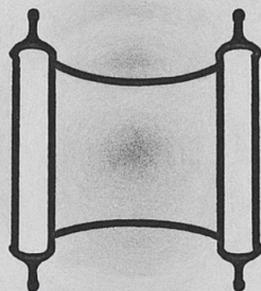


כ"ח"ד

The Maggid of Mezritch
Ohr Torah
Parshas Beshalach



Dedicated in Honor of

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Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch

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Siman #88

What do you cry out to Me; speak to the children of Israel and let them journey. The explanation is that the Holy One, blessed be He, sometimes performs a miracle for His own sake, as [it is written] “for My sake, for My sake I will do [it],” and sometimes He performs [it] in the merit of a righteous one.

מה תצעק אלי דבר אל בני ישראל ויסעו. פירוש כי השם יתברך לפעמים עושה גם בשביל עצמו, כמו למעני למעני אעשה, ולפעמים עושה בזכות צדיק.

And behold, it is known that Israel of that generation were not fit for a miracle, for they had no merit, and they cried out to the Lord that He should do [it] for His sake, for the sake of publicizing His greatness and His Godliness, may He be blessed.

והנה ידוע ישראל שבאותו הדור אינם ראויים לגם, שלא הנה להם זכות, וצדקו אל ה' שיעשה למעננו, למען פרסום גדלותו ואלהותו יתברך.

And the Holy One, blessed be He, said, “What do you cry out to Me,” meaning that your cry is that I should do [it] for My sake; speak to the children of Israel and let them journey, in the merit of Abraham, as is stated in the Midrash.

ואמר השם יתברך מה תצעק אלי, דהיינו צעקתך היא שאעשה למעני, דבר אל בני ישראל ויסעו, בזכות אברהם, כמו שנגאמר במדרש.

For regarding Abraham it is said, “And Abraham arose early in the morning,” and here it is said “toward the morning”; if so, they have nothing but to journey.

כי באברהם נאמר וישכם אברהם בבקר וכאן נאמר לקנות בקר, אם כן אין להם אלא לפעולות.

For although they have no merit on account of themselves, they have the merit of their father Abraham, and they do not need to cry out that I should do [it] for My sake.

כי אף על פי שאין להם זכות מפני עצמם, יש להם זכות אביהם אברהם ואינם צריכים לצעק שאעשה למעני.

[NOTE Summary:

This maamar explains the exchange between Hashem and Moshe at the Sea, focusing on the nature of miracles and the source of redemption. There are times when Hashem performs miracles purely for His own sake, in order to reveal and publicize His greatness and Godliness, as expressed in the verse “for My sake, for My sake I will do.” At other times, miracles are drawn down through the merit of righteous individuals. In this instance, the Jewish people of that generation were not themselves worthy of a miracle, for they lacked sufficient personal merit. Recognizing this, they cried out to Hashem that He should act for His own sake, to magnify His Name in the world.

Hashem’s response, “What do you cry out to Me; speak to the children of Israel and let them journey,” reveals a deeper truth. Their cry to Hashem to act for His own sake was unnecessary, because they already possessed an inherited merit, namely the merit of Avraham Avinu. Just as Avraham is described as arising early in the morning with alacrity and devotion, so too the moment of the sea was described as “toward the morning,” alluding to that same quality. This ancestral merit was sufficient to justify the miracle. Therefore, there was no

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need for further supplication. Their task was not to cry out, but to move forward in action, trusting in the merit they already carried.

Practical Takeaway:

A person may sometimes feel unworthy of Divine assistance due to their own limitations or shortcomings. This teaching emphasizes that one is never starting from nothing. Every Jew carries inherited spiritual merit from the Avos, along with accumulated merits from past efforts and commitments. When action is required, excessive pleading can itself become an obstacle. Instead of remaining stuck in self-doubt or spiritual paralysis, one must step forward and act with trust. Even when personal merit feels insufficient, forward movement grounded in faith can unlock Divine help already waiting to be revealed. **END NOTE]**

Siman #89

And the sea returned toward the morning to its strength, and our Sages of blessed memory expounded it as “to its condition,” that the Holy One, blessed be He, made a condition that the sea would split for Israel. And at first glance it is not understood with whom the Holy One, blessed be He, made this condition.

וַיָּשָׁב הַיָּם לְפָנוּת בְּקֶרֶת לְאֵיתָנוּ, וְדָרְשׁוּ רַבֵּי לְתַנְאֵי, שֶׁהַתְּנָה הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא שִׁיקְרַע הַיָּם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל. וְלִכְאוּרָה אֵינּוּ מוּכָן עִם מִי הַתְּנָה הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא.

But the matter is as follows: at the time that He said the utterance, He made a condition that the sea would split, and if not, the seas [variant: the waters] would not have existed and would not have been created in this place, for they would be nullified from the existence of creation.

אִךְ הָעִנְיָן הוּא, בְּשִׁעָה שֶׁאָמַר הַמֶּלֶכֶת הַתְּנָה שִׁיקְרַע הַיָּם, וְאִם לֹא לֹא הָיוּ נִמְצָאִים הַיָּמִים [נִיֵּא: הַיָּמִים] וְלֹא נִבְרָאוּ בְּמָקוֹם הַזֶּה, כִּי יִתְבַטְּלוּ מִמְצִיאוֹת הַבְּרִיאָה.

For the entire Torah is [composed of] positive commandments and negative commandments. And through this one will understand what our Sages of blessed memory said, “The righteous perform the will of the Omnipresent,” and they did not say “they perform His word” or “His utterance,” for behold the will of Hashem, blessed be He, is not grasped.

כִּי כָל הַתּוֹרָה כְּלֵהּ הִיא עֲשֵׂה וְלֹא תַעֲשֶׂה. וּבְזֶה יוֹבֵן מֵה שֶׁאָמְרוּ רַבֵּי צְדִיקִים עוֹשִׂים רְצוֹנוֹ שֶׁל מְקוֹם, וְלֹא אָמְרוּ עוֹשִׂים דְּבָרוֹ אוֹ מֵאֲמָרוֹ, כִּי הֲלֹא רְצוֹן הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ אֵינּוּ מוֹשָׁג.

