheless retain their prestige, and remain the very will and wisdom of G-d, which like we explained, are G-d Himself. Therefore it is of no importance what they may be clothed in, as long as they are G-d Himself –so to speak –and therefore he who fulfills the Torah and Mitzvos is “Hugging” G-d himself, as it were. Just as if one were to be given the opportunity to hug a king, the

¹ Avos 4:17

² See Tractate Brachos 17a

³ Leviticus 19:18. See tractate Shabbos 31a

⁴ Song of Songs 2:6, 8:3

⁵ Deuteronomy 33:2. See also Tractate Brachos 62a

⁶ See Tractate Succah 49b. See also Pri Etz Chayim Sha’ar HaSuccos beginning of chapter 1

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quantity of garments the king is adorned in are of no consequence, the king is still the one who he is hugging, nothing changes. The same is with the unity of G-d and the Torah and Mitzvos themselves, they are still united as one, even when they are clothed in material matter, for they have been compressed entirely to “fit” in that matter, just like the flow of water from a higher to a lower surface, not changing from their original essence –the will and wisdom of G-d –and therefore they are entirely one with G-d, allowing man to connect in the same way, whereby he himself clothes his whole being in the study of the Torah and the performance of its Mitzvos.

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Perek 05 part 01

In the previous chapter we explained how through the study of the Torah and the performance of its Mitzvos one clothes his faculties in their Levushim, immersing himself entirely within the Torah and its Mitzvos –which are the will and wisdom of G-d –thus defying the nature of all created beings, and apprehending G-d directly. In this chapter the Alter Rebbe will explain this concept further.

PEREK HEY – CHAPTER FIVE

Let us explain further and fully elucidate the expression “Tefisa” (apprehension) in the words of Elijah¹, “No thought can apprehend you”. Every intellect, when it conceives and comprehends with the intelligence any concept, it grasps (Tofes) and encompasses (Makif) this matter with the intellect, and this concept in turn is grasped (Nitfas), enveloped (Mukaf) and clothed (Melubash) within the mind that has comprehended and conceived it. The mind, for its part, is also clothed in the concept at the time it comprehends and grasps it with the intellect².

The Alter Rebbe begins by analyzing the term “Tefisa” –the term used by Elijah when he declared ‘Leis Machshavah Tefisa Bei Klal’ –No thought can *apprehend* you. For its meaning is straightforward when used in a material context, for when someone grabs something, he then *apprehends* it, it is now in his hands. But here it is used in a spiritual sense –“no thought can apprehend You [G-d]”, and therefore further elucidation is required.

The Alter Rebbe therefore explains a two-step process of this intellectual [spiritual] apprehension; I. when one wishes to understand any concept he will do so by studying it in attempt to apprehended it. When successful and apprehension is achieved, his intellect [Sechel] has now “encompassed” the concept, and “surrounds” it, so to speak. II. The concept [Muskal] is now enveloped and clothed within the mind, thus, it too in turn captivates the mind, and occupying its focus.

The Alter Rebbe illustrates this further by way of an example:

When a person understands and comprehends, fully and clearly any Halachah in the Mishnah or Talmud, his intellect encompasses it and, at the same time, is clothed in it.

In Chassidus this concept is expressed by these two words –“Makif”-“Encompassing” entity and “Mukaf”-“Encompassed” entity. There cannot be the latter without the former. Simply, something can only be “Mukaf” [encompassed] when there is something else “Makif” [encompassing] it. In other words, first by toiling to understand until apprehension is achieved, will then the concept be clothed in the mind, thus becoming enveloped by the mind. Therefore, within the first stage itself, there exists two aspects; 1. The mind apprehending the concept. 2. The concept becoming clothed and enveloped in the mind. However, at closer glance these two stages are really one, for through someone studying and apprehending a concept with his mind, will the concept in turn become clothed and enveloped. It is simply one action transpiring between two entities, thus resulting in a dual unity, whereby both the mind apprehends the concept, and the concept becomes apprehended by the mind. This being so, why then does the Alter Rebbe phrase this phenomena in a two-stage process?

