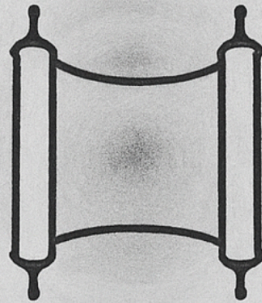


בס"ד

כתר שם טוב

Kesser Shem Tov

מ-מט סימנים



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 מ-מט **Simanim**

Siman #

From the Baal Shem Tov: One who was accustomed to speaking falsehood, his repentance is to not speak falsehood even for the sake of making peace, just as those who take interest, even from non-Jews, should not accept it.

מהבעש"ט: מי שְׁהִיָּה רְגִיל לְדַבֵּר שְׁקֵר אֶז תְּשׁוּבָתוֹ שְׁלֵא לְדַבֵּר שְׁקֵר גַּם לַעֲשׂוֹת שְׁלוֹם, כְּמוֹ לֹקְחֵי רִבִּית גַּם מֵעַכּוּ"ם לֹא יִקְבֹּל.

Therefore, the swallowed ones of Korach said: "Moshe is truth, and his Torah is truth, and we are the liars."

עַל כֵּן אָמְרוּ בְּלוֹעֵי קֶרַח: מֹשֶׁה אֱמֶת וְתוֹרָתוֹ אֱמֶת וְאֵנָּחֵנוּ בְּדַאִים.

[NOTE: Therefore, the *swallowed ones of Korach*—the members of Korach's assembly who were swallowed by the earth—cried out: "Moshe is true, and his Torah is true, and we are liars."

The explanation of this matter: Korach and his assembly were envious of Aharon the Kohen and believed that they were on his level. Since Aharon would sometimes deviate from absolute truth for the sake of peace—doing so according to the Torah's instruction as commanded by Moshe—they assumed that they too were permitted to do the same. However, once they were swallowed by the earth, they recognized their mistake and proclaimed that specifically *Moshe*, whose defining trait was truth, and likewise *his Torah*, which permitted Aharon to alter the truth for the sake of peace, was not a deviation from *truth*. On the other hand, they, whose defining trait was falsehood (*liars*), were forbidden to deviate from the truth even for the sake of peace, and they could never equate themselves with Aharon the Kohen...

The Baal Shem Tov teaches a profound lesson about truthfulness and repentance.

1. True Repentance Means Complete Transformation

- A person who has developed a habit of lying must not only stop lying but also not use falsehood even for seemingly good purposes, such as making peace.
- This aligns with the idea that a mitzvah (good deed) must be performed in a completely truthful and pure manner, without compromising on moral integrity.

1. Parallel to Prohibited Interest (Ribbit)

- Just as taking interest (ribbit) is prohibited even from non-Jews, meaning that something inherently wrong remains wrong regardless of context, so too falsehood is inherently corrupt, even if one intends a positive outcome.
- This highlights that means do not justify the ends—we must pursue peace and goodness through truthful methods.

1. The Confession of Korach's Followers

- After being swallowed by the earth, Korach's followers ultimately admitted: "Moshe is truth, and his Torah is truth, and we are the liars."
- This statement represents the ultimate recognition of reality—that truth will always prevail.

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- The lesson: Sometimes, people deceive themselves and others for personal gain or out of arrogance, but in the end, the truth of Torah and divine justice always stands firm.

Practical Takeaway (PT)

- Strive to always speak truthfully, even when it feels inconvenient or when we think a small lie might create peace.
- Integrity matters: Don't justify dishonesty by thinking it's for a good cause.
- In moments of doubt, remind yourself: Truth will always prevail, even if it takes time.

END NOTE]

מאז #Siman

From the Baal Shem Tov: The explanation of "Turn away from evil and do good" is that the prophet Jeremiah was punished by being thrown into the pit because he did not pray for Israel when he heard the prophecy of misfortune for them.

מבעש"ט: פרוש "סור מרע ועשה טוב", דירמיהו הנביא גענוש מה שהשלה לבור וכיוצא, לפי שלא התפלל על ישראל כששמע הנבואה לרעה על ישראל.

This was not the case with Isaiah, whose name itself hints at salvation, etc.

'מה שאין פן ישעיהו, שמו מורה על ישועה וכו

A person has the ability to transform a dream or a prophecy from bad to good.

והאדם יכול להפך חלום או נבואה מרעה לטובה.

Just as if one sees a deceased person in a dream, he can transform it to symbolize perfection (tam) or narrowness (tzarah) into brightness (tzohar).

כמו שרואה בחלום מת, יכול להפך לעשות תם, מצרה צהר.

This is the meaning of "Turn away from evil and do good."