However, the parable for this is: a father who says before his son some matter of halachah or some novel insight in Torah, and the son, due to his great sharpness and dialectic, refutes his words [and says it in another manner].

אִךְ הַמִּשְׁלַל בְּזֶה, אָב שֶׁאָמַר בְּפָנָי בְּנוֹ אֵינָה דְּבָר הַלְכָה אוֹ אֵינָה חֲדוּשׁ בַּתּוֹרָה, וּבֵן מַגְדִּיל חֲרִיפוֹתוֹ [וּפְלִפּוּלוֹ סוֹתֵר אֶת דְּבָרָיו] [וְאָמַר בְּאוֹפֵן אַחֵר.

And behold, even though the son opposes his father and refutes his words, with all this the father has great satisfaction and great delight and great joy from this, in the manner of “Make your father wise, my son,” and the like.

וְהִנֵּה אִף שֶׁהֵבִין מִתְנַגֵּד לְאָבִיו וְסוֹתֵר אֶת דְּבָרָיו, עִם כָּל [זֶה] יֵשׁ לְאָב נַחַת וְתַעֲנוּג גְּדוֹל וְשִׂמְחָה גְּדוֹלָה מְזֵה, עַל דְּרָךְ חֲכָם בְּנֵי וְגוֹ'

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And this is the good will from the father more than if he were silent and agreed with his words. Thus the righteous rules, as it were, with the fear of God, and this is “they perform His will,” even though they do not perform His word and His utterance.

וְזֶהוּ רְצוֹן הַטּוֹב מִן הָאֵב יוֹתֵר מִשְׁהֵיָה שׁוֹתֵק וּמְסֻפִּים לְדַבְּרוֹ. כִּי הוּא הַצַּדִּיק מוֹשֵׁל בְּיִרְאַת אֱלֹקִים כְּכֹל, וְזֶהוּ עוֹשִׂים רְצוֹנוֹ, אַף עַל פִּי שְׂאִינָם עוֹשִׂים דְּבָרוֹ וּמֵאָמְרוֹ.

And through this one will understand what is said [regarding] Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair, [who said] to the river Gennai, “River, split your waters for me, for I am going to speak a matter of mitzvah.” He said to him, “I too am going to do the will of my Creator.”

וּבִנְיָה יוֹבֵן מֵה שְׂאָמְרוֹ (גַּבִּי) רַבִּי פִּנְחָס בֶּן יָאִיר [שְׂאָמַר] לְגִינָאֵי נְהַרָא (פְּלוּג) [חֲלוּק לִי] מִימִיָּה שְׂאֵנִי הוֹלֵךְ לְדַבֵּר דְּבַר מִצְוָה, אָמַר לוֹ גַּם אֲנִי הוֹלֵךְ לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹן קוֹנֵי.

He said to him, “If you do not split your waters for me, I decree upon you that water shall never pass through you forever.” And at first glance this is difficult, for behold he answered him with a correct answer.

אָמַר לוֹ אִם אֵין אַתָּה חוֹלֵק [לִי] מִימִיָּה גּוֹזְרֵנִי עֲלֶיךָ שְׂלֵא יַעֲבְרוּ בְּךָ מֵיִם לְעוֹלָם. וְלִכְאוּרָה קֹשָׁה, הֲלֵא הַשִּׁיב לוֹ תְּשׁוּבָה נְכוֹנָה.

And it is understood with what was said above, that the Holy One, blessed be He, made a condition with the act of Creation that they should do the will of the righteous even though it is not in their nature, and from a positive you hear a negative.

וַיּוֹבֵן עִם מֵה שְׂאָמְרָנוּ לְעֵיל, שְׁהִתְנָה הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עִם מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית שְׂעִיעֵשׂוּ רְצוֹן הַצַּדִּיקִים אַף שְׂאִינָם בְּטַבָּעַם, וּמְכַלֵּל הוּא אַתָּה שׁוֹמֵעַ לָאוּ.

And thus Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair said to him: if you do not split your waters, it is found that you do not fulfill your condition that was stated at the time of the utterance, and behold you are as though you never were, and as though waters were not created here, and it is found that water will never pass through you forever.

וְכִי אָמַר לוֹ רַבִּי פִּנְחָס בֶּן יָאִיר, אִם אֵין אַתָּה חוֹלֵק מִימִיָּה נִמְצָא שְׂאִין אַתָּה מְקוֹמִים תְּנַאֲף הַנְּאָמַר בְּשַׁעַת הַמֵּאָמַר, וְהָרִי אַתָּה כְּלֵא הֵיָה מַעוֹלָם וְכִמוֹ שְׂלֵא נִבְרָאוּ כְּאֵן מֵיִם, וְנִמְצָא שְׂלֵא יַעֲבְרוּ בְּךָ מֵיִם לְעוֹלָם.

And this is also what is written that Joshua said to the sun, “Stand still.” And all this applies to one who is called a son to the Holy One, blessed be He, who can perform the will of his Creator, and who is this: one who guards His covenant, who is called “the righteous, foundation of the world” [variant: one who guards the covenant, who is called righteous]. And understand this היטיב.

וְזֶהוּ גַּם בֶּן מֵה שְׂאָמַר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ לְשֶׁמֶשׁ דּוֹם. וְכָל זֶה מִי שְׁהוּא נִקְרָא בֶּן לְהַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא יְכוֹל לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹן קוֹנֵו, וְאִיזְהוּ זֶה, הַשׁוֹמֵר בְּרִיתוֹ הַנִּקְרָא צַדִּיק יְסוֹד עוֹלָם [נִיֵּא: הַשׁוֹמֵר הַבְּרִית הַנִּקְרָא צַדִּיק], וְהָבֵן זֶה הַיִּטִּיב.

[NOTE Summary:

This maamar expounds the verse “And the sea returned toward the morning to its strength,” which the Sages interpret as “to its condition,” meaning to the original stipulation made at Creation. The Maggid explains that this stipulation was not made with an external party, but was embedded within the very utterance of Creation itself. At the moment the sea and the waters were brought into existence, it was conditioned that they would split for Israel when the time came. If they would not fulfill this condition, they would forfeit their very right to

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exist, since their being was contingent on that Divine will. Creation itself thus contains within it an obligation to conform to the higher purpose for which it was brought into being.