The Rebbe offers two explanations³; I. indeed, there is no difference, it is really only two perspectives of the same thing. However, the Alter Rebbe elaborates and words this unity between the mind and a concept in this two-step process in order to illustrate a point that will be explained at the end of the chapter. There the Alter Rebbe explains how a Jew unites with G-d in the same way the mind unites with a concept, and therefore, in order to stress the dual unity between man and G-d –the apprehension of G-d by man, and the apprehension of man by G-d, so to speak, – the Alter Rebbe therefore phrases the unity of the mind and a concept in such a manner which emphasizes the two-

¹ Introduction to the Tikkunei Zohar (17a)

² See Lekutei Torah Parshas Shelach (37c)

³ Igros Kodesh vol. 3 p.122

way apprehension. II. There is much novelty to this unity between the intellect and the concept it grasps, when it comes to the study of the Torah in particular, for unlike any other intellectual field of study, whereby the intellect comprehends intellectual concepts, the study of the Torah is the comprehension of *Divine* wisdom. Therefore there are certain requirements demanded when it comes to the study of Holy and Divine wisdom, such as the intention to study the Torah for no motive other than to connect one’s soul to G-d through studying the Torah [‘Lishmah’] (As will be explained later on⁴). Henceforth, when one neglects the above and is in violation of these requirements –upon who it is said in Psalms⁵: ‘But to the wicked, G-d said, “what does it help you to discuss my laws, and bear My covenant upon your lips?”’ –and like the Talmud says⁶ the Torah becomes like poison [סם המוות]. Nevertheless, since he has apprehended the portion of the Torah with his intellect, the Torah in turn then becomes clothed in his mind, even though he is unworthy. Therefore the Alter Rebbe words the unity between the intellect and a concept in a two-step process, for it is specifically in the study of the Torah that there is novelty in the unity, whereby once the mind has apprehended the concept, the concept becomes clothed in the mind, like explained above.

The Alter Rebbe continues to explain the purpose of the whole study on the definition of “Tfisa” –“Apprehension”; *since the particular Halacha is the wisdom and will of G-d, for it was his will that when, for example, Reuven pleads in one way and Shimon in another, the verdict between them shall be thus and thus.*

When a Jew studies a particular Halacha in the Torah and apprehends it, he is in reality apprehending G-d. For these scenarios and laws are the very will and wisdom of G-d, and like we explained, G-d and his will and wisdom are entirely one. And therefore the Alter Rebbe first explained the term “apprehension” in the intellectual [spiritual] sense, in order to elucidate how through the study of Torah a Jew apprehends G-d.

We observe how the Alter Rebbe uses a scenario between a claimant and plaintiff as an example of Halacha. These Halachos are discussed in the last volume of the Jewish code of law –‘Choshen Mishpat’, which discusses monetary law, and often deals with false claims and forgery. Why hadn’t the Alter Rebbe chosen an example from the earlier volumes –“Orach Chayim” –the laws which dictate one’s daily service to G-d, “Yoreh Deah” –the laws which inform us how to keep Kosher, “Even Ha’ezer” –the laws of Jewish married life –why didn’t the Alter Rebbe use a Halacha from these volumes as an example?

The Rebbe explains as follows⁷; the Alter Rebbe did this in order to emphasize a point made earlier in the previous chapter, whereby the Alter Rebbe teaches how even though the Torah has descended and became clothed in physical matter, it nevertheless remains complete, unaltered, and entirely united with G-d. Therefore when explaining further the unity between man and G-d through the study of the Torah in this chapter, does the Alter Rebbe illustrate the above by giving an example from the last volume of the Code of Jewish law (a volume which deals with falsehood), in order to emphasize that even within materialism, and falsehood nonetheless, does the Torah remain the pure will and wisdom of G-d, thus uniting the Jew who studies it with G-d.

⁴ Like the Alter Rebbe writes later on (see Perek 05 Part 03) –*‘the study of the Torah “for its own sake” (Lishmah)’.*

⁵ 50:16

⁶ Tractate Yuma 72b

⁷ ‘Tanya with sources and notes’ p.216

Perek 05 part 02

We previously explained the term “Tefisa” [apprehension] in a spiritual sense, explaining how through the study of an intellectual concept one creates a dual unity, whereby the mind apprehends the concept, and the concept is enveloped in the mind. The Alter Rebbe ended off explaining how this is true every time we study the Torah –the very will and wisdom of G-d. Now the Alter Rebbe will continue to explain further the divinity of the Torah.