"וזהו שכתוב "סור מרע ועשה טוב

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[NOTE:**Turn Away from Evil and Do Good – Transforming Evil Itself into Good**

(From the Baal Shem Tov)

The explanation of the verse *"Turn away from evil and do good"* (*Sur me'ra va'aseh tov*) begins with the account of the prophet Yirmiyahu, who was punished by being cast into a pit (by the men of King Tzidkiyahu when he prophesied misfortune about the fall of the Kingdom of Israel into the hands of Babylon). The deeper reason why Heaven decreed this punishment upon him (even though he was seemingly fulfilling his command by delivering the prophecy he had received) is because he did not pray for Israel when he heard from Heaven a prophecy of misfortune regarding them. That is, instead of immediately delivering the harsh prophecy to Israel, he should have pleaded and worked to have the decree changed and transformed into good.

In contrast, the prophet Yeshayahu was specifically the prophet of *salvations and consolations* because he always sought to annul (through prayer and supplication for mercy) prophecies that were not for the salvation of Israel.

Similarly, a person has the power to transform a dream or prophecy from bad to good: *"For the decree [set Above] consists of letters, and one can... rearrange them into a different combination"*. By drawing a new spiritual influence, for example, if one sees a deceased person in a dream and fears that it is a negative omen, he can change the interpretation of the dream by rearranging the letters of the word *"מת"* (*dead*) into *"תם"* (*pure, complete*), which signifies perfection. Likewise, one can transform *"צרה"* (*trouble*) into *"צהר"* (*radiance*), which symbolizes light. This is the meaning of the verse *"Turn away from evil and do good"*—How does one distance himself from evil? By *doing good*, meaning by transforming the evil itself into good...

In *Melachim II* (22), it is recounted that during the days of Yirmiyahu, a hidden Torah scroll was discovered in the Beit HaMikdash, rolled to the verses of rebuke. King Yoshiyahu sent messengers to Chulda the prophetess to determine whether this indicated that exile had been decreed upon Israel. The Gemara (*Megillah* 14b) questions this: *"Yoshiyahu himself—how could he ignore Yirmiyahu and send to her?"* The school of Rabbi Sheila explained: *"Because women are compassionate."* In *Chiddushei Aggadot* of the Maharsha, he clarifies that it is impossible to suggest that, due to her compassion, she would deliver a message different from the divine decree. Rather, the intent is that, due to her compassion, she would pray for the prophecy to be altered in Heaven from one of calamity to one of goodness (see also Rambam, *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah*, chapter 10, halacha 4).

In *Ohr Torah* (Siman 449), it is written: "Our sages asked: Why did King Yoshiyahu send to Chulda the prophetess to inquire about the found scroll, rather than to Yirmiyahu? And they answered: 'Because women

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are compassionate.' At first glance, this is difficult to understand—how does compassion relate to prophecy? A prophet cannot say anything other than what he receives from Hashem!

I have heard from our teacher and master [the Baal Shem Tov] a great explanation on this, though I do not fully recall it. The main reasoning is as follows: There is certainly power in the language of prophecy to transform harshness into compassion. This means that while a prophet does not, Heaven forbid, alter the words he hears from Hashem, the prophecy depends on the *niggun* (musical cantillation) with which the prophet delivers it to Israel. It is known that *niggun* corresponds to *ta'amim* (cantillation marks), and the essence of prophecy depends on these *ta'amim*. The proof is that in many cases, the *ta'amim* of a verse completely change its simple meaning. Thus, it was dependent on the prophet's manner of speech—if he spoke the prophecy with strong *ta'amim*, it carried a tone of harshness and judgment; but if he used different *ta'amim*, it conveyed compassion. Moreover, the prophet's *ta'amim* could arouse *Heavenly compassion*. This is why Yoshiyahu sent to Chulda—because women are compassionate and could transform the prophecy from strict judgment to compassion."* (See also there in *Parashat Eikev*, Siman 164.)

Siman #מבא

From the Baal Shem Tov: "Whatever your hand finds to do with your strength, do it"(Kohelet 9:10)—the explanation is to connect the action with the power of thought.

מבבש"ט: "כל אשר תמצא ידך לעשות בכחך עשה", פרוש לקושר המעשה בכח המחשבה.

This is what is written: "to do with your strength."

"וזהו שקתוב "לעשות בכחך".

This is the greatness of Chanoch (Metatron), who unified the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Shechinah with every prayer.

זהו מעלת חנוך (מט"ט), שהיה מיוחד קודשא בריהו הוא ושכינתיה על כל תפלה.

And this is also the greatness of Moshe Rabbeinu, peace be upon him, as it is written: "And you, stand here with Me," etc.(Devarim 5:28)

זהו מעלת משה רבנו עליו השלום, "ואתה פה לעמד עמדי" כו

[NOTE: Connecting Action to the Power of Thought – The Unification of the Holy One, Blessed Be He, and His Presence

(From the Baal Shem Tov)

It is written: "*Whatever your hand finds to do with your strength, do it*" (Kohelet 9:10). The explanation: "*your strength*" refers to the power of thought—the spiritual intent of cleaving to