

Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl

Me'or Einayim

Parshas Chukas

Introduction

This discourse by **Rabbi Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl**—known as the Me'or Einayim—explores the essence of Torah through the lens of *Chukas haTorah* and the Parah Adumah. Living in the 18th century in Ukraine, Rabbi Menachem Nachum was a close disciple of the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezritch. He was the founder of the Chernobyl Chassidic dynasty and spiritual ancestor of the many Chernobyler rebbes. His writings are deeply rooted in the mystical tradition of Chassidus, emphasizing divine unity, the hidden light (*Or HaGanuz*), and spiritual refinement through cleaving to the Infinite (*Ayin*).

In this profound interpretation of the red heifer, he draws a line from the revealed aspects of Torah to the concealed divine light that transcends reason, arguing that true transformation occurs only when one connects to the inner core of Torah. This ISPC offers a reflection on that vision.

And Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying: “This is the statute of the Torah...” etc., “and they shall take to you a red heifer...”

וַיִּדְבֹר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה גו', וַיִּקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ פָּרָה גו'.

For it is known that the Torah consists of letters, vowel-points (nekudos), cantillation marks (taamim), and crownlets (tagin), but this is the aspect of the revealed Torah (Torah d'Atgalyah), for all these things can be comprehended by the human intellect, each person according to his own level.

דְּנוּדַע שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה הִיא אוֹתִיּוֹת וְנִקּוּדוֹת וְטַעֲמִים וְתַגִּין, אָבֵל זֶה הוּא בְּבַחֲיִנַת הַתּוֹרָה דְּאַתְגָּלְיָא, כִּי כָל זֶה אֲפָשָׁר לְשַׁכֵּל אֲנוּשֵׁי לְהַשִּׁיג כָּל אֶחָד לְפִי מִדְּרָגָתוֹ,

But the light within it—about which the Sages said, “The light in it returns them to the good” (Eicha Rabbah 2:13)—this refers to the level of Ayin, which cannot be grasped, because it is beyond reason.

אָבֵל הַמְּאֹר שֶׁבָּה שְׁעָלָיו אָמְרוּ חֲזו"ל הַמְּאֹר שֶׁבָּה מִחֲזוֹרָן לְמוּטָב, הוּא בְּבַחֲיִנַת א"י שֶׁאֵין לוֹ תַּפְסֻסָּה, מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהוּא לְמַעְלָה מִן הַטַּעַם

And it is the source from which the Torah flows forth—namely, the Creator, blessed is He—through which He and the Torah are one.

וְהוּא הַמְּקוֹר שֶׁמִּמֶּנּוּ נִבְיַעַת הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁהוּא הַבּוֹרָא כְּרוּךְ הוּא, שְׁעַל יְדֵי זֶה, הוּא וְהַתּוֹרָה אֶחָד

And each person who engages in Torah study must bind his vitality specifically to this inner light—called Ayin—which is above reason.

וְצָרִיךְ כָּל אֶחָד הַעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה, לְדַבֵּק אֶת חַיּוּתוֹ בְּמְאֹר שֶׁבָּה דִּיִּקְרָא הַנִּקְרָא א"י שֶׁהוּא לְמַעְלָה מִן הַטַּעַם

For this is why the cantillation marks (taamim) are so called—because they are still within the realm of comprehension and explanation (giving a taam, a reason), even though they are lofty.

כִּי לְכָד נִקְרָא הַטַּעֲמִים שֶׁל הַנְּגִינּוֹת טַעֲמִים, מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהֵן עֲדִין בְּבַחֲיִנַת שְׁאֲפָשָׁר לְהַשִּׁיג וּלְתַת טַעַם, אִף שֶׁהֵם דְּבָר גְּבוּהָה

But the inner dimension is called Ayin, for it has no reason and cannot be grasped.