V’HINEI HALACHA –CONSEQUENTLY, AS THE PARTICULAR HALACHA...

Consequently, as the particular Halacha is the wisdom and will of G-d, for it was His will that when, for example, Reuben pleads in one way and Simeon in another, the verdict as between them shall be thus and thus (Kach V’Kach); and even should such a litigation never have occurred, nor will it ever present itself for judgment in connection with such disputes and claims, nevertheless, since it has been the will and wisdom of the Holy One, blessed be He, that in the event of a person pleading this way and the other litigant pleading that way, the verdict shall be such and such (Kach V’kach) –now therefore, when a person knows and comprehends with his intellect such a verdict in accordance with the law as it is set out in the Mishnah, Talmud or Poskim (Codes), he has thus comprehended, grasped and encompassed with his intellect the will and wisdom of the Holy One, blessed be He, whom no thought can grasp, nor his wisdom and will, except when they are clothed in the laws that have been set out for us. Simultaneously the intellect is also clothed in them [the divine will and wisdom].

The Torah is the will and wisdom of G-d. Therefore it is not merely a code of law, or even a profound work of sheer brilliance, but rather Divine wisdom itself. This being so, the very knowledge of any portion in the Torah, whether in the Mishnah, Talmud or Poskim, is itself the unity between the student and G-d. It is not even restricted to the practical application of the said Halacha, but rather the very apprehension (knowledge) of it –for it is the will of G-d that when Reuben will claim this and this etc. the verdict shall be as follows –therefore just the study and subsequent apprehension of the Halachic scenario is itself the apprehension of the will and wisdom of G-d.

The novelty goes even further¹, for in truth G-d is beyond apprehension, as Elijah said² –‘No thought can apprehend you’ –nevertheless, when one studies Torah and apprehends a Halacha, he apprehends G-d. For like we said many times³, G-d and his wisdom are entirely one.

Through analyzing the words of the Alter Rebbe we observe how when describing the Halachic scenario he writes –וכך וכך –‘when Reuben pleads such and such’, writing “וכך” twice. Later on when the Alter Rebbe explains that although such a litigation may never occur it nevertheless still remains the very will and wisdom of G-d, he writes –כך וזה כך וזה כך –‘in the event of a person pleading this way and the other [litigant] pleading that way...’, here the Alter Rebbe writes “וכך” once. If so, there appears to be no need for the superfluous “וכך” –“and such”, why then when the Alter Rebbe writes the scenario for the first time it is written twice, it could have been written ‘when Reuben pleads such’ –without needing to repeat “and such” [וכך] again. For like we explained⁴ the Alter Rebbe was very meticulous and precise with his wording, why then did the Alter Rebbe write –וכך וכך the first time, and only כך the second time?

¹ Compiler’s note: For the above teaches how the knowledge of the Torah alone, independent from actual application, is the apprehension of the Divine wisdom and will. Now, we will explain the second novelty in the above teaching of the Alter Rebbe, and this is how the apprehension of the Divine wisdom and will is the apprehension of G-d (so to speak) –which is entirely above the grasp of any created being –nevertheless, through the study of the Torah, apprehension of G-d is possible, as is explained in the above text.

² Introduction to the Tikkunei Zohar (17a)

³ See Perek 02 part 01 and Perek 04 part 02

⁴ See Perek 01 part 03

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The Rebbe explains as follows⁵; within the Torah there are two general dimensions –I. the spiritual. II. The physical. The spiritual dimension of the Torah is the words of the Torah, which is the very will and wisdom of G-d. The physical dimension of the Torah is its application to a physical scenario, whereby a verdict will be ruled in accordance to the Torah law. Therefore, at first when explaining the Halachic scenario whereby the Alter Rebbe discusses the divinity of the Halacha –how it is the will of G-d that it should be this way –this is the spiritual dimension of the Torah. But this also includes the practical verdict which will be applied should the scenario materialize, henceforth speaking of the physical dimension of the Torah as well. For this reason the Alter Rebbe writes “כך וכך” twice –alluding to the two dimensions of the Torah, both the spiritual and physical. However, when the Alter Rebbe continues to explain the significance of the Halacha, how it is the will and wisdom of G-d regardless of whether the litigation has ever occurred or ever will, does the Alter Rebbe write “כך” only once, for here the Alter Rebbe speaks only of the Torah’s spiritual dimension without it being clothed in physical matter i.e. material application.