This understanding sheds light on the teaching that “the righteous do the will of the Omnipresent,” rather than His word or utterance. Divine will is deeper and less graspable than explicit speech or command. Through a parable of a father and a sharp, insightful son, the Maggid explains that when a son challenges and even refutes his father’s stated words through deep understanding, this can bring the father greater pleasure than passive agreement. The contradiction is not rebellion but alignment with the father’s deeper intent. So too, the righteous may appear to act against the surface form of creation or its natural order, yet they are fulfilling the innermost Divine will embedded at Creation.

This principle explains the episode of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair and the river Ginai. Although the river claimed it was already doing the will of its Creator, Rabbi Pinchas responded with a decree, for the river’s true obligation, rooted in Creation’s original condition, was to submit to the will of the righteous. By refusing, the river would be negating the very condition of its existence. The same principle applies to Joshua commanding the sun to stand still. Authority over nature is not arbitrary power, but the fulfillment of the primordial condition placed within creation itself. This capacity belongs only to one who is truly called a “son” of the Holy One, namely the tzaddik who guards the covenant and embodies the attribute of “tzaddik yesod olam.”

Practical Takeaway:

This teaching reframes spiritual authority and influence. True spiritual power does not come from overriding reality, but from aligning with the deepest Divine intention embedded within it. When a person lives with integrity, self-discipline, and covenantal faithfulness, their actions resonate with the original purpose of creation itself. Such a person does not need to force outcomes; reality itself yields to them. On a personal level, this means that inner consistency, moral discipline, and faithfulness to one’s spiritual commitments can transform obstacles into pathways. When one acts from that place, even resistance can become cooperation, and the world itself begins to assist rather than obstruct.

Chassidic Story:

It is related about Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair that his extraordinary influence over the natural world was never displayed casually. When he commanded the river to split, it was not an act of dominance, but of moral clarity. He was on his way to fulfill a mitzvah, and in his mind there was no conceivable reality in which creation itself would obstruct the fulfillment of Divine will. Those who witnessed this did not see a spectacle of supernatural power, but a revelation of harmony, where a human being so fully aligned with his mission caused nature to recognize its own deeper purpose. This story was often cited by the Maggid to illustrate that holiness does not negate the world, but reveals the reason it exists in the first place. **END NOTE]**

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Siman #90

Then Moses sang, etc. Behold, our Sages of blessed memory said: the deer is the most pious among the animals, etc., that when her children desire to eat, she runs to the mountains of darkness and brings them sustenance and delights more in what they eat than in all pleasures.

אז ישיר משה וגו'. הנה אמרו רז"ל אילה חסידה שפחיות וכו', פד בנהא בעינין למיכל רהטה להרי חשך ומתי להון מזונא ומתענגת במה שהם אוכלים יותר מכל התענוגים.

Behold, it is known that all the influence that comes to us comes through the attributes of three lines: kindness, judgment, and mercy. Behold, if it comes in revelation, three lines are seen; from this it is known that also in the upper world, which we do not grasp, it is also in the attribute of three lines.

הנה נודע כי כל ההשפעה הבאה אלינו הוא על-ידי [מדות] ג' קוין חסד דין רחמים. הנה אם בא באתגלוי נראה ג' קוין, נודע מזה שגם בעולם עליון שאין אנו משיגים גם כן הוא במדת ג' קוים.

Even though according to the smallness of our apprehension the division of the three aforementioned lines is not seen, this is due to the great clarity within it, like the parable of the sun, which one cannot look at because of the great clarity within it, while the light that emerges from it one can look at and apprehend and derive pleasure from because of its lesser clarity.

הגם שלפי מעוט השגותינו אינו נראה התחלקות הג' קוים הנזכר, הוא מחמת גדל הבהירות שבו, כמשל השמש שאין יכולים להסתכל בה מחמת גדל הבהירות שבה, והאור היוצא ממנה יכולים להסתכל בו ולהשיגו ולהנות ממנו לסבת מעוט בהירותו.

And if the light had clarity like the sun, they would not be able to apprehend it or derive pleasure from it, for on the contrary it would darken the eyes like the sun. So too in the upper world [variant: so too the Holy One, blessed be He, in the world], because of the great clarity within it, it is not apprehended, and it appears that there is no light in it but darkness.

ואלו הנה באור בהירות כשמש לא היו יכולין להשיגו ולהנות ממנו, כי אדרבא הנה מחשיך את העינים כמו השמש. כמו כן גם בעולם העליון (נ"א: כמו כן גם השם יתברך בעולם), מחמת גדל הבהירות שבו אינו מושג, ונראה שאין בו אור אלא חשך.

Only what goes forth from it, like the soul (and the thought), we see that it gives life to the body, but not its essence [variant: His essence]. And this is the explanation of "He makes darkness His hiding place," and all the more so the division of the three lines is not seen.

רק מה שיוצא ממנו כמו הנשמה (והמתשבה) אנו רואים שמחיה את הגוף, אבל לא עצמותה [נ"א: עצמותו]. וזהו פירוש ישות חשך סתרו, ומכל שכן שאין נראה התחלקות ג' קוים.

But in truth, everything that exists on dry land exists in the sea, and it is known that the lines are called mountains. Therefore, those lines that are in the upper world are called mountains of darkness.

אבל באמת כל מה שיש ביבשה יש בים, ונודע שהקוים הנראים הרים, לכך אותן הקוין שבעולם העליון נקראים הרי חשך.

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And this is the deer, which is the Shechinah, as it were, which is the world of speech, that is, the letters of the speech of the Holy One, blessed be He, with which the world was created, namely, “And He said: Let there be light,” and the like, and it is that which gives life to this world.

And this is what is meant by “she runs,” etc., meaning that she ascends to the world of thought to receive influx for the inhabitants of the world, like the manner of speech, which receives from thought and from above it, and she has delight in that which she bestows.

And it is known that Israel are the vitality of all the worlds [all of them], because for their sake all of them were created, and when He, blessed be He, contemplated that Israel would be created, with that fervor all the worlds were created for the sake of Israel, and that fervor is their very vitality.

Thus it is found that Israel are the vitality of all the worlds, as our Sages of blessed memory said: just as it is impossible for the world without winds, so it is impossible for the world without Israel.

And the speech of all Israel is the world of speech, as it were, which gives life to all the worlds, and their thought is the world of thought, and likewise above that. And this world receives the letters of speech through the mediation of the attributes mentioned, since this world has expanse and boundary and needs to receive through the attributes.

And behold, the sanctity of Shabbat, in the Musaf, in “Keter,” is that we elevate the world of speech into the world of thought, and there the clarity is so great that no division of attributes is seen.

And according to this, there would not remain vitality in this world, yet this world is a need Above, for there is no king without a people.

וזהו אילה, שהיא שכינה כפיכול, שהוא עולם הדבור, דהיינו אותיות הדבור של הקדוש ברוך הוא שבו נברא העולם, דהיינו ויאמר יהי אור וכדומה, והיא המחייה העולם הזה.

וזהו שאמר רהטת וכו', רצון לומר שעולה היא (על) [אל] עולם המחשבה לקבל שפע לבאי עולם, כמשפט הדבור שמקבל מן המחשבה ולמעלה הימנו, ויש לה תענוג כמה שמשפעת

ונודע כי ישראל הם חיות של כל העולמות [כלם] (פירוש [לפי] שבשביבם נבראו כלם, ובחשבו יתברך שיבראו ישראל, בהתלהבות זה נבראו כל העולמות לצורך ישראל, והתלהבות זה הוא חיותם). (ממש).

אם כן נמצא שישראל הם חיותם של כל העולמות, כמו שאמרו רז"ל כשם שאי אפשר לעולם בלא רוחות כך אי אפשר לעולם בלא ישראל.

דבור של כל ישראל הוא עולם הדבור כפיכול המחיה כל העולמות, ומחשבתם הוא עולם המחשבה, וכן למעלה הימנו, והעולם הזה מקבל אותיות הדבור דרך אמצעות (המדור) [המדות] הנזכר, לפי שהעולם הזה יש בו שטח וגבול וצריך לקבל עליו המדות.

והנה קדשת שבת במוסף בכתר שאנו מעלים עולם הדבור בעולם המחשבה, ושם הבהירות גדול עד שאין נראה התחלקות המדות.

ולפי זה לא ישאר חיות בעולם הזה, והעולם הזה הוא צריך גבוה, כי אין מלך בלא עם.

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Therefore, immediately when we say “where is the place of His glory,” etc., and “where” alludes to the three first attributes where there is no division of attributes, immediately afterward we say “from His place He will turn,” etc., meaning to bestow His goodness here, for there is no king without a people.

And this is “Why do you cry out to Me,” and [the explanation in the Zohar is] “to Me” specifically, for the matter depends upon Atika. And this is “and you shall be silent.”

For at that time it was necessary to effect a change of nature from water to dry land, and then Israel were strengthening themselves in prayer and sustaining the world of speech, which is the vitality of this world; therefore it was not able to effect the change in this world.

Therefore He said to them, “Be silent,” and the letters of speech, the vitality of the world, were elevated up to Atika, where no division of the attributes is seen, and there sea and dry land are all equal, for it is supernal will, and understand.

And afterward, when the sea returned to its strength, then “then Moses will sing,” etc.; “then” specifically, meaning that the Chief of the world was bound with seven, which is the lower level; Moses will sing, and not before that.

And therefore Joshua said, “Sun, stand still in Gibeon,” and our Sages of blessed memory explained “stand still” as “be silent from saying song,” and consequently it will stand in its place, since all its vitality is through the song.

And likewise with all existents, all their vitality is from the world of speech, that is, letters, and the letters desire to cleave to their source, and that is their vitality.

But when it is necessary to effect a change, then the letters of speech have an ascent above the attributes, and “be silent from saying song” until the change passes, and then they say song.

And it is known that the letters (of speech) are the Shechinah. And this is “To my mare in Pharaoh’s chariots I have likened you, my beloved,” and see in siman Ayin-Dalet, and the Shechinah is called “this,” which is the revealed world.

על כן תיכף נשאנו אומרים אי"ה מקום כבודו וכו', ואי"ה מרמז לגי' ראשונות שאין שם התחלקות המדות, תיכף אחר זה אנו אומרים ממקומו הוא יפן וכו', דהיינו להשפיע טובו לכאן, לפי שאין מלך בלא עם.

וזהו מה תצעק אלי, [ופרוש בזהר] אלי דייקא דבעתיקא תליא מלתא. וזהו ואתם תחרישון.

לפי שבעת ההיא היה צריך לעשות השתנות הטבע מים ליבשה, ואז היו ישראל מתחזקים בתפלה, ומתחזקים בעולם הדבור שהוא חיות העולם הזה, לפיכך לא (הוא) [היה] יכול לעשות השתנות בעולם הזה.

על כן אמר להם תחרישון, ונתעלו אותיות הדבור חיות העולם עד לעתיקא, ששם אין נראה התחלקות המדות ושם גם ויבשה הפל שוין, כי הוא רצון עליון ונהגו.

ואחר כך כששב הים לאיתנו, אז ישיר וגו', אז דייקא, דהיינו שנתקשר אלופו של עולם בדי' שהיא מדרגה המתונה, ישיר משה, ולא מקודם לכן.

ולכן יהושע אמר שמש בגבעון דום, ופרוש רז"ל דום מלומר שירה, וממילא תעמוד במקומה לפי שכל חיותה על ידי השירה.

וכן בכל הנמצאים כל חיותם מעולם הדבור, דהיינו אותיות, והאותיות חפצים לדבק בשורשם, והוא החיות שלהם.

אבל כשצריך לעשות השתנות, אז אותיות הדבור יש להם עליה למעלה מן המדות, ודום מלומר שירה עד שיעבור ההשתנות, ואז אומרים שירה.

ונודע כי אותיות (הדבור) היא השכינה. וזהו לסוסתי ברכבי פרעה דמיתיה רעיתי, ועין בסיון ע"ד, והשכינה נקראת זאת, שהיא עלמא דאתגלייא.

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And this is that after the change passed and the sea returned to its strength, then “then Moses will sing,” all this song, that is, that which the Shechinah was singing at that time when it was in the change in its place, Moses and the children of Israel sang afterward when the change passed, and understand.

וְהוּא שְׁאָחַר [שְׁעָבַר] הַהִשְׁתַּנּוּת וְחִזַּר הַיָּם לְאִתְּנוּ אֶז
 לְשִׁיר וְגו' (כָּל) הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת, דְּהֵיִינוּ מֵהַ שְׁהִיְתָה
 הַשְׂכִּינָה שָׁרָה בְּאוֹתָהּ הַשְּׁעָה שְׁהִיְתָה בְּהִשְׁתַּנּוּת
 בְּמִקּוֹמָהּ, שֶׁר מְלֻשָׁה וּבְגִי שְׁרָאֵל אַחַר כִּד כְּשֶׁעָבַר
 הַהִשְׁתַּנּוּת וְהִבֵּן.

[NOTE Summary:

This maamar presents a deep mystical reading of Shirat HaYam and the events surrounding the splitting of the Sea, centering on the nature of Divine vitality, speech, and transformation. The Maggid explains that all Divine flow enters existence through three lines: kindness, judgment, and mercy. In revealed realms these distinctions are perceptible, but in higher realms the light is so intense that differentiation disappears and appears as darkness. This is the meaning of “the mountains of darkness,” referring to the supernal lines whose overwhelming clarity conceals structure. Just as the sun’s essence blinds while its rays give life, so too the highest Divine reality appears concealed, while its emanations sustain the worlds.

The image of the ayalah, the deer, is interpreted as the Shechinah, identified with the world of speech. Divine speech, composed of letters, is the medium through which the world is created and sustained. Like speech that receives from thought, the Shechinah ascends to the world of thought to receive Divine influx and then bestows vitality downward, taking delight in the act of giving. Israel are described as the life force of all worlds, since all creation came into being in anticipation of them. The fervor and Divine desire bound up with the creation of Israel is itself the vitality that sustains existence. The speech of Israel corresponds to the cosmic world of speech, and their thought corresponds to the world of thought. This lower world, being bounded and finite, can only receive Divine vitality through the mediation of the attributes.

Shabbat, particularly the Musaf prayer with the theme of Keter, represents an elevation of the world of speech into the world of thought. At that level, clarity is so great that the distinctions of the attributes disappear. However, if this elevation were to remain without return, vitality would cease in this world. Therefore, after the ascent signified by “Where is the place of His glory,” the liturgy immediately moves to “From His place He will turn,” indicating the return of Divine flow downward. This reflects the principle that “there is no king without a people,” and that the existence of this world is itself a Divine need.

This framework explains the command “Why do you cry out to Me,” with the Zohar emphasizing “to Me,” meaning that the matter depends on Atika, the level of supernal will beyond attributes. At the Sea, a fundamental transformation of nature was required, from water to dry land. At that moment, Israel’s prayer and speech sustained the existing order of the world, preventing transformation. Therefore they were commanded to be silent, allowing the letters of speech, the vitality of the world, to ascend to Atika, where sea and dry land are equal and transformation is possible. Only afterward, when the sea returned to its original state, could song emerge.

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This explains why the verse says “Then Moses will sing,” emphasizing “then,” after the restoration. It also illuminates Joshua’s command to the sun to stand still, which the Sages interpret as silencing it from song. Since the vitality of all beings derives from song, meaning the flow of Divine speech, silencing that flow suspends natural motion. In all existence, letters yearn to cleave to their source, and this yearning is their life. During transformation, the letters ascend above the attributes and cease their song; once the transformation is complete, song resumes. The Shechinah, identified with the letters and with the revealed world, sang during the moment of transformation, and afterward Moses and Israel articulated that song in human form.

Practical Takeaway:

This teaching reframes prayer, silence, and action. There are moments when expression, prayer, and articulation sustain reality, and moments when silence is required to allow deep change. Not every breakthrough comes from more words or effort. Sometimes transformation requires releasing control, quieting even sacred speech, and allowing reality to reconnect with its deepest source. Knowing when to speak and when to be silent is itself a spiritual discipline. Growth often demands ascent before return, withdrawal before expression, and trust that after silence, a more authentic song can emerge.

Chassidic Story:

It is related that the Maggid once observed a student pouring out lengthy prayers with great intensity at a moment when decisive action was required. Afterward, the Maggid gently remarked that prayer is indeed the breath of the soul, but even breath must pause for a heartbeat to sustain life. He explained that silence can sometimes reach higher than speech, not because it lacks devotion, but because it allows the soul to rise beyond form. Those present later reflected that the deepest turning points in their lives often came not during moments of eloquence, but in quiet surrender, after which clarity and direction emerged with renewed force.

END NOTE]

Siman #91

“**My strength and song is Y-ah,**” etc. For the letters are impossible to apprehend except through the cantillation and the vowel points.

עֲזִי וְזִמְרַת יְהוָה וְגוֹי'. כִּי הָאוֹתִיּוֹת אֵי אֶפְשֶׁר לְהַשְׁיִיגֵן
כִּי אִם עַל־יְדֵי הַטְּעָמִים וְהַנְּקֻדּוֹת

And this is “my strength,” which refers to the vowel points, the attribute of gevurah (variant: gevurot).

(וְזֶהוּ עֲזִי הוּא הַנְּקֻדּוֹת, בְּחֵינַת גְּבוּרָה (נ"א: גְּבוּרוֹת

And “my song” refers to the melody, the cantillation (variant: the melodies, the cantillation).

(וְזִמְרַת הוּא הַנְּגִינָה הַטְּעָמִים (נ"א: הַנְּגִינוֹת טְעָמִים

And cantillation and vowel points are the aspect of (Mah) [Y-ah], and “He was for me salvation,” to understand the letters as mentioned.

וְטְעָמִים וְנְקֻדּוֹת הֵם בְּחֵינַת (מ"ה) [י"ה], הִנֵּה לִי
לְיִשׁוּעָה לְהַבִּין הָאוֹתִיּוֹת כְּנֻכָר

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[NOTE Summary:

This teaching focuses on the inner meaning of the verse “My strength and my song is Y-ah,” explaining how Divine letters become intelligible and alive. Letters themselves are too abstract to be grasped directly. They can only be accessed through two mediating layers: nekudot (vowel points) and ta’amim (cantillation and melody). The nekudot are identified with strength and gevurah, providing form, limitation, and structure that allow letters to be received. The ta’amim are identified with song and melody, giving movement, flow, and vitality to the letters. Together, these two dimensions correspond to the Divine level of Y-ah, through which the letters become understandable and effective. This is the meaning of “He was for me salvation,” that through these layers one can truly grasp and connect to the letters, rather than encountering them as inaccessible abstraction.

Practical Takeaway:

Understanding alone is not enough, and structure alone is not enough. Meaning emerges when discipline and melody work together. In spiritual life, nekudot represent boundaries, commitment, and restraint, while ta’amim represent enthusiasm, feeling, and inner music. When one engages in Torah, prayer, or any meaningful pursuit, both elements are required. Structure without vitality becomes dry, and vitality without structure becomes chaotic. True clarity and inner salvation come when strength and song are integrated, allowing the deepest messages to be both understood and lived. **END NOTE]**

Siman #92

And He said: If you will surely listen to the voice of the Lord your God. One must examine what is the matter of the duplication “listen, you shall listen.”

And it can be said by way of parable: the teacher who studies with the student cannot tell him all of his intellect; rather, the teacher constricts his intellect and tells him certain reasonings so that he can understand.

And it comes to be that the speech of the teacher, which is a lower level relative to the teacher, becomes inner intellect for the student.

And perforce, [indeed] without a voice one does not speak, and therefore here too the voice is en clothed, and within the voice are en clothed the letters of thought.

And behold, this intellect and these letters are two companions that do not separate, and here too the intellect is en clothed.

And this is [the meaning of] “the Lord at your going forth from Seir.” For all these constrictions are called Seir, each one according to its measure, and He brings forth all four letters of the Divine Name that are alluded to here.

וַיֹּאמֶר אִם שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָע (בְּקוּל) [לְקוּל] הִי אֶלְקִיָּהּ. יֵשׁ לְדַקְדָּק מֵהוּ עֲנִנוּ הַכֶּפֶל שְׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָע

וַיֵּשׁ לֹאמַר עַל דְּרָגָה מְשַׁל הָרַב הַלּוֹמֵד עִם הַתְּלָמִיד אֵי אֶפְשָׁר לָרַב לֹאמַר לוֹ כֹּל שְׂכֹלוֹ, רַק הָרַב מְצַמְצֵם לוֹ שְׂכֹלוֹ וְאוֹמֵר לוֹ אֵיזָה סְבָרוֹת כִּדֵּי שְׂיוּכַל לְהִבִּין

וְנַעֲשֶׂה דְבוּר שֶׁל הָרַב, שֶׁהוּא מְדַרְגָּה תַּחְתּוֹנָה גְּבִי הָרַב, נַעֲשֶׂה זֶה הַדְּבוּר פְּנִימִיּוֹת שְׂכָל אֶצֶל הַתְּלָמִיד

וְעַל כְּרַחֵף (נִי"א: וְהָרִי) בְּלִי קוּל לֹא מִשְׁתַּעֵי, וְעַל כֵּן מְלוּבָּשׁ כָּאֵן גַּם הַקּוּל, וּבְקוּל מְלוּבָּשִׁים הָאוֹתִיּוֹת שֶׁל הַמִּשְׁבָּה

וְהִנֵּה הַשְּׂכָל וְהָאוֹתִיּוֹת הָאֵלוּ הֵם תְּרִין רַעֲיוֹן דְּלֹא מִתְפָּרְשִׁין, וּמְלוּבָּשׁ כָּאֵן גַּם הַשְּׂכָל

וְזֶה הִי בְּצִאתָהּ מִשְׁעִיר. כִּי כָּל אֵלוּ הַצְּמֻצּוּמִים נִקְרָאִים שְׁעִיר, כֹּל חַד כְּפֹם שְׁעוּרָא דִּילֵיהּ, וְיוֹצִיא כֹּל דִּי אוֹתִיּוֹת הַנִּי"ה הַמְרָמְזִין כָּאֵן

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And when the intellect goes forth, it is written, “The wisdom of a man lights up his face,” “Open your mouth and your words will shine,” and the judgments are subdued.

וְכָשֶׁהֱשִׁיבֵל יוֹצֵיאַ כְּתִיב חִכְמַת אָדָם תִּאִיר פָּנָיו, פֶּתַח פִּיהוּ וְיֵאִירוּ דְבָרָיו, וְיִכְפְּפוּ הַדִּינִים.

And this is [the meaning of] “at your step from the field of Edom,” and they are bent beneath him.

וְזֶהוּ בְּצַעֲדָה מִשָּׂדֶה אֲדוֹם, וְנִכְפְּפִין תַּחְתָּיו.

And behold, the Patriarchs, they are indeed the chariot. For when the Patriarchs heard the speech of the Holy One, blessed be He, that speech became en clothed within them, inside their hearts.

וְהִנֵּה הָאֲבוֹת הֵן הֵן הַמְּרַכְבָּה. כִּי הָאֲבוֹת בְּשִׁהִיו שׁוֹמְעִים הַדְּבוּר שֶׁל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֲזַ נִתְלַבֵּשׁ בָּהֶם הַדְּבוּר בְּתוֹךְ לְבָבָם.

As [it is written], “And they shall make Me a sanctuary and I shall dwell within them,” and this is “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” and the Name was unified upon them.

כְּמוֹ וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשִׁכְנָתִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם, וְזֶהוּ אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹרָהֶם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב, וְנִתְיַחַד הַשֵּׁם עֲלֵיהֶם.

And this is what is written, “And it shall be, if you will surely listen.” The explanation is: when you hear the Divine Name, blessed be He, which is the letters “and it was,” then you will merit to hear the voice of the Lord your God.

וְזֶהוּ שִׁכְתוּב וְהִנֵּה אִם שָׁמוֹעַ תִּשְׁמַע. פִּירוּשׁ בְּשִׁתְּשִׁמַּע הַשֵּׁם הַנִּי"ה בְּרוּךְ הוּא, שֶׁהוּא אוֹתִיּוֹת וְהִנֵּה, אֲזַ תִּזְכּוּ לְשִׁמוֹעַ בְּקוֹל ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ.

(Here something is missing.)

(חִסֵּר בְּאוֹן).

[NOTE Summary:

This maamar explains the double expression “if you will surely listen,” framing it as a layered process of Divine communication and human reception. A teacher cannot transmit the full depth of his intellect directly to a student; instead, he constricts his understanding into speech suited to the student’s capacity. That spoken form, though lower relative to the teacher, becomes inner intellect within the student. So too with Divine speech. Revelation requires tzimtzum, contraction, through voice, letters, and intellect, so that it can be internalized by the listener.

Voice is essential, for speech cannot exist without it, and within the voice are en clothed the letters of thought. These letters and the intellect they carry are inseparable companions. The successive contractions through which Divine wisdom emerges are called “Seir,” each according to its measure, and through them the four letters of the Divine Name are drawn forth into expression. When this inner wisdom emerges, it illuminates the person, subdues harsh judgments, and brings clarity and radiance, as wisdom shines through speech and presence.

The Patriarchs exemplify this process perfectly. They are called the chariot because Divine speech fully en clothed itself within them, settling in their hearts. This is the meaning of “I will dwell within them,” and why the Divine Name is uniquely associated with each of the Avot. Thus, “if you will surely listen” means that

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when one first attunes to the Divine Name itself, the inner source of speech, one then merits to hear the voice of Hashem in a fully integrated and internalized way.

Practical Takeaway:

True listening is not passive hearing but internalization. Spiritual growth requires patience with process and structure. One must first accept constriction, guidance, and form, allowing wisdom to enter through limited vessels such as words, routines, and discipline. Over time, those outer forms become inner understanding. When learning, praying, or receiving guidance, the goal is not merely to hear words, but to allow them to settle into the heart until they illuminate character and action. Consistent listening, even through limitation, opens the way for genuine clarity, inner radiance, and the softening of inner judgments. **END NOTE]**

Siman #93

And it was when Moses would raise his hand, Israel would prevail. This is the secret of the lifting of the hands, and the secret of “Lift your hands in holiness,” and the reason that one raises the hands opposite the head and the intellects.

וְהָיָה כַּאֲשֶׁר יָרִים מֹשֶׁה יָדוֹ וְגִבֵּר יִשְׂרָאֵל. זֶה סוּד נְטִילַת יָדַיִם, וְסוּד שְׂאוֹ יָדֶיכֶם קֹדֶשׁ, וּמָה שְׂמִגְבִּיהֵם הַיָּדַיִם נִגְדָה הָרֹאשׁ וְהַמֹּחַיִת.

The explanation is that when a builder built a very inferior house, and there is no good place in the house that he built, there is no remedy except to demolish the entire house and return and build according to what is good in his eyes.

פִּירוּשׁ כִּי כְשֶׁהַבְּנָאִי בָּנָה בַּיִת גְּרוּעַ מְאֹד, וְאִין מְקוֹם טוֹב בַּבַּיִת אֲשֶׁר בָּנָה, אִין תְּקוּמָה (נ"א: תְּקִנָּה) אֵלָּא לְסִתּוֹר כָּל הַבַּיִת וְלְחַזֵּר וּלְבַנוֹת כְּטוֹב בְּעֵינָיו.

And before he builds a second time, he needs to take the entire house in his thought, that is, in his refined intellect, and to understand how to build it to be very good.

וְקוֹדֵם שְׂיִבְנֶה פַּעַם ב' צָרִיף לְקַח כָּל הַבַּיִת כְּלוּ כַּמְחֻשְׁבָּתוֹ, דְּהֵינּוּ בְּשִׁכְלוֹ הַזֶּה, וְלְהַבִּין אִיךָ לְבַנוֹת לְהֵיוֹת טוֹב מְאֹד.

As opposed to if the house is not inferior except in one place, then the builder does not take the entire house into his intellect, only the inferior place, to repair it properly.

לְאַפּוֹקִי אִם אִין הַבַּיִת גְּרוּעַ אֵלָּא בְּמְקוֹם אֶחָד, אִזְּ הַבְּנָאִי אֵינּוּ לוֹקֵחַ כָּל הַבַּיִת בְּשִׁכְלוֹ, רַק הַמְּקוֹם הַגְּרוּעַ, לְתַקֵּן כְּרָאוּי.

So too, if a person has a very inferior love, it is found to be encloded in inferior letters. Therefore he needs to rectify for this love other letters, and he takes in his intellect and understanding how to serve the Creator, blessed be He, with this love.

כֵּן אִם יֵשׁ לְאָדָם אַהֲבָה גְּרוּעָה מְאֹד נִמְצָא מְלוּבְּשֵׁת בְּאוֹתִיּוֹת גְּרוּעִים. לְכֵן צָרִיף לְתַקֵּן לְאַהֲבָה זֶה אוֹתִיּוֹת אַחֲרֵימָם, וְלוֹקֵחַ (נ"א: וְלוֹקֵחַ) בְּמוֹחַיִת וּבְשִׁכְלוֹ אִיךָ לְעִבּוֹד לְהַבְּרָא יְתִבְרַךְ בְּאַהֲבָה זֶה.

But if there is only some defect in his love, then he does not need to take in his intellect except the small defect. This is the lifting of the hands, the language of raising the hands, in one's intellect.

אֲבָל אִם לֹא יֵשׁ רַק קְלִקוּל בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ מִצַּד מָה, אִזְּ אִין צָרִיף לְקַח בְּשִׁכְלוֹ רַק הַקְּלִקוּל מְעוּט. (בְּזִיָּה) [וְזִיָּה] הַיָּי נְטִילַת יָדַיִם, לְשׁוֹן הַגְּבִהַת יָדַיִם, בְּשִׁכְלוֹ.

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And so it is with fear. Love and fear are called hands. And this is “when Moses would raise his hand and Israel would prevail,” for Moses is alluded to this, and see in Etz Chaim and you will see the explanation of this.

וכן בִּירָאָה. (ולקח) [הֵאֱהָבָה וִירָאָה] הָיוּ יָדַיִם. וְזֶהוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר יָרִים מֹשֶׁה יָדוֹ וְגַבַר יִשְׂרָאֵל, כִּי מֹשֶׁה מְרוֹמֵז עַל זֶה, וְעֵינָיו בְּעֵץ חַיִּים וְתִרְאָה פִּירוּשׁ עַל זֶה.

Love and fear are called hands, for it is the way of one who loves an intellectual matter, and clarifies in his intellect to love that act, that immediately he completes that act with the hands, and the hands are called the agent, and all of his actions are completed by the hands.

אֵהָבָה וִירָאָה נִקְרָאִים יָדַיִם, כִּי מִדְּרוֹךְ הָאוֹהֵב דְּבַר שְׂכָלִי וּבִירַר בְּשִׂכְלוֹ לְאַהֲבֵה אוֹתָהּ הַמַּעֲשֵׂה, תִּיכַף גּוֹמֵר אוֹתָהּ הַמַּעֲשֵׂה בְיָדַיִם, וְנִקְרָאִים הַיָּדַיִם הַפּוֹעֵל, וְכָל מַעֲשָׂיו נִגְמָרִים בְּיָדַיִם.

And likewise all acts of kindness are with the hand. And always the power is greater in the right hand, and therefore the right hand is called kindness and love, and the great hand.

וְכֵן כָּל גְּמִילוֹת חֶסֶד בְּיָד הוּא. וְלַעֲוֹלָם הַכֹּחַ יוֹתֵר בְּיָד יְמִינִי, וְלִכֹּן נִקְרָא יָד יְמִינִי חֶסֶד וְאַהֲבָה, וְיָד הַגְּדוֹלָה.

And if it is fear, such that it is impossible to complete the act with the right hand alone, then he assists with the left hand and supports the act, and constricts himself to the action. Therefore it is called gevurah, meaning that it strengthens the power.

וְאִם הוּא יִרְאָה שְׂאֵי אִפְשָׁר לְגַמֵּר הַמַּעֲשֵׂה בְיָד יְמִינִי לְבַד, אָז הוּא עוֹזֵר בְּיָד שְׂמָאל וּמְחַזֵּק הַמַּעֲשֵׂה, וּמְצַמֵּצִים עֲצָמוֹ לְעוֹבְדָא, לִכֹּן נִקְרָא גְבוּרָה, רְצוֹן לֹמֵר שְׂמַגְבִּיר הַכֹּחַ.

And it is called fear, for so is fear with the Holy One, blessed be He, that one fears to restrain himself from the act because of the weakness of the act, and this is the root of contraction and is called the strong hand.

וְנִקְרָא יִרְאָה, כִּי כֹן הִירָאָה אֶצֶל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא שְׂיִרָא לְהִמְנִיעַ [עֲצָמוֹ] מִן הָעוֹבְדָא מִכַּחַת חֲלִישׁוֹת הָעוֹבְדָא, וְהוּא שָׂרֵשׁ הַצְּמָצוּם וְנִקְרָא יָד הַחֲזָקָה.

[NOTE Summary:

This maamar explains the verse “And it was when Moshe would raise his hand, Israel would prevail,” revealing its inner meaning as a model for spiritual repair and avodah. The Maggid teaches that the raising of the hands is not a physical gesture alone, but an inner act of elevation, drawing love and fear back to their source in the intellect. This is the secret of netilat yadayim and of lifting the hands toward the head, meaning toward the mochin, the seat of clear understanding.

Through a parable, the Maggid explains the process of spiritual correction. When a house is deeply flawed throughout, the builder must demolish the entire structure and rebuild it from a fresh, clear plan held fully in his mind. But if the flaw is localized, only that portion requires focused repair. So too in the soul: if a person’s love is fundamentally distorted, it must be dismantled and rebuilt by returning fully to the intellect and redefining how love of the Creator should be expressed. If the flaw is minor, only that specific distortion must be examined and corrected. This inner act of lifting love back into the intellect is what is meant by “raising the hands.”

Love and fear are called “hands” because they are the forces that carry intention into action. Intellect clarifies purpose, but hands complete deeds. Love corresponds to the right hand, associated with kindness and

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expansiveness, while fear corresponds to the left hand, associated with restraint, strength, and contraction. When love alone is insufficient to complete an action properly, fear assists by setting limits and discipline, strengthening the act. This is why fear is called gevurah and “the strong hand.”

Moshe embodies this process. When he raises his hands, meaning when love and fear are elevated and clarified at their root, Israel prevails. The Maggid emphasizes that true spiritual victory comes not from emotional intensity alone, but from emotions aligned, refined, and guided by clear inner understanding. Fear itself is not weakness, but the power to restrain, focus, and give form, mirroring the Divine tzimtzum through which the world itself exists.

Practical Takeaway:

When spiritual energy feels blocked or misdirected, the solution is not always more effort, but deeper clarity. Strong emotions without guidance can build unstable structures. Periodically, a person must lift their “hands” back to the mind, reassessing motivations, loves, and fears at their root. When love is aligned with wisdom and fear is used to give form rather than suppress growth, actions become effective and sustainable. Real strength comes from integration, not force.

Chassidic Story:

It is told that a chassid once complained to the Maggid that despite great enthusiasm in prayer and mitzvot, his inner struggles remained unresolved. The Maggid asked him, “Do you run with your hands before your eyes see where to go?” The chassid replied that his heart burned, but his thoughts were scattered. The Maggid explained that passion must sometimes pause and return to the mind, just as hands must be guided by sight. Only then does action succeed. Years later, that chassid would say that learning when to slow down, reflect, and realign his emotions transformed his avodah more than any increase in effort ever had.

END NOTE]