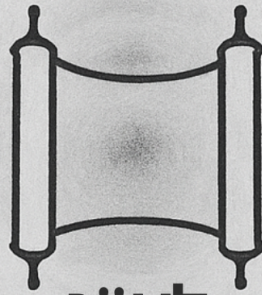


בס"ד

Alter Rebbe
Likkutei Torah
Parshas Massei
אלה מסעי בני ישראל



לע"נ

שמעון בן ישראל

Dedicated By:

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Alter Rebbe
Likkutei Torah
Parshas Massei - בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל - אֵלֶּה מַסְעֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

Introduction

This discourse by the Alter Rebbe (Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, 1745–1812), founder of Chabad Chassidus, reveals a deep and nuanced map of divine service. It uses the framework of *Moshe* and *Aharon* to represent two complementary modes of avodah: Moshe as the embodiment of Torah and divine wisdom, and Aharon as the embodiment of love, yearning, and prayer. The discourse outlines how a person progresses in holiness—not by escaping the world, but by sanctifying even what is permitted. It shows how everything physical and spiritual is nullified before G-d, and how this recognition empowers a Jew to cleave to Him and transform their inner world. Through the balanced dance of Torah and prayer, structure and yearning, the soul journeys ever upward, fulfilling the verse: “These are the journeys of the Children of Israel.”

These are the journeys of the Children of Israel who went out from the land of Egypt by the hand of Moshe and Aharon. It is written: “You led Your people like sheep, by the hand of Moshe and Aharon.”

אֵלֶּה מַסְעֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יָצְאוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּיַד מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן. כְּתִיב נְחִית כְּצֹאן עֶמְדָּה בְּיַד מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן.

Behold, this is a great principle in the service of Hashem Yisbarach—that anyone who comes to cleave to Him, may He be blessed, behold it is written: “Who may ascend the mountain of Hashem, and who may stand [in His holy place]?”—one with clean hands and a pure heart, that his heart be completely pure and refined, without any sediment, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood.

הִנֵּה זֶה כָּלֵל גָּדוֹל בְּעִבּוּדַת הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ, שְׂכַל מִי שֶׁבָּא לְדַבְּקָה אֵלָיו יִתְבָּרַךְ, הִנֵּה כְּתִיב: מִי יַעֲלֶה בְּהַר ה' וּמִי יָקוּם כּו'—נָקִי כַפַּיִם וּבֶרֶךְ לֵב, שִׁיְהֶא לְבוֹ כְּרוּר וְזֶה לְגִמְרֵי בְּלִי שׁוּם סִיג, אֲשֶׁר לֹא נִשָּׂא לְשׁוֹן נִפְשִׁי—נִפְשִׁי קָרִי—כְּמוֹ שֶׁכְּתִיב: אֵלֶּיךָ ה' נִפְשִׁי אֲשָׁא.

For the Shechinah dwells among any ten [Jews], that is, his elevation and spiritual pride in the ways of Hashem must not be in vain or falsehood, God forbid.

בְּכָל בֵּי עֲשָׂרָה שְׂכִינִתָּא שְׂרִיא—דְּהִינּוּ, שְׁלֹא תִהְיֶה הַתְּנַשְׁאוּתוֹ וְהַתְּגַבְּהוּתוֹ בְּדַרְכֵי ה' לְשׁוֹן וְלִשְׁקֶר חֵס וְשָׁלוֹם.

And certainly, such a level is very deep—“deep, deep—who can find it?” And the advised counsel for this is through the level of Moshe and Aharon.

וּבּוֹדָאי מְדַרְגָּה כְּזוֹ עֲמוּק עֲמוּק מִי יִמְצְאָנָה, וְהַעֲצָה הַיּוֹעֲצָה לָזֶה עַל-יְדֵי בְּחִינַת מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן.

For behold, it is known the statement of our Sages: “If there is no awe, there is no wisdom; and if there is no wisdom, there is no awe.” And seemingly, one cannot begin with either of them—since each requires the other, how can one start?

דְּהִנֵּה נוֹדֵעַ מֵאַמֵּר רַ"ל: אִם אֵין יִרְאָה אֵין חֲכָמָה, וְאִם אֵין חֲכָמָה אֵין יִרְאָה, וְלִכְאוּרָה אֵי אֲפָשָׁר לְהִתְחִיל לֹא בְּזֶה וְלֹא בְּזֶה, כִּיּוֹן שֶׁאֵי אֲפָשָׁר לָזֶה בְּלֹא זֶה—וְאֵיךְ יִתְחִיל?