The Alter Rebbe emphasizes the above by writing –‘and even should such a litigation never have occurred, nor would it ever present itself for judgement in connection with such disputes and claims’ –this illustrates the uniqueness of the Torah, for it itself is not a means to an end, but rather an end of its own. This can be elucidated by way of an analogy; a genius when reading the instructions to an item he wishes to assemble must first put his great brilliance and broad wealth of knowledge aside, in order to focus on the instructions on the item’s assembly. Now the instructions alone are nowhere close to the genius’s intelligence, and therefore one can wonder why he would replace his intelligence (albeit momentarily) with the inferior instructions on the item’s assembly, nevertheless it is understood why the genius puts aside his massive intellect, for this is in order to achieve the results of the instructions i.e. the assembly of the desired item.

Henceforth, it is not the instructions that are valuable, but rather the item’s assembly, the instructions are merely a means to another end. The Torah however is not so, for it is not merely a book of law. In other words, it is not only the study of the practice commanded therein, but the very core intellect (Sechel Atzmi) of G-d, so to speak. This means that it is altogether independent from the materialization of practice, and that is what the Alter Rebbe emphasizes when writing the above.

The Alter Rebbe continues:

simultaneously the intellect [of the student] is also clothed in the divine will and wisdom. This is a wonderful union, like which there is no other (Yichud Nifla Sh’ein Kamohu), and which has no parallel anywhere in the material world, whereby virtual oneness and unity, from every side and angle, could be attained.

When a Jew learns Torah he unites himself entirely with G-d. This is due to the apprehension of the Torah by his intellect during study, whereby like we explained, there is a dual unity: I. the intellect [Sechel] apprehends and encompasses the concept [Musckal]. II. The concept [Musckal] is enveloped by the intellect and captivates it. This then creates a wonderful union, where each entity envelops the other entirely, leaving their previous state of individuality and becoming entirely one, this oneness is therefore not found anywhere in the material world, for it is simply immaterial.

Based on all the above a question may arise; since the basis of the above wonderful union is the apprehension of the intellect, why then does this oneness only exist through the study of Torah? The apprehension of any intellectual idea would have the same ramifications!

It is explained in Chassidus⁶ how all created matter is naturally divided, therefore within human intelligence itself, and in all the fields it is categorized by, there exists no true unity and oneness, therefore consequently there cannot exist any true unity between any intellectual concept and the human intellect. However, this is not so with the study of the Torah, for the Torah is Divine, it is *directly* united with G-d –it is the will and wisdom of G-d, unaltered, therefore it unites entirely with man creating virtual oneness like no other between Sechel (intellect) and Musckal (concept).

⁵ ‘Tanya with sources and notes’ p.216-217

⁶ Compiler’s note: see Hemshech 5670 Hosafos Ma’mar “Ani Ledodi”

Perek 05 part 03

We previously explained the wonderful union between the mind and a concept it apprehends, creating virtual oneness that exists nowhere else in our material world. We ended off explaining how this is true only with the Torah, for only the Torah is entirely complete and directly united with G-d, allowing there to be a complete unity between it and the mind of he who studies it. Now the Alter Rebbe will explain the unique quality and superiority of the Torah over all other Mitzvos.

V’ZOS MA’ALAH YESERA –HENCE THE SPECIAL SUPERIORITY...

Hence the special superiority, infinitely great and wonderful, that is in the commandment of knowing the Torah¹ and comprehending it, over all the Mitzvos involving action, and even those relating to speech, and even the Mitzvah to study the Torah, which is fulfilled through speech². For, through all the Mitzvos involving speech or action, the Holy One, blessed be He, clothes the soul and encompasses it (Makifa) from head to foot with the Divine light (Or Hashem). However, with regard to knowledge of the Torah, apart from the fact that the intellect is clothed in Divine wisdom, this Divine wisdom is contained in it, to the extent that his intellect comprehends, grasps and encompasses, as much as it is able to do, of the knowledge of the Torah, every man according to his intellect, his knowledge capacity, and his comprehension in Pardes.