אָבֵל הַפְּנִימִיּוּת נִקְרָא א"י, שֶׁאֵין לוֹ טַעַם וְתַפְסֻסָּה

Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl

Me'or Einayim

Parshas Chukas

And the learner must cleave to the light that flows from the aspect of Ayin, and then surely it will return him to the good—since his innermost being becomes bound to the inner light of Torah.	וְצָרִיךְ הַלומֵד לְדַבֵּק בְּאוֹר הַנִּשְׁפָּע מִבְּחִינַת אַיִן, וְאָז בְּיָדָאִי מִתְחַזְרֵר לְמוֹטֵב, מֵאַחֵר שֶׁנִּדְבַּק פְּנִימִיּוֹתוֹ בְּאוֹר פְּנִימִיּוֹת הַתּוֹרָה,
He becomes a throne for the Divine Presence to rest upon, which dwells within the Torah and flows into it.	נֶעֱשֶׂה כִסֵּא לְהִשְׁרָאֲתוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ הַשּׁוֹרֶה בַּתּוֹרָה וְשׁוֹפֵעַ בַּתּוֹכָהּ,
And even though when studying Torah one must understand what he is learning and articulate it so that he can grasp the meaning, still he must also intend toward the above—so that the wholeness will be complete.	וְאִף שֶׁצָּרִיךְ בְּעֵת לְמוֹדָה לְהִבִּין מֶה שֶׁלומֵד וּלְהִטָּעִים בְּכַדֵּי שִׁבְיָן הַטַּעַם, מְכַל מְקוֹם צָרִיךְ גַּם כֵּן לְאַמּוֹר בְּכַדֵּי שִׁיָּהָא שְׁלֵמוֹת הַגִּמּוּר,
For this is the hidden light reserved for the righteous, as the Sages said: “He arose and hid it...” etc., as explained elsewhere.	כִּי זֶה הוּא אוֹר הַגִּנּוּז לְצַדִּיקִים, כְּמוֹ שֶׁאַמְרוּ רַז"ל עֲמַד וּגְנָזוּ וְכו', כְּאִמּוֹר אֶצְלָנוּ בְּמִקְוֶה אַחֵר
Therefore, anyone who wants the Torah to affect him and return him to the good must seek the light that flows from the source from which the Torah was hewn.	עַל כֵּן צָרִיךְ כָּל אֶחָד שְׂרוּצָה שֶׁתִּפְעַל בּוֹ הַתּוֹרָה לְהִתְחַזְרֵר לְמוֹטֵב, לְחַפֵּשׁ הָאוֹר הַשּׁוֹפֵעַ שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה נִגְזְרָה מִמֶּנּוּ,
And this is called the aspect of “cow” (parah), as the Sages said: “More than the calf wants to suckle, the cow wants to nurse”—for the one who bestows is referred to as parah.	וְזֶהוּ נִקְרָא בְּחִינַת פָּרָה, עַל דֶּרֶךְ שֶׁאַמְרוּ רַז"ל יוֹתֵר מִמָּה שֶׁהַעֵגֶל רוּצָה לִינֹק פָּרָה רוּצָה לְהִנִּיק, שֶׁהַמְשַׁפֵּיעַ מְכַנֶּה בְּשֵׁם פָּרָה,
And this hidden light that flows into the Torah may also be referred to as parah, and the Torah is called by the name of Moshe—as it says (Malachi 3:22), “Remember the Torah of Moshe My servant.”	וְאִף זֶה הָאוֹר הַגִּנּוּז הַשּׁוֹפֵעַ בַּתּוֹרָה יוֹכֵן בְּשֵׁם פָּרָה, וְהַתּוֹרָה נִקְרָאת עַל שֵׁם מֹשֶׁה, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכְּתוּב (מְלָאכִי ג', כ"ב) זָכְרוּ תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי
And when one engages in Torah, he must take also the level of Ayin mentioned above and attach it to the revealed Torah, which is called the Torah of Moshe, so that there will be completeness in Torah as per the Creator’s intent.	וְצָרִיךְ לְקַחַת בְּעֵת עֶסֶק הַתּוֹרָה גַּם בְּחִינַת אַיִן הָאִמּוֹר, לְהַדְבִּיקוֹ לְבְּחִינַת תּוֹרָה דְּאִתְגַּלְיָא שֶׁנִּקְרָאת תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה, בְּכַדֵּי שִׁיָּהָא שְׁלֵמוֹת הַתּוֹרָה כְּפִי כּוֹנֵן הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ,
And the pure and radiant light will shine and be revealed in the letters of what is called the Torah of Moshe.	וְיֵאֵיר יוֹפִיעַ אוֹר הַנֶּזֶק וּמִצְחָצַח בְּהֵאוֹתִיּוֹת שֶׁנִּקְרָאת תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה.
And this is [the meaning of] “Speak to the children of Israel and have them take to you...”—that is, to the Torah that is called by your name, the revealed Torah of Moshe, they must take a red cow.	וְזֶהוּ דְּבַר אֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ, פִּירוּשׁ אֵל בְּחִינַת הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁנִּקְרָאת עַל שֵׁם, תּוֹרָה דְּאִתְגַּלְיָא תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה, יִקְחוּ פָּרָה אֲדָמָה
The level called parah, which is the source of the light that shines within the Torah—and “adumah” (red) because of the great radiance and brilliant light that cannot be grasped—then	הַבְּחִינָה שֶׁנִּקְרָאת בְּשֵׁם פָּרָה שֶׁהוּא מְקוֹר הַשּׁוֹפֵעַ וּמֵאִיר בַּתּוֹרָה, וְאֲדָמָה עַל שֵׁם זְהוּרִית הַגְּדוּלָּה וְאוֹר

Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl

Me'or Einayim

Parshas Chukas

“temimah” (perfect), for it will be a complete perfection in the Creator’s intent.	הַנֶּזֶק שֶׁאֵי אֶפְשָׁר לְהַשְׁיִיגוֹ, וְאֵז תְּמִימָהּ, יִהְיֶה שְׁלֵמוֹת גָּמוּר בְּכֻנַּת הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ.
And it is also possible that this level is called “temimah” (perfect) because it is still untouched, as the Baal Shem Tov said, for the hidden light is still tamim (whole), not yet accessed by man except in the smallest measure.	וְגַם אֶפְשָׁר שֶׁנִּקְרָאת בְּחִינָה זוֹ עַל שֵׁם שְׁעֵדִיין הִיא תְּמִימָה, כְּמֵאֲמַר הַבַּעַל שֵׁם טוֹב כִּי אוֹר הַגָּנוּז עֲדִיין הוּא תָם שֶׁלֹא הִגִּיעַ לוֹ שֵׁם אָדָם כִּי אִם מְעַט מְזִעַר.
As it says (Tehillim 19:8), “The Torah of Hashem is perfect”—that is, the level of Torah called by Hashem’s name, not Moshe’s, is still temimah, untraveled by the masses and unachieved in its depth.	כְּמִשְׁכָּתוֹב (תְּהִלִּים י"ט, ח') תּוֹרַת ה' תְּמִימָה, תּוֹרַת ה' פִּירוּשׁ בְּחִינַת הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁנִּקְרָאת עַל שֵׁם ה' וְלֹא עַל שֵׁם מֹשֶׁה תְּמִימָה שֶׁלֹא דָּרְכוּ בָּהּ רַבִּים וְלֹא בָּאוּ לְזוֹ הַמַּדְרָגָה.
But in these generations, every complete person must strive to reach this.	אָבֵל בְּדוֹרוֹת הָאֵלֶּה צָרִיךְ כָּל אָדָם הַשָּׁלֵם לְהִתְאַמֵּץ, וְלִהְיוֹת לְזֶה כְּאִמּוֹר.
And this is [the meaning of] “in whom there is no blemish”—mum (blemish) connotes deficiency, i.e., the aspect of Ayin is lacking from the revealed Torah as long as a person has not awakened himself to cleave to that level.	וְזֶהוּ אֲשֶׁר אָ"י בָּהּ מוֹם, מוֹם הוּא לְשׁוֹן חֲסָרוֹן, פִּירוּשׁ בְּחִינַת אָ"י, הוּא חֲסָר בָּהּ בְּבְחִינַת תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה, כָּל זְמַן שֶׁלֹא יִתְעוֹרֵר הָאָדָם הַשָּׁלֵם לְדַבֵּק עֲצָמוֹ לְבְחִינַת אָ"י, הַבְּנִי.
And why? Because no yoke has been placed upon her—that is, he has not properly accepted upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven and thus not reached completeness.	וּמִפְּנֵי מָה מִפְּנֵי אֲשֶׁר לֹא עָלָה עָלֶיהָ עַל, שֶׁלֹא קִבֵּל, עָלָיו עַל מַלְכוּת שָׁמַיִם כְּרֵאוֹי וְלֹא הִגִּיעַ לְשְׁלֵמוֹת.
And indeed, it is certain that only through this can one come to complete perfection.	אִם בּוֹדָאי שֶׁשְׁלֵמוֹת גָּמוּר אֵי אֶפְשָׁר לְבוֹא אֵלָיו כִּי אִם, בְּעֵנֶיז זֶה.
And this is [the meaning of] the Targum of Onkelos: “This is the decree of the Torah that Hashem has commanded,” meaning one must reach the level from which the Torah is hewn and engraved—then he is called a complete servant of Hashem.	וְזֶהוּ שְׁתַּרְגוּם אוֹנֶקְלוֹס דָּא גְזִירַת אוֹרִינְתָא דִּי פְקִיד ה', שְׁצָרִיךְ לְבוֹא לְבְחִינַת שְׁהַתּוֹרָה נִגְזְרָה וְנִחְקָקָה מִשָּׁם וְאֵז נִקְרָא עוֹבֵד ה' הַגָּמוּר.

Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl

Me'or Einayim

Parshas Chukas

[NOTE Summary:

The discourse begins by distinguishing between two levels of Torah: the revealed (*Torah d'Atgalyah*)—made up of letters, nekudos (vowels), taamim (cantillation marks), and tagin (crowns)—and the concealed inner light of Torah, referred to as the *Ayin*, the Infinite. The revealed Torah can be understood according to one's intellect, but the *Ayin* cannot be grasped at all. It is the Divine essence—the very source from which Torah is hewn—and it is what Chazal mean when they say “the light within it returns one to the good.”

Menachem Nachum insists that engaging with the Torah's intellect alone is insufficient. A Jew must seek to bind himself to the *Ayin*, the level that is above all comprehension. This is the level from which true inner transformation occurs, where one becomes a dwelling place for the Shechinah. He explains that this *Ayin* is like the mother's milk—the Torah as a living source of Divine nurture. The verse “Zos chukas haTorah” introduces the Parah Adumah, and the Rebbe uses this symbol of the motherly “cow” (*parah*) to describe how the hidden divine light longs to flow into the learner even more than the learner desires it.

The term *Parah Adumah Temimah* (a red heifer, perfect and without blemish) reflects this hidden light. It is red—radiant with a fiery light that cannot be grasped. It is *temimah*—perfect and whole, untouched by the masses. This is the light that has not yet descended into human comprehension. It is the *Torah of Hashem*, not the *Torah of Moshe*, and it remains pure, like the *Or HaGanuz*, the Hidden Light created at the beginning of time.

However, the Rebbe calls upon our generation specifically to pursue this level. Even if previous generations did not fully access it, he insists that now, each sincere and spiritually complete person must strive to reach it. He teaches that until one binds the *Torah of Moshe* (the revealed Torah) with the *Ayin* (the divine source of Torah), the Torah remains lacking. This lack is referred to as a *mum*, a blemish—because the infinite light is missing.

Finally, he interprets the Targum's rendering of “Zos chukas haTorah”—“This is the decree of the Torah which Hashem has commanded”—as referring to the higher Torah that is hewn and engraved from the *Ayin*, the decree of Torah that comes directly from the divine source. A true servant of Hashem is one who reaches this level, where his Torah is not merely learned, but lives within him.

Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl

Me'or Einayim

Parshas Chukas

Practical Takeaway

This discourse challenges us to shift from intellectual engagement with Torah toward a spiritual bond with the divine essence that flows through it. Learning must be more than comprehension—it must be *cleaving*. When studying Torah, one should:

- Begin with understanding, but seek inwardly the light that lies beyond understanding.
- Approach the Torah with humility and openness, ready to be *changed*, not just informed.
- Accept the yoke of Heaven—*kabbalas ol*—to access the Torah's higher source.
- Meditate on the fact that Hashem and the Torah are one, and that learning Torah is an act of unification, not merely education.

To truly be “returned to the good,” we must desire the warmth of the flame more than its explanation. This is the perfection of Torah, the *Parah Temimah*, which flows into the soul when one seeks the *Ayin*—the hidden, the divine, the infinite.

Chassidic Story

Once, Rabbi Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl was visited by a young scholar who prided himself on his mastery of Talmud and Halacha. The man asked, “Is there really more in Torah than what the mind can grasp? I feel complete just learning the reasoning of the halachos.”

The Me'or Einayim looked at him gently and said, “When you warm yourself by a fire, is it the flame that heats you—or the light?”

“The flame,” the man replied.

“But can you hold the flame?” the Rebbe asked.

“No,” said the scholar.

“Then what enters you is not the flame, but the warmth *from* the flame. So too with Torah: what transforms you is not just what you grasp, but the light hidden within it—what you cannot grasp. That is the *Ayin*, the warmth that returns you to truth.”

The scholar began to cry. “Then how can I ever reach that warmth?”

The Rebbe answered, “You must *want* the truth more than you want to understand it. Then Torah will draw you in, like a nursing mother who longs to nourish her child.”

(Source: Oral tradition within the Chernobyl dynasty) END NOTE]

Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl

Me'or Einayim

Parshas Chukas

“This is the Torah: when a man dies in a tent” (Bamidbar 19:14) — our Sages said: The Torah is only upheld by one who kills himself over it, etc.	זאת התורה אדם כי ימות באהל, אמרו רז"ל אין התורה מתקיימת אלא במי שממית עצמו עליה כו'.
It is known that there are 600,000 letters in the Torah, and corresponding to them are 600,000 root souls—though there are in Israel many more [souls]—nonetheless, the essential [structure] is 600,000 roots, and the rest come from the divisions of the sparks.	ידוע כי יש נשמים רבוא אותיות לתורה, וכנגדן יש נשמים רבוא נשמות, אף שיש בישראל כהנה וכהנה, על כל פנים העקר הם נשמים רבוא נשמות, והמותר באין מחלוק הנצוצות.
And each individual in Israel has a letter in the Torah, and the Torah and the Holy One Blessed be He are one.	וכל אחד מישראל יש לו אות בתורה, ואורייתא וקדשא, בריך הוא חד.
And it is the divine portion within man that is literally that same letter from which his soul's root derives.	והוא חלק אלוהי שבקרב האדם, הוא ממש אותו האות, שממנו נשמתו.
And the letter bestows upon the person influence and vitality of holiness.	והאות משפיע על האדם שפע וחיות הקדושה.
And one must know that the letter dwells in the mouth of a person, and each letter includes within it the whole Torah.	וצריך לדעת כי האות שורה בפי האדם, וכל אות כלול מכל התורה.
Thus, the entire Torah is in the mouth of a person.	נמצא שכל התורה בפי האדם.
For behold, a Torah scroll lacking even one letter is invalid and not considered a Torah, for this reason—because each letter is considered Torah when joined together with all the rest.	כי הלא ספר תורה שחסר ממנה אות אחת פסולה, ואינה נחשבת לתורה מטעם זה, כי כל אות חשוב תורה בהצטרף כלל יחד.
And the entirety of serving Hashem is included in this: that a person must draw near to his root—which is the Torah, which is a full stature of 613 mitzvos.	וכל עבודת ה' הכל הוא בזה, שצריך האדם לקרב לשרשו דהיינו התורה שהיא קומה שלימה תרי"ג מצוות.
And man too is comprised of 248 limbs and 365 sinews, as is known.	והאדם כלול גם כן רמ"ח אברים ושס"ה גידים פנוע.
Just as a Torah scroll lacking even one letter is incomplete, so too [the same applies to the body of Israel].	וכמו שאם חסר אות אחת מן הספר תורה אינה בשלמות.
Therefore the Sages said: Whoever destroys a single Jewish soul, it is as if he destroyed an entire world; and the opposite—whoever sustains, etc.—it is as if he sustained an entire world. Understand this well.	לכך אמרו רז"ל כל המאבד נפש אחת מישראל כאילו אבד עולם מלא, וההפך כל המקיים וגו' כאילו קיים עולם מלא, והבן.
Therefore we say before every prayer: “Behold, I accept upon myself the positive commandment of ‘And you shall love your fellow as yourself,’” because all is complete unity—just like the Torah, which is only called “Torah” when all the letters are joined together.	ולכן אומרים קדם כל תפלה הריני מקבל עלי מצוות עשה של ואהבת לרעך וגו', כי הכל הוא אחדות גמור, כמו התורה שנקראת תורה בהצטרף כל האותיות כלן.

Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl

Me'or Einayim

Parshas Chukas

And even if one sees in his fellow something evil, he should hate the evil within him—but love the holy part very much, as his own soul.	ואף אם רואה בחבירו שום דבר רע, ישנא הרע שבו, ואכל החלק הקדוש יאהבנו מאד כנפשו,
For the Baal Shem Tov of blessed memory said: A completely righteous person who has no evil within him sees no evil in any person.	פי הבעל שם טוב נבג"מ אמר שהצדיק הגמור שאין רע בקרבו אינו רואה שום רע על שום אדם
But whoever sees any evil in his fellow—it is like one looking in a mirror: if his own face is dirty, he sees dirt in the mirror; if his face is clean, he sees no blemish.	אכל מי שרואה שום רע בחבירו, הענין הוא כמו שמסתכל במראה, אם פניו מטנפין רואה גם כן במראה, בך, ואם פניו נקיים אינו רואה במראה שום דופי
As he is, so he sees.	כמו שהוא כך רואה
And this is (Vayikra 19:18) “And you shall love your fellow as yourself”—meaning, <i>as yourself</i> : just as a person knows within himself some evil, yet does not hate himself, even though he hates the evil within—so too regarding his fellow.	ונהו (ויקרא י"ט, י"ח) ואהבת לרעך כמוך, פירוש כמוך כמו שאם יודע האדם בעצמו שום רע בקרבו משום זה אינו שונא את עצמו, אף ששונא הרע שבקרבו, כך גם כן על חבירו
For in truth, all is one—for behold, his fellow also has a divine portion just like him, and he too has a letter in the Torah.	כי באמת הכל אחד, כי הלא גם לחבירו יש גם כן חלק אלוהי כמוהו, ויש לו אות בתורה
But the nations of the world—their souls are from the side of impurity. Therefore their speech is also impurity, for most of their speech is vulgar speech or other similar things.	ואומות העולם נפשם הוא מצד הקליפה, לכך דבורם הוא גם כן קליפות כי רוב דבורם הוא נבול פה או שאר דבורים פיוצא בו
But from where do the <i>kelipos</i> (husks of impurity) derive the power to influence through speech? It is from the <i>lashon hara</i> (evil speech) that Jews speak, or idle talk.	אכל מאיכן להם הכח לקליפות להשפיע עליהם הדבור, הוא מלשון הרע שמדברים ישראל או דברים בטלים
Therefore, the sin of <i>lashon hara</i> is weighed against the three cardinal sins: idolatry, sexual immorality, and bloodshed.	לכך שקול עון לשון הרע כנגד ג' עבירות עבודה זרה, גילוי עריות ושפיכות דמים
For from this [sin] comes speech and power to the nations of the world, who are idolaters, immoral, and bloodshedders.	פי מכן זה בא הדבור והכח לאומות העולם, אשר הם עובדי עבודה זרה ומגלין עריות ושופכים דמים
Therefore the verse says (Tehillim 34:13): “Who is the man who desires life, who loves days to see good”—and not evil, as it is said: to be in the level of a tzaddik who sees no evil in his fellow.	על כן אמר הכתוב (תהלים ל"ד, י"ג) מי האיש החפץ חיים, אהב ימים לראות טוב — ולא רע כאמור — שיהיה בבחינת צדיק שאינו רואה רע שבחבירו
“Guard your tongue from evil... turn away from evil...” and then “do good.”	נצור לשונך מרע... סור מרע, ואז ועשה טוב
For in truth, the primary matter is <i>sur meira</i> —that is, the complete abandonment of sin and regret in the heart.	פי באמת העקר הוא סור מרע, דהיינו עזיבת החטא בלב שלם והתרתה

Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl

Me'or Einayim

Parshas Chukas

As our Sages said: If a man betroths a woman on condition that he is righteous, and he is [in fact] wicked, she is betrothed [nonetheless] out of doubt, for perhaps he had a thought of repentance.	וּמֵאַמֵּר רַז"ל, הַמְקַדֵּשׁ אֶת הָאִשָּׁה עַל מְנַת שְׂאֵנִי צָדִיק וְנִמְצָא רָשָׁע, מְקוּדָּשֶׁת מִסִּפֶּק שְׂמָא הֵהָרֵר תְּשׁוּבָה.
And the thought alone is enough for him to be called righteous.	וְהֵהָרֵר לְבַד מִסִּפִּיק לוֹ שִׁיקְרָא צָדִיק.
And to understand this matter—why is it so?	וְלִהְיוֹן הַדָּבָר מִפְּנֵי מָה הוּא כֵּן.
The matter is: For every transgression creates an accusing force (mekatreg).	הַעֲנֵן הוּא כִּי בְּכָל עֲבֵרָה בּוֹרָא מְקַטְרֵג אֶחָד.
And how is it created? Because every sinner first thinks, in thought, to do it—and thereby creates a <i>nefesh</i> (soul) for the <i>kelipah</i> .	וְאִיךָ בּוֹרָאוֹ? אֵלֹא מִפְּנֵי שְׂכַל עוֹבֵר עֲבֵרָה חוֹשֵׁב מְקוֹדֵם בְּמַחְשָׁבָה לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ, וְאַזְּ בּוֹרָא נֶפֶשׁ לְקִלְפָּה.
And afterwards, when he performs the deed, he creates the <i>body</i> [of the <i>klipah</i>].	וְאַחֵר כֵּן כְּשֶׁעוֹשֶׂה הַמַּעֲשֶׂה, בּוֹרָא הַגּוּף.
And then, when he thinks thoughts of <i>teshuvah</i> , he repairs the <i>hirhur</i> (thought), and withdraws the vitality from the <i>kelipah</i> —and what remains is a lifeless stone.	וְאַחֵר כֵּן כְּשֶׁמִּהְרֵהֵר בְּתִשְׁבּוּבָה, מְתַקֵּן הֵהָרֵר וּמוֹצִיא אֶת הַחַיּוּת מִהַקְלִיפָה, וְנִשְׁאַר אֶבֶן דּוֹמָם.
But why is the abandonment of sin in the heart called <i>charatah</i> (regret)? It is from the language of <i>charat enosh</i> (engraving of man).	אָבֵל מִפְּנֵי מָה נִקְרָא עֲזִיבַת הַחֶטָּא בְּלֵב חֲרָטָה? הוּא מִלְּשׁוֹן חֲרַט אָנוּשׁ.
For it is known that <i>vidui</i> (confession) with the mouth is the main thing—and also that it be from the heart.	כִּי יָדוּעַ כִּי הַיְדוּי בִּפֶּה הוּא הָעֶקֶר, וְגַם שִׁיחָה מִן הַלֵּב.
For one who damages and sins erases, so to speak, his letter, from which the root of his soul derives, and is severed from holiness.	כִּי הַפּוֹגֵם וְחוֹטֵא מוֹחֵק כְּבִיכּוֹל אוֹתוֹ שְׁלֹו שְׂמִשְׁם שְׂרִשׁ נִשְׁמָתוֹ, וְנִפְסַק מִן הַקְּדוּשָׁה.
And when he confesses with speech—and speech is drawn from the letter, as stated—then he renews the letter and rewrites what had been erased.	וּכְשֶׁמִּתְוַדֶּה בַּדְּבוּר, וְהַדְּבוּר נִמְשָׁךְ מִן הָאוֹת כְּאֵמֹר, אֵז מְחַדֵּשׁ אֶת הָאוֹת וְכוֹתְבוֹ מִחֲדָשׁ מֵהַשְׂמָחָק.
And the main thing is that it be from the heart, like the <i>charat</i> (engraving)—that is, the quill does not write unless it is dipped by the hand.	וְהָעֶקֶר שִׁיחָה מִן הַלֵּב, כְּמוֹ הַחֲרַט, דִּהְיִינוּ הַקּוֹלְמוֹס לֹא יִכְתֹּב בּוֹ אִם לֹא יִטְבְּלוּ בְּיָדוֹ.
And the tongue is called “the pen of a scribe,” as it says (Tehillim 45:2), “My tongue is the pen of a skilled scribe.”	וְהַלְשׁוֹן נִקְרָא עֵט סוֹפֵר, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכְּתוּב (תְּהִלִּים מ"ה, ב') לְשׁוֹנִי עֵט סוֹפֵר וְגו'.
And the heart must join with it primarily, and afterward one should do good and not return to his former ways.	וְצָרִיךְ לְהַצְטָרֵף אֵלָיו הַלֵּב בְּעֶקֶר, וְאַחֵר כֵּן יַעֲשֶׂה טוֹב וְלֹא יָשׁוּב לְסוּרוֹ.

Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl

Me'or Einayim

Parshas Chukas

But matters that a person needs—even though they are of this-worldly nature—if they are necessary, such as business dealings and the like, they too are considered <i>avodah</i> (Divine service).	אָבֵל דְּבָרִים הַצָּרִיכִים לוֹ, אִף עַל גַּב דְּהֵם מֵעֲנִינֵי עוֹלָם הַזֶּה, רַק שֶׁהֵם מְכֻרְחָסִים, דִּהְיִינוּ מִשָּׂא וּמִתָּן וְכִיּוּצָא, הֵן גַּם בֵּן עֲבוּדָה
Like one who writes a Torah scroll—he must first prepare parchment from a physical object, the hide of an animal, to make at first a vessel that holds the letters upon it.	כְּמוֹ הַכּוֹתֵב סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה, צָרִיךְ מְקוֹדֵם לַעֲבֹד קֶלֶף מִדְּבָר גִּשְׁמִי, מֵעוֹר בְּהֵמָה, לַעֲשׂוֹת בִּתְחִלָּה כְּלִי שֶׁמִּשְׁרַת הָאוֹתִיּוֹת עָלֵיהֶן
For we are material beings, and therefore we need a physical vessel upon which the holiness can rest.	כִּי אֲנַחְנוּ מְגִשְׁמִים, לָכֵן אֲנַחְנוּ צָרִיכִים כְּלִי מְגִשֵּׁם לְהַשְׁרֹאוֹת הַקִּדְשָׁה עָלָיו
And afterward, one must make staves for the Torah scroll, which are called “Etz Chayim” (Tree of Life), as it says (Mishlei 3:18), “It is a tree of life to those who grasp it.”	וְאַחֵר כִּף צָרִיךְ לַעֲשׂוֹת עֲמוּדִים לְסֵפֶר תּוֹרָה, הַנִּקְרָא עֵץ חַיִּים, עַל שֵׁם (מִשְׁלֵי ג', י"ח) עֵץ חַיִּים הִיא לַמַּחֲזִיקִים בָּהּ עֵץ
For through it we hold the letters.	שֶׁבַעֲבוּרוֹ אֲנוּ מַחֲזִיקִין אֶת הָאוֹתִיּוֹת
So too, a person who serves Hashem must make a vessel in everything: whether in business or in other necessary worldly matters.	כִּף צָרִיךְ הָאָדָם הַעוֹבֵד אֶת ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּלִי בְּכָל דְּבָר, הֵן מִשָּׂא וּמִתָּן, הֵן בִּשְׂאָר דְּבָרֵי עוֹלָם הַזֶּה הַהִכְרָחִים
For this is called “those who grasp it,” for through this the Torah is sustained—as it is said: “If there is no flour, there is no Torah.”	כִּי זֶה נִקְרָא לַמַּחֲזִיקִים בָּהּ, כִּי עַל יְדֵי זֶה יִתְקַיֵּם הַתּוֹרָה, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב: אִם אֵין קֹמַח אֵין תּוֹרָה
But everything should be for His service, blessed be He—and not for oneself, as is the way of fools and evildoers.	אָבֵל יִהְיֶה הַכֹּל לַעֲבוּדָתוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ, שְׂלֹא יַעֲשֶׂה בְּשֵׁבִיל עַצְמוֹ כְּדֶרֶךְ הַשּׁוֹטִים וְהַרְשָׁעִים
For example, it says in the Gemara: “He who does charity at all times”—this refers to one who provides food and sustenance, etc.—if he does so for the sake of serving Hashem, that is, if he thinks that they too contain a divine portion, and Hashem gave me these portions, and I am like an appointed gabbai (treasurer) to support them.	לְמִשְׁלַל אֲמָרוֹ בְּגִמ' עוֹשֶׂה צְדָקָה בְּכָל עֵת, זֶה הֵזֵן וּמִפְּרִנָּס וְגו', אִם הוּא עוֹשֶׂה לַעֲבוּדָתוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ, דִּהְיִינוּ שֶׁחוֹשֵׁב כִּי בָהֶם גַּם כֹּן חֵלֶק אֱלֹהִים, וְהַקִּבָּה נָתַן לִי הַחֲלָקִים, וְהִנֵּנִי כַּגַּבַּי מְמַנֶּה עֲלֵיהֶם לְפָרִינָס
If he thinks in this way—it is <i>avodah</i> (Divine service). But if he does it without this awareness, even though he acts—it is considered nothing.	וְאִם חוֹשֵׁב כֹּן — הוּא עֲבוּדָה. וְאִם עוֹשֶׂה שְׂלֹא בְּדַעַת, אִף שֶׁעוֹשֶׂה — אֵינָה נְחֻשֶׁבֶת לְכָלוּם
As it says in the Gemara: Two who slaughtered their Pesach offerings, etc.—this one who ate it for the sake of the mitzvah, about him it is said (Hoshea 14:10), “The righteous walk in them”; and this one who ate it as gluttonous consumption, about him it is said, “but the sinners stumble in them.”	כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב בְּגִמ' שְׁנַיִם שֶׁצָּלְאוּ אֶת פֶּסַחֵיהֶם וְגו', זֶה שֶׁאָכְלוּ לְשֵׁם מִצְוָה — עָלָיו נֶאֱמַר (הוֹשֵׁעַ י"ד, י') צְדִיקִים יֵלְכוּ בָּם, וְזֶה שֶׁאָכְלוּ לְשֵׁם אֲכִילָה גִסָּה — עָלָיו נֶאֱמַר וּפִשְׁעֵים יִפְּשְׁלוּ בָּם

Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl

Me'or Einayim

Parshas Chukas

So our eyes see that it is possible in one matter—when both people do the same thing—that because their intentions differ, this one draws himself near through that act to Hashem, while the other distances himself.	אם כן עינינו הוראות שיש באפשרי שבדבר אחד שיעשו שניהם שוים, אבל מפני שהמכון אינו שוה — יהיה זה מקרב את עצמו באותו דבר אל השם יתברך, ונה מתרחק.
So too in everything—the main thing is the intention, as it is written (Mishlei 3:6), “In all your ways, know Him.”	ככה גם כן בכל דבר, העקר הוא המכון, כמו שכתוב (שם ג', ו') בכל דרכיך דעהו.
And this is [the meaning of] “This is the Torah: man...”—as stated, “man” refers to the divine portion within him, and it is the letters from the Torah.	וזהו זאת התורה אדם — כאמור, אדם נקרא החלק אלוה שבתוכו, והוא האותיות מן התורה.
But the Torah is only upheld by one who “kills himself” over it—“himself” specifically, meaning: his intent should not be for <i>himself</i> .	אבל אין התורה מתקיימת אלא במי שממית עצמו עליה — עצמו דייקא.
That he should kill the thought “for himself”—that such motivation should not be remembered or counted at all.	פירוש שלא יהיה כוונתו בשביל עצמו — שיימית את המחשבה שבשביל עצמו — שלא יזכר, לא יפקד.
Rather, all should be for His service—blessed is His Name.	אלא הכל לעבודתו יתברך שמו.

[NOTE Summary:

This rich and layered teaching by Rabbi Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl centers on the inner essence of Torah, teshuvah, and Divine service. He begins by expanding on the verse *"This is the Torah: when a man dies in a tent,"* citing the Sages' interpretation that Torah is only upheld by one who “kills himself” over it. But the Me'or Einayim reveals a deeper meaning: this “death” is not physical, but the nullification of self-centered intention. True Torah only endures in one who surrenders his ego and serves not for his own sake, but entirely for the sake of Heaven.

Each Jew, he teaches, has a letter in the Torah—corresponding to the 600,000 root souls. When one sins, he erases his personal letter. Through sincere *vidui* (verbal confession), especially when flowing from the heart, the soul rewrites its place in the scroll of holiness. The metaphor of the *kli* (vessel) is critical: just as a Torah scroll needs a parchment and staves (Etz Chayim), man must create vessels in the physical world—like business, speech, or daily needs—so they may hold the light of Torah. The goal is not to escape the material world, but to spiritualize it.

Even mundane acts like business dealings can be Divine service—if they are done with awareness that the other person, too, holds a portion of the divine. But if one acts without holy intent, his actions—even mitzvos—are void of spiritual power. The proof is the Pesach offering: two people can do the same deed; one draws near to Hashem, the other stumbles—depending solely on inner intent.

Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl

Me'or Einayim

Parshas Chukas

This leads to his bold interpretation of “*charatah*” (regret): not just remorse, but *engraving*—a deliberate re-etching of one’s spiritual letter. Sin is born of thought, and so teshuvah must begin with thought. Regret rewrites, redirects, and restores the flow of holy vitality. When one truly turns, he doesn’t just return—he becomes a living vessel for the letters of Torah once again.

Practical Takeaway

This discourse calls us to radical spiritual honesty. The heart of Divine service is not the action, but the **intention**. A mitzvah without consciousness may fulfill the body of Torah but not its soul. To draw close to Hashem:

- Transform daily tasks—business, speech, needs—into vessels of holiness by dedicating them to G-d.
- Remember that each person is a letter in the Torah. To harm another is to erase part of G-d’s scroll; to help them is to restore it.
- In teshuvah, focus not just on regret but on re-engraving your soul’s divine imprint through heartfelt vidui and renewed alignment with your purpose.
- Do not serve for your own gain—even spiritually. “Kill” the thought of self and live entirely for Him.

When we act this way, we don’t just learn Torah—we *become* Torah..

Chassidic Story

Once, Rabbi Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl encountered a water-carrier in his village who was known for his sharp tongue. One day the man came to the Rebbe and wept: “I’ve harmed people with my speech. I’ve gossiped, cursed, and lied. I want to do teshuvah, but I don’t know where to start.”

Rabbi Nachum gave him a simple instruction: “Come tomorrow with a single feather pillow.”

The next day, the man returned. The Rebbe told him, “Take the pillow to the top of the hill and rip it open in the wind.” The man obeyed. Feathers flew in every direction.

“Now,” said the Rebbe, “go gather each feather and put them back inside.”

“But that’s impossible!” the man cried.

The Rebbe replied: “So it is with speech. But there is one thing that repairs what cannot be gathered: words of truth, spoken from a broken heart. When you speak that way to Hashem, you begin to rewrite what was torn.”

Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl

Me'or Einayim

Parshas Chukas

(Source: Shivchei HaBaal Shem Tov, variant transmitted in Chernobyl tradition)

Therapeutic-Psychological Integration (TPX)

This discourse offers a spiritually rich framework for psychological healing: your identity is not constructed—it's inscribed. You are a living letter in the Divine scroll. When a person feels lost, fragmented, or ashamed, it's as if their "letter" has been erased. But Rabbi Menachem Nachum teaches that this erasure isn't permanent. With sincere words and heart-based teshuvah, that letter can be rewritten.

This reflects what modern therapy tells us: **speech restores coherence**. In trauma recovery, a key turning point is the moment someone can narrate their pain honestly and safely. Rabbi Nachum anticipates this: the mouth, when connected to the heart, becomes the stylus of the soul. Speech is not just cathartic—it's reconstructive.

He also collapses the divide between sacred and secular. A person doesn't need to escape the world to find God. If your intention is pure, **your job, your transactions, your errands—all become vessels for holiness**. This mirrors Viktor Frankl's insight: meaning can be found in suffering, in work, in every corner of life—if we orient ourselves toward purpose.

At its root, the Me'or Einayim is asking: *For whom do you live?* A life lived for self, even in mitzvah disguise, stays trapped in ego. A life lived for Hashem, however mundane, is radiant with Torah light.

True Story

In 1992, Dr. Edith Eger, a Holocaust survivor and psychologist, was counseling a woman trapped in grief. The woman had lost her son in a tragic accident and couldn't stop blaming herself. "I killed my own son," she repeated in every session.

One day, Dr. Eger stopped her gently and said, "You've spoken that sentence hundreds of times. It's your new name. But what if you wrote a new sentence today—just one? Even if it feels like a lie?"

The woman began to cry. She whispered: "I want to be someone who forgives herself."

"That's it," said Dr. Eger. "That's your new letter. Say it again."

The woman repeated it—and kept repeating it. It became her morning prayer. Over time, it rewrote the way she saw herself.

(Source: Dr. Edith Eger, *The Choice*, 2017) END NOTE]