However, our Sages said: “Anyone whose fear of sin precedes his wisdom—his wisdom endures.” The explanation is that there are two types of evil: the first is actual evil—something prohibited, even a light prohibition of Rabbinic origin is absolute evil.

אָבֵל אָמְרוּ חַז"ל: כָּל שִׁירְאָת חֲטָאוֹ קוֹדֶמֶת לְחֲכָמָתוֹ—חֲכָמָתוֹ מִתְקַיֶּמֶת. פִּירוּשׁ: שֵׁישׁ שְׁנֵי מִיָּנִי רַע. הָרֵאשׁוֹן—הוּא רַע מִמַּשׁ בְּאִיסוּר, אֲפִלּוּ הוּא אִיסוּר קָל שֶׁל דְּבָרֵי סוּפְרִים—הוּא רַע גָּמוּר.

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For this, one's fear of sin must precede their wisdom—for [Hashem is] "too pure of eyes to behold evil," and anything evil is called an abomination of Hashem. For this one does not require wisdom to avoid the snares of this evil.	וְלִזְהָ צָרִיד שֶׁתִּהְיֶה יִרְאַת חֲטָא קוֹדֶמֶת לְחָכְמָתוֹ, כִּי טָהוֹר עֵינָיו מִרְאוֹת רָע, וְהַדְּבָר הָרַע הוּא נִקְרָא תוֹעֵבַת ה', וְאִין צָרִיד לִזְה שׁוֹם חֲכָמָה לְסוּר מִמוֹקָשֵׁי הָרַע הַנִּ"ל.
The second type is within the realm of what is permitted. Even regarding what is permissible, our Sages said: "Sanctify yourself in what is permitted to you," so as not to be a degenerate with the permission of the Torah, as the Ramban writes on Parshas Kedoshim.	וְהַמִּין הַבֵּית — הוּא בְּהֵתֵר, שְׁאֵפְלוּ בְּהֵתֵר אֲמָרוּ רַז"ל: קֹדֶשׁ עֲצָמָה בְּמֵתֵר לָהּ, שְׁלֹא יִהְיֶה נֶכֶל בְּרִשּׁוֹת הַתּוֹרָה, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתַב הַרְמְבַ"ן רִישׁ פָּרָשַׁת קְדֹשִׁים.
And in order to be free from this evil, one must precede it with wisdom—and this is through the level of Moshe and Aharon.	וְכַדִּי לְפָטוֹר מִהָרַע הַזֶּה צָרִיד לִהְיוֹת חָכְמָתוֹ, וְהוּא עַל־יְדֵי בְּחִינַת מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן.
Moshe is the "escort of the King," Aharon is the "escort of the Matron." The explanation: the escort of the King is the one who brings the King to unite within this world—that the level of Sovev Kol Almin should dwell below, as our Sages said: "The Holy One, blessed be He, desires a dwelling place below."	מֹשֶׁה — שׁוֹשְׁבֵינָא דְמַלְכָּא, אַהֲרֹן — שׁוֹשְׁבֵינָא דְמַטְרוֹנִיתָא. פִּירוּשׁ: שׁוֹשְׁבֵינָא דְמַלְכָּא — שֶׁהוּא מְבִיא אֶת הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהִתְיַחַד בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, שֶׁבְּחִינַת סוֹבֵב כָּל עֲלָמִין יִהְיֶה שׁוֹרֵה בְּתַחְתּוֹנִים, כְּמוֹ שֶׁאֲמָרוּ רַז"ל: הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְתַאֲנֶה שְׂיִתָּהּ לוֹ דִּירָה בְּתַחְתּוֹנִים.