The very study of the Torah is superior to all Mitzvos in regard to the connection between man and G-d. The study of the Torah is superior in this regard over Mitzvos that are to be fulfilled by action, and even Mitzvos to be fulfilled through speech, such as the very Mitzvah to learn the Torah itself. Yet, why is this so? This is understood based on what was taught previously in this chapter, whereby the unity one creates with G-d through the study of the Torah is a dual connection, whereby the mind apprehends the concept, thus connecting to it, and the concept in turn now captivates the mind, connecting itself to it. This means that through the study and apprehension of the Torah one connects to G-d, and G-d connects to him. This is indeed what makes this union so unique, for by all other Mitzvos there is a connection initiated by the Divine light (Or Hashem) encompassing the soul entirely, thus making it ‘truly bound up in the bundle of life with G-d³’ –like we explained in the previous chapter⁴. However, there is only a one-way connection, for it is only the Divine light that entirely encompasses the soul, creating a powerful union, but there is no apprehension of man, and therefore cannot produce virtual oneness like that of Torah study.

The Alter Rebbe continues to explain the above by way of an analogy; *since, in the case of the Torah, the Torah clothes itself in the soul and intellect of a person, and is absorbed in them, it is called “bread”⁵ and “food”⁶ of the soul. For just as physical bread nourishes the body and it is absorbed internally, in his very inner self (Bescho V’kirbo Mamash), where it is transformed into blood and flesh of his flesh, whereby he lives and exists –so too, it is with the knowledge of the Torah and its comprehension by the soul of the person who studies it well, with a concentration of his intellect (B’iyun), until the Torah is absorbed by his intellect and is united with it and they become one. This becomes nourishment for the soul, and its inner life from the Giver of life, the blessed En Sof, who is clothed in His wisdom and in His Torah that are absorbed in the soul. This is the meaning of the verse⁷, ‘Your Torah is within my inward parts’.*

Through the above analogy, whereby the Alter Rebbe compares the study of the Torah to the consumption of food, we achieve a much clearer understanding in the quality and superiority of Torah study. Both clothing and food provide a human being with the nurture he needs –clothing protects man from harm around him and maintains a comfortable temperature etc. and food gives man the nurture his body needs to function etc. There is a difference between the two of course –clothing never nourishes the body from within, rather it clothes the body thereby nourishing it from without. The consumption of

¹ See Hilchos Talmud Torah (Shulchan Aruch Harav) 3:1

² See chapter 23 of Tanya

³ Samuel I 25:29

⁴ See Perek 04 part 03

⁵ See Proverbs 25:21. See also Tractate Succah 52b

⁶ See Zohar vol. II 61b

⁷ Psalms 40:9

food however, does not only provide necessary nourishment required for the body's function, but actually becomes part of the body, therefore actually adding life to the body itself. So too with the study of the Torah, it actually becomes part of the soul, becoming one with it – 'this becomes nourishment for the soul, and its *inner life* from the giver of life...'

This is the meaning of the verse⁸, 'Your Torah is within my inward parts'. The Talmud relates⁹ how Torah scholars are called "kings", Chassidus¹⁰ explains this as follows; when one studies the Torah one then becomes a ruler and has dominion over the world, just as it is explained in the Jerusalem Talmud¹¹ on the verse in Psalms¹² – 'to the A-lmighty Who fulfills [His promise] to me' – לֹא-לֵ גוֹמֵר עָלַי – that when the Beth Din comes to a verdict on any matter so will be the law, thus changing even the nature of things, for they carry full jurisdiction over worldly matters. The reason (for this powerful and G-dly dominion over nature carried by the Beth Din) is like we said, for through the study of the Torah, G-d does not only envelop the soul with his Divine light, thus clothing Himself, so to speak, in the soul, but also the soul becomes clothed in G-d, so to speak. And since G-d is the King of all Kings, therefore through the study of the Torah whereby one clothes his soul in G-d, one therefore becomes a king, thus being granted the power of jurisdiction and authority.

the Alter Rebbe continues:

it is also stated in 'Etz Chayim', portal 44, chapter 3¹³, that the Levushim ("Garments") of the soul in Gan Eden (Paradise) are the Mitzvos, while the Torah is the "food" for the souls which, during life on earth, had occupied themselves in the study of the Torah "for its own sake" (Lishmah). It is similarly written in the Zohar. As for the meaning of "for its own sake" – Lishmah, it is study with the intent to attach one's soul to G-d through the comprehension of the Torah, each one according to his intellect, as explained in 'Pri Etz Chayim¹⁴'.

From the above it appears that the novel quality of the Torah – henceforth compared to "food" – is due to its *intention* of being studied by the *student* – in order 'to attach one's soul to G-d', and not because of its raw quality of being the only true oneness in our world, this is contrary to what was explained previously in this chapter¹⁵!?

In truth this is not contradictorily, for the Alter Rebbe teaches how through the study of the Torah alone one will eventually come to study and comprehend it with the intent to attach one's soul to G-d, for the very study of the Torah itself causes G-d to become clothed in his soul, and his soul in G-d (So to speak), therefore the attachment of his soul to G-d is nothing additional to the raw study of the Torah itself, the intention 'to attach one's soul to G-d' is therefore truthfully because of the quality of the Torah itself. For like we explained before, the Torah and the mind of man do not remain indifferent, but rather the Torah becomes a part of man himself, creating a "Torah mind" – "Torah Kop" (in the Yiddish idiom).

There is a story¹⁶ told over by the Friediker Rebbe¹⁷ that illustrates the above concept, it is as follows; there was a great Chassidic genius named Rabbi Zalman Lubliner¹⁸ who was a pupil of the Rebbe the Tzemach Tzedek (the third Rebbe of the Chabad Lubavitch dynasty). Every time he came to Lubavitch, the city where his Rebbe presided, he would be invited over by the Rebbe the Tzemach Tzedek for a personal audience and asked to deliver a profound lecture based on his newest Torah insight (Chidushei Torah). One such time he delivers a beautiful complex lecture on a certain topic in the Torah based upon his own original insight. The Rebbe the Tzemach Tzedek waited for him to complete the lecture, and at the conclusion the Rebbe the Tzemach Tzedek tells R' Zalman that there is a clear Mishnah that explicitly states this very "new insight" Rabbi Zalman based his whole lecture upon. Upon hearing this Rabbi Zalman is shocked, he remained silent, after

⁸ Ibid

⁹ See Tractate Gittin 62b. See also Zohar vol. III 253b

¹⁰ See Lekutei Sichos Vol. V p.1161

¹¹ See Tractate Kesubos 1:2. And other places.

¹² Psalms 57:3

¹³ See also Tanya part II end of Chapter 5

¹⁴ Sha'ar Hanhagas Halimud

¹⁵ See Perek 05 part 02

¹⁶ See Sefer Hasichos 5704 p.16-17

¹⁷ Lit. previous Rebbe, the sixth Rebbe of the Chabad Lubavitch dynasty

¹⁸ **Shneur Zalman Fradkin of Lublin** (1830–1902), also known as the **Toras Chessed** (after his main work; תורת חסד "Kindly teaching") or **The Liader** (after his place of birth), was a famous Chabad *Posek* and *Gaon*. He was a disciple of the third Chabad-Lubavitch Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn (also known as the *Tzemach Tzedek*).

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searching for such a Mishnah and coming up empty handed, the Rebbe the Tzemach Tzedek then proceeded to say that it can be found in the order (Seder) of Kodshim. Rabbi Zalman mentally scanned the order, and again cannot locate the Mishnah the Rebbe may be referring to. The Rebbe the Tzemach Tzedek then told him that the Mishnah can be found in Tractate Bechoros. [After failing to locate the Mishnah, the Tzemach Tzedek then recited the exact wording of the Mishnah, only then did R’ Zalman understand what the Tzemach Tzedek was referring to, and how indeed it was already stated explicitly¹⁹.] After this exchange R’ Zalman commented “I know understand the meaning of studying Torah ‘Lishmah’ (for the sake of engaging in the study of the Torah alone)”. It is like explained above, when the mind and the Torah become entirely one, leaving no room for the mind to even project a theory that can incorrectly be viewed as novel due to the failure of reaching the depths of a Mishnah’s meaning.

¹⁹ Compilers note: this part does not appear in the above Sicha. (However there appears to be other versions of the story).

Perek 05 part 04

We previously explained the difference between the study of the Torah and the performance of all the other Mitzvos, how through the study of the Torah one becomes entirely one with the Torah, and henceforth entirely one with G-d. This nurture is likened to the consumption of food, whereby the food becomes the actual flesh and blood of man, in contrast to clothing which nurtures as well, but remains separate. Now the Alter Rebbe continues to explain this superior quality of the Torah in more depth.

V’HAMAZON –THE “FOOD” OF THE SOUL...

In order to understand the difference between the study of the Torah and the performance of the Mitzvos in greater depth, we must first examine the example it was accompanied with. The Alter Rebbe teaches how the study of the Torah is likened to the consumption of food, and the performance of the Mitzvos like the garbing of garments. Up until now we understood this as proof of the clear superiority that exists within the study of the Torah over the performance of Mitzvos, for the former creates true unity –‘it is transformed into blood and flesh of his flesh’, whereas the latter only nurtures externally.

However, in Chassidus¹ there is a general principle that goes as follows; whenever there exists a potent energy (Or) much too powerful for its designated recipient, the energy must be transmitted in a “external” way in order to give vitality to its recipient, in other words –in a manner that will successfully achieve the transference of energy, imparting vitality to the recipient, yet still remaining aloof, beyond the parameters of the recipient. This is called ‘Makifim’² [lit. “Encompassing”], whereby the energy “encompasses” the recipient, but does not “enter” its finite parameters. This being said, it is here too that there exists such a powerful energy, one which cannot “enter” but can only “encompass” –this is the energy “harnessed” through the performance of a Mitzvah, like the Alter Rebbe quotes from Etz Chayim –‘the “garments” of the soul in Gan Eden are from the Mitzvos’. If so, why then is the study of the Torah superior to the performance of the Mitzvos? It is for the abovementioned reason that the Divine energy remains an “encompassing Light” (Or Makif) and therefore similar to a garment, but this is because in truth it is much too potent!

The Alter Rebbe addresses this question and explains as follows:

The “food” of the soul is in the nature of “Inner Light” – ‘Or Pnimi’; while the “garments are in the “encompassing Light” – ‘Makifim’. Therefore our Rabbis, of blessed memory, have said³, ‘the study of the Torah equals all the Mitzvos’. For the Mitzvos are but “garments” whereas the Torah is both “food” as well “garment” for the intellectual soul (Nefesh Hamasckeles), in which a person is clothed during learning and concentration.

The Alter Rebbe explains that the Torah too has the quality and advantage of the lofty “encompassing Light” just like Mitzvos, in which the mind is clothed in during study and concentration. Therefore our Rabbis have said Torah study equals all the Mitzvos, for it too has the “encompassing Light”. And yet, the Torah still has the quality of inner nurture just like food, whereby the study of the Torah unites man and G-d entirely as one, creating a connection initiated by man to G-d, and G-d to man, for essentially, the Torah becomes part of man.

In truth there are different levels in Levushim. This can be elucidated by way of an example; a student is stuck on a certain portion of the Torah, the concepts appear to be incomprehensible. The student persists and toils, focusing his concentration even stronger, until finally he comprehends. Through speculating the above, we see how in truth the particular Torah portion was always accessible to the student, however, toil and immense concentration was required. Nevertheless, even at the stage where it indeed appeared to be incomprehensible to the student, it was never actually beyond his comprehension, for as we see, he finally did comprehend it. This is one level of a Levush. A Levush in the sense that the matter does not enter readily within the recipient, but remains an “encompassing Light” –in our scenario, the incomprehensibility experienced by the student.

¹ See for example Tanya Vol. I chapter 48, Vol. V chapter 13, and more.

² See Perek 05 Part 01

³ Tractate Peah 1:1

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However, there is another level in Levushim which is “greater” in the sense of aloofness, this is the Levush of the Mitzvos, which in many instances are entirely above the human psyche and logic. Thus remaining an entirely aloof “encompassing Light”.

This being so, how then is the Torah equal to all the Mitzvos in the quality field of Levushim? The Torah is only the first degree in Levushim, a degree that was never truly aloof. While the Mitzvos are the second degree, an entirely transcendent “Encompassing Light” truly above the dimension of Human comprehension!

The Rebbe the Tzemach Tzedek explains as follows; the straight forward sections of the Torah are likened to “food”, this means to say, it is comprehensible and thus possible to internalize like food. The difficult and complex sections of the Torah are likened to “garments”, this means to say, these sections are naturally more abstract, and therefore come in the form of “encompassing Light”.

This however does not fully answer the above question, for after all, we observe what appeared to be aloof turned out not to be after further toil and rigorous study. Henceforth, the question returns! The Levush of “encompassing Light” of the Mitzvos are greater than that of the Torah, why then do our Rabbis say that Torah study is equal to all Mitzvos?

The Alter Rebbe continues and explains; *all the more so when a person also articulates, by word of mouth; for the breath emitted in speaking the words of the Torah becomes something on the nature of an “Encompassing Light”, as is explained in ‘Pri Etz Chaim’⁴.*

This means that within the study of the Torah there is not only the two qualities of “food” and “garments”, but also a third, more impressive quality. This is the unique “Encompassing Light” achieved through articulating the words of the Torah while studying it. The Alter Rebbe explains in ‘Torah Or’, how the articulation during Torah study creates a greater “Encompassing Light” than that of Mitzvos. As a matter of fact, the Alter Rebbe explains in ‘Likkutei Torah’ how there are two general degrees in “Encompassing Light”: I. Levush – “Garment”. II. Bayis – “House”. In a broader sense there is the third, the nurture of III. Mazon – “food”. The difference between the first two and the third was previously explained. The difference between the two types of “Encompassing Light” can be understood by their titles, “Levush” and “Bayis”. When one wears clothing one garbs himself in clothing that fit his size, thus, even though it only encompasses the body, nevertheless it must take the body into account, hence the required tailoring to fit the size. A house however, is not built to fit certain size people, etc.

The Alter Rebbe explains that there is a third quality in the Torah, and this quality is likened to the “Encompassing Light” of a “house”, a Light which is beyond the tailoring of man – in other words it transcends both the first degree of “Encompassing Light” that too exists in the Torah, and transcends even the greater degree of “Encompassing Light” that exists in Mitzvos. In conclusion, we have now come to understand how within the Torah there exists three different qualities making it overall superior; I. The quality of “Mazon” – this is how the Torah essentially becomes one with the student. II. The quality of “Levush” – this is how the Torah clothes and captivates the mind of man (after toil and concentration). III. The quality of “Bayis” – this is how the Torah harnesses an entirely aloof “Encompassing Light” through it being articulated. Because of the above, it is Torah that is greater than all Mitzvos, even within the respect of “Makifim” – “Encompassing Light”.

⁴ See Sha’ar Hatefillah chapter 4

THE FLOW FROM PEROKIM I-V

Perek I:

The Alter Rebbe asked a fundamental question on Divine Service. At the end of the Perek the Alter Rebbe explains that there are two souls –the Nefesh Elohis, and Nefesh Habahamis

Perek II:

The Nefesh Elohis is an actual piece of G-d above. The Nefesh Elohis is clothed and concealed within the Nefesh habahamis.

Perek III:

The Nefesh Elohis has ten faculties –three intellectual and seven emotional.

Perek IV:

Explanation on the three Levushim –thought, speech and action. The intellect of the Neshamah is clothed within the study of the Torah, and the characteristics of the Neshamah in the Mitzvos. Both Torah and Mitzvos are in turn clothed within the three Levushim. Nevertheless the Levushim of Torah and its Mitzvos are greater than even a Jewish soul.

Perek V:

Explanation on the true nature of Torah, and the quality of studying it.