And this is through Torah and mitzvos, which are the drawing down of His godliness—since the Torah is entirely His names, and His name is expressed in letters, which is something not graspable at all by our intellect, for it is exceedingly lofty. Even what is referred to as merely a "name" by Him is still entirely beyond comprehension. So too, the mitzvos are called "limbs of the King."	וְהֵינּוּ עַל־יְדֵי תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת, שֶׁהֵם הַמְשָׁכַת אֱלֹהוּתוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ, שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה כְּלָה שְׁמוֹתָיו שֶׁל הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, שֶׁבְּחִינַת שֵׁם הוּא בְּאוֹתֵיּוֹת, וְהוּא דָּבָר שֶׁאִינּוּ נִתְפָּס כָּלל בְּשִׁכְלָנוּ, כִּי גְבוּהַ גְבוּהַ מְאֹד מִשְׁכְּלָנוּ, אֲפֹלוּ בְּחִינַת מֶה שֶׁנִּקְרָא אֲצִלוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ בְּחִינַת שֵׁם לְבַד. וְכֵן עַל־יְדֵי הַמִּצְוֹת שֶׁנִּקְרָאִים אֲבָרֵי דְמַלְכָּא.
And an analogy of the mitzvos to limbs: just as in every limb there is the life-force of the soul, so too in every mitzvah there is a divine vitality.	וּמִשְׁלַל הַמִּצְוֹת בְּאַבְרָיִם, כִּי כְּמוֹ כָּכָל אֲבָרַיִשׁ חַיּוֹת הַנִּשְׁמָה, כֵּן כָּכָל מִצְוָה יִשׁ חַיּוֹת אֱלֹהוּת.
And when a person performs a mitzvah—such as wrapping in a tallis with tzitzis in the morning—he draws upon himself the aspect of Sovev Kol Almin (the all-encompassing divine light) so that it hovers over him.	וְכַשְׁאֲדָם עוֹשֶׂה הַמִּצְוָה, כְּגוֹן שֶׁמְתַעַטֵּף בְּטָלִית צִיצִית בַּבֹּקֶר, מִמָּשִׁיף עָלָיו בְּחִינַת סוֹבֵב כָּל עֲלָמִין שְׂיִתָּהּ חוֹפֶף עָלָיו.
And likewise with tefillin—it is a drawing down of oneness. Through this, the evil is automatically separated from him, as it is written: "As wax melts before fire, so shall the wicked perish before God."	וְכֵן בְּתַפִּילִּין, הוּא הַמְשָׁכַת אֶחָדוּת, וּבִזְהָ מִמִּילָא נִפְרָד הָרַע מִמֶּנּוּ, כְּדָכְתִּיב: כְּהַמָּס דּוֹנֵג מִפְּנֵי אֵשׁ, יֵאָבֶדוּ רַשְׁעִים מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים.

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And it is written: “And Mount Sinai was all in smoke because Hashem descended upon it in fire”—for they are like thorns, consumed in flame.	וּכְתִיב: וְהָר סִינַי עָשָׂן כָּלּוּ מִפְּנֵי אֲשֶׁר יָרַד עָלָיו ה'. בָּאֵשׁ, כִּי הֵם קוֹצִים כְּסוּחִים, בָּאֵשׁ יִצְתּוּ.
And this is through the aspect of Moshe— <i>daas</i> , the knowing that “He is One.” And he contemplates what our Sages said: “A person does not sin unless a spirit of folly enters him.”	וְהִנּוּ עַל־יְדֵי בְּחִינַת מֹשֶׁה, בְּחִינַת דַּעַת, שְׂיֻדָּע שֶׁהוּא בְּאֶחָד, וְיִתְבּוֹנֵן בְּמַה שֶׁאֲמָרוּ חַז"ל: אִין אָדָם עוֹבֵר עֲבֵרָה אֵלָּא אִם כּוֹן נִכְנָס בּוֹ רוּחַ שְׁטוּת.
And as is written elsewhere, that even the lightest of the light-hearted (קל שבקלים) does not want to throw off the yoke and would give up his life for the sanctification of Hashem's Name, and no other contemplation is needed except that he should know that “Hashem's portion is His people.”	וּכְמוֹ שֶׁכְּתוּב בְּמָקוֹם אֲחֵר, שֶׁאֲפִלוּ קַל שִׁבְקָלִים אֵינוֹ רוֹצֶה לְהִיּוֹת פּוֹרֵק עוֹל, וּמוֹסֵר נַפְשׁוֹ עַל קְדוּשַׁת שֵׁם ה'. יִתְבָּרֵךְ, וְאִין צָרִיד שׁוֹם הִתְבּוֹנְנוּת אַחֲרֵת רַק שְׂיֻדָּע כִּי חֵלֶק ה' עִמּוֹ.
And through that—when he thinks or speaks physical matters—he is separating himself from the One. And surely he would not desire this, just as one would not naturally want to take a son away from his father.	וּבְזֶה, שֶׁהוּא חוֹשֵׁב אוֹ מְדַבֵּר דְּבָרִים גְּשָׁמִיִּים, הוּא מִפְּרִיד אֶת עַצְמוֹ מֵאֶחָד, וּבוֹדֵא לֹא יִרְצֶה בְּזֶה, כְּמוֹ שֶׁאִי אָפֶשֶׁר לְקַח הֶבֶן מֵאֶצֶל אָבִיו דֶּרֶךְ הַטָּבַע.
And this is the meaning of “How beautiful is our inheritance.” And it is written: “Even darkness will not obscure from You”—for darkness is called fire, and even fire cannot serve as a separation.	וְזֶהוּ מַה יָּפֶה יִרְשָׁתֵנוּ, וּכְתִיב: גַּם חֹשֶׁךְ לֹא יַחְשִׁיד מִמֶּךָּ, שֶׁחֹשֶׁךְ נִקְרָא אֵשׁ, שֶׁאֲפִלוּ אֵשׁ אֵינוֹ מִפְּסִיק.
And this is the meaning of “Sanctify yourself in what is permitted to you”—for even though it is permitted, it is only permitted to <i>you</i> because of your body; but with regard to what dwells within you—His godliness, may He be blessed—this permissibility is of no value.	וְזֶה פִירוּשׁ: קְדֹשׁ עַצְמוֹ בְּמִתְרֵ לֶךְ, שֶׁאֵף שֶׁהוּא מֵתֵר, אֵינוֹ רַק לֶךְ מִחֻמַּת גּוּפְךָ, אֲבָל מִחֻמַּת הַשׁוֹרֶה בְּךָ, שֶׁהוּא אֱלֹהוּתוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ—אֵינוֹ מוֹעִיל הֵיתֵר זֶה.
And this is [the meaning of] “And you shall be holy, for I, Hashem, am holy.” And this is [the meaning of] “For the sake of the unification of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Shechinah”—and it is the aspect of Aharon, the escort of the Matron, who brings and arouses yearning for Hashem, which is an awakening of yearning from below to above—through prayer.	וְזֶהוּ וְהִייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי ה', וְזֶהוּ לְשֵׁם יַחֲוֹד קוֹדֵשׁא בְּרִיד הוּא וְשִׁכְיִנְתָּיָהּ, וּבְחִינַת אֶהְרֹן, שׁוֹשְׁבֵינָא דְּמַטְרֹנִיתָא, שֶׁמְבִיא וּמוֹלִיד תְּשׁוּקָה לֵה' יִתְבָּרֵךְ, שֶׁהוּא הִתְעוֹרְרוּת תְּשׁוּקָה מִלְּמַטָּה לְמַעְלָה, שֶׁהוּא עַל־יְדֵי תַפְלָה.
As it says: “My soul thirsts for You.” [This occurs] through contemplation in the verses of praise before Shema, and afterward when one reaches “And you shall love” in Shema.	כְּמוֹ שֶׁכְּתוּב: צָמָאָה לֶךְ נַפְשִׁי, הִתְבּוֹנְנוּת בְּפָסוּקֵי דְּזִמְרָא קֹדָם קְרִיאַת שְׁמַע, וְאַחֲרֵי כֵךְ כְּשֶׁמַּגִּיעַ לְוַאֲהֲבָת שֶׁבְּקְרִיאַת שְׁמַע.
For behold, the soul of every person yearns—only the love is in exile and hidden, like [the concept] “they were exiled to Edom and the Shechinah is with them.” Meaning, even though he acts like Edom, nevertheless, the Shechinah is with him.	כִּי הִנֵּה נַפְשׁ כָּל אָדָם מִשְׁתַּוְּקָקָת, רַק שֶׁהֶאֱהָבָה הִיא בְּגִלוּת וּמְסוּתֶרֶת, כְּמוֹ גָּלוּ לְאֶדוֹם שְׁכִינָה עִמָּהֶם, פִּירוּשׁ: אֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁעוֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂה אֶדוֹם—אֵף עַל פִּי כֵן שְׁכִינָה עִמָּהֶם.

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And the heart of man will be ignited to nullify himself before Him, may He be blessed—like, for example, when we see a physical thing, an action of a person is nullified before the spirituality, like a thought.	וְיִתְלַהֵב לֵב הָאָדָם לְהִיּוֹת בָּטֵל נִגְדּוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ, כְּמוֹ לְמַשָּׁל שֶׁאֲנֵחֲנוּ רוֹאִים דְּבָר גִּשְׁמִי—מַעֲשֵׂה שֶׁל אָדָם בָּטֵל נִגְדּוֹ רוּחָנִיּוֹת כְּמוֹ מַחְשְׁבָה
And this is [the meaning of] “the feet of the Chayos correspond to them all”—meaning, a level which is the lowest within vitality (spiritual life), which is spirituality, [yet] corresponds to all of them. For there is no comparison between physicality and spirituality.	וְזֶהוּ רִגְלֵי הַחַיּוֹת כִּנְגֵד כָּלֶם, פִּירוּשׁ: מִדְּרָגָה שֶׁהִיא הַתַּחְתּוֹנָה בְּבַחֲיַנַת חַיִּית—שֶׁהִוא רוּחָנִיּוֹת—כִּנְגֵד כָּלֶם, כִּי אֵין עֲרֹךְ דְּבָר גִּשְׁמִי נִגְדּוֹ רוּחָנִיּוֹת
For even in physicality it is said that the earth is like a mustard seed compared to the orbits of the spheres, which are also physical—how much more so compared to something spiritual.	כִּי אֶפְלוּ בְּדָבָר גִּשְׁמִיּוֹת נֹאמַר שֶׁהָאָרֶץ כְּגִרְגֵר חֶרְדֵּל נִגְדּוֹ עוֹלָם הַגְּלִגְלִים, שֶׁהֵם גַּם כֵּן גִּשְׁמִיִּים—כֹּל וְחוּמָר נִגְדּוֹ דְּבָר רוּחָנִיּוֹת
And likewise, every spiritual thing compared to the spirituality above it—for example, as it says “the thighs of the Chayos compared to them all,” and “the ankles of the Chayos compared to them all,” and “before Him all is considered as nothing.” For everything is as naught and null before Him, may He be blessed.	וְכֵן כֹּל דְּבָר רוּחָנִי נִגְדּוֹ רוּחָנִיּוֹת הַגְּבוּהָה וְלַמַּעְלָה מִמֶּנּוּ, כְּמוֹ שֶׁפָּתוּב: שׁוּקֵי הַחַיּוֹת כִּנְגֵד כָּלֶם, בְּרַסוּלֵי הַחַיּוֹת כִּנְגֵד כָּלֶם, וְקַמִּיָּה כְּלֹא כְּלֹא חָשִׁיב, שֶׁהַכֹּל כְּאִין וְאֶפְס וּבָטָלִים נִגְדּוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ
And this is [the meaning of] “All will exalt You forever” (הַכֹּל יִרְמְמוּךָ סְלָה)—that forever they will exalt You, for no matter how much they exalt You, it is still nothing, for there is always more to exalt.	וְזֶהוּ הַכֹּל יִרְמְמוּךָ סְלָה—שֶׁלְעוֹלָם יִרְמְמוּךָ, שֶׁכֹּל מֵה שֶׁמְרַמְּמִים אוֹתָךְ—אֵין כְּלוּם, כִּי יֵשׁ עוֹד לְרֹמֶם
And moreover, this has no measure—for it is higher and higher than all that we can exalt, and His exaltedness is not distant from us, God forbid. On the contrary, this is closeness to us—since everything is null before Him, may He be blessed, and before Him all is considered as nothing, therefore there is no separation.	וְעוֹד: זֶה אֵין לוֹ שִׁיעוּר, שֶׁהוּא לַמַּעְלָה לַמַּעְלָה מִכֹּל מֵה שֶׁאֲנוּ יְכוּלִים לְרֹמֶם, וְאֵין רוּמְמוֹתוֹ הַתַּרְחֻקוֹת מֵאַתְנֹו חֹס וְשִׁלּוּם, כִּי אֲדָרְבָּא—שֶׁבִּזְזָה הִיא קְרוֹיב אֲצִלְנוּ, מֵאַחֵר שֶׁהַכֹּל בָּטֵל אֲצִלּוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ, וְקַמִּיָּה כְּלֹא כְּלֹא חָשִׁיב, אִם כֵּן אֵין הַפְּסֵק
And this is the aspect of Aharon—to cleave to Him, and to become “one with one.”	וְזֶהוּ בַּחֲיַנַת אַהֲרֹן—לְדַבְּקָה בּוֹ, וּלְהִי אֶחָד בְּאַחָד
However, it is written: “He is Aharon and Moshe,” [and] “He is Moshe and Aharon”—for sometimes one must begin with Torah and mitzvos, so that afterward he may pray from love. And sometimes the beginning is with an arousal of love in prayer, and afterward he is able to learn and perform [mitzvos]. As was explained.	אָבָל הִנֵּה פְתִיב: הוּא אַהֲרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה, הוּא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן, שֶׁלְפָעֲמִים צָרִיךְ לְהַקְדִּים הַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוֹת כְּדִי שֶׁיִּתְפַּלֵּל אַחֵר כִּךָּ מֵאַהֲבָה, וּלְפָעֲמִים הַהֲתַחֲלָה מֵהֲתַעֲרָרוֹת הַאַהֲבָה בַּתְּפִלָּה, וְאַחֵר כִּךָּ יְכוּל לְלַמּוֹד וּלְעֲשׂוֹת, עַל דְּרָךְ שְׁנוּתִבְאָר

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(And see Bereishis Rabbah, end of Chapter 1 and Parshas Bechukosai, section 36, regarding the matter of “He is Moshe and Aharon.”)

וַעֲזָן בְּרַבָּה בְּרֵאשִׁית סוּף פָּרָק א', בְּחֻקֹּתַי פֶּלִי, מַעֲנֵנוּ
(הוּא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן כו').

[NOTE Summary]

The discourse opens with the verse “אֵלֶּה מַסְעֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל”—“These are the journeys of the Children of Israel.” This represents the spiritual journey of every Jew, leaving behind their personal “Egypt” and ascending toward divine attachment. However, the psalm states that this exodus happens only “בְּיַד מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן”—through the hands of Moshe and Aharon. These two figures represent two essential forces in divine service.

The Alter Rebbe explains that true spiritual ascent requires both **yirah** (awe) and **chochmah** (wisdom), but since each is dependent on the other, a paradox arises: which comes first? The solution lies in differentiating between two types of evil. The first is absolute evil—transgressions that require awe to avoid. The second is subtle evil—permissible behavior done without holiness, where the risk is becoming a “degenerate with the permission of the Torah.” This second category requires wisdom to navigate.

Thus, Moshe, the “escort of the King,” represents Torah and the downward flow of divine light, while Aharon, “escort of the Matron,” represents prayer and the upward longing of the soul. Torah brings G-d down into the world; prayer lifts the soul toward G-d. The mitzvos, like limbs of the body, channel divine vitality, and when done with awareness, they melt away evil like wax before fire. Prayer, on the other hand, reveals the inner yearning hidden even in the spiritually distant—“the Shechinah is with them in Edom.”

All existence, the discourse emphasizes, is null compared to G-d. Just as the earth is like a mustard seed to the celestial spheres, and those in turn are nothing compared to spirituality, so too every created thing is utterly null before the Creator. This understanding fuels the soul’s longing for oneness: “To cleave to Him and be one with the One.”

Finally, the discourse resolves that sometimes Moshe comes first—Torah and mitzvos spark prayer—and sometimes Aharon comes first—prayer awakens love that leads to Torah observance. The goal is to unite both directions: *Sovev* (transcendent G-dliness) drawn downward and *memaleh* (internalized G-dliness) drawn upward, culminating in complete unity with the Divine.

Practical Takeaway

A balanced spiritual life requires both structured commitment and heartfelt yearning. Like Moshe and Aharon, we need Torah study and mitzvah observance to draw holiness into our lives, but we also need prayer and inner longing to arouse our soul’s hidden love for G-d. Sometimes structure leads to feeling; sometimes feeling leads to structure. Wherever you begin, remember:

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even what is permissible must be sanctified. Elevate the mundane. Recognize that your soul's thirst is never quenched by the external. And know that no matter how far you feel, the Shechinah is still with you.

Chassidic Story

Once, during a harsh winter in Liozna, a young man came to the Alter Rebbe distressed.

“Rebbe,” he cried, “I learn, I pray, I do mitzvos, but my heart is frozen. I feel no love or awe. It’s all rote.”

The Alter Rebbe paused, then asked him gently, “And when you learn Torah—do you realize Whose words you are speaking?”

The young man was silent.

“And when you pray—do you realize Who is listening?”

Tears welled up.

“Your fire is not gone,” the Rebbe continued. “It is exiled. Like the Shechinah in Edom. Begin with the mitzvah. Begin with the words. But know they are limbs of the King. And when you remember that, the flame will return.”

Source: *Shemuos V'Sippurim*, Vol. 2, p. 104, attributed by R. Hillel Paritcher to a private audience with the Alter Rebbe.

TPX (Therapeutic-Psychological Integration)

This discourse offers a remarkably rich framework for psychological and emotional healing, disguised in mystical terms. The Alter Rebbe weaves together two core models—Moshe and Aharon—as archetypes that mirror two essential modes of inner work: *descending insight* and *ascending emotion*, or in modern terms, **cognitive integration** and **emotional attunement**.

At the heart of this maamar is a universal truth: **the human soul is always journeying**. “These are the journeys of the Children of Israel” is not only historical—it is existential. We are each engaged in a personal exodus, leaving behind inner Egypt: trauma, limitations, compulsions, and the pull of ego.

Dual Dynamics of Inner Growth

- **Moshe** represents *chochmah*, divine wisdom, and the voice of structure, clarity, and divine truth descending into the psyche. In therapeutic terms, this is the role of **cognitive reframing, insight work, psychoeducation, and learning-based intervention**. It allows the person to draw down clarity from above, organizing the chaos within.

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- **Aharon** represents *tefillah*, love, longing, and the cry from below—what we might call **somatic yearning, emotional regulation, or attachment longing**. His function is not to inform but to *ignite*. He arouses the hidden parts of the soul, even in exile—especially in exile.

The Alter Rebbe acknowledges that **some healing begins with structure**—with regulated behaviors, ritual, and discipline. Other healing begins with raw yearning, with letting the emotions erupt in prayer-like expression. The therapeutic equivalent? Sometimes clients need frameworks first (CBT, DBT, boundaries); sometimes they first need to **cry**.

Sanctifying the Permissible: Reclaiming the “Mundane Self”

The line “קדש עצמך במותר לך” (“Sanctify yourself even in what is permitted”) is a profound call to address not only what is clearly dysfunctional, but the areas we tolerate in ourselves as “fine.” The Alter Rebbe warns that even permissible behaviors can serve as a spiritual cover for emotional numbness. This parallels the modern idea of **functional dissociation**—people who appear regulated but are inwardly disconnected.

The goal is not suppression but **elevation**. The soul is not meant to be anesthetized but awakened. And how is this done?

- By recognizing that **even the most distant soul still carries the Shechinah within** (“Even in Edom, the Shechinah is with them”).
- By understanding that **everything, even darkness, is null before the Divine**—and so too, even your flaws and pain are not barriers to closeness but bridges toward it.
- By shifting the inner narrative: “You are not a degenerate in the permission of Torah. You are royalty acting out of amnesia.”

Melting the Ice: Fire Before Fire

The imagery of mitzvos melting evil like wax before fire is emotionally compelling. It suggests that **structured sacred acts**, when done with consciousness, act like **healing rituals**, breaking up the frozen parts of the self. But fire must meet fire. The ritual must be done not robotically but as a **conscious expression of love**—or at least longing.

This is the work of therapy: to help a person reconnect with the meaning behind their practices, to awaken the yearning behind their numbness, and to help them believe that **their soul is not broken, only buried**.

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Story

A teenage boy had stopped putting on tefillin. He wasn't angry at God—he just felt nothing. “I don't think He wants me,” he told his therapist.

They explored his daily life, and eventually the therapist asked, “When was the last time you felt anything during tefillin?”

The boy paused. “Years ago. At a campfire at sleepaway camp. We were singing Shema. It was... I don't know, warm.”

“Was it about the words?” the therapist asked.

“No,” he said, “it was the people. It was like we were all part of something.”

“Maybe,” the therapist replied gently, “that's still there. Under the ashes.”

Slowly, they made a plan: not to start with daily tefillin, but just once, in a quiet room, without pressure. He tried. And he cried.

Source: Composite case adapted from narratives in *Daniel J. Siegel, The Power of Showing Up*, and anonymous accounts from clinical work with religious teens. **END NOTE]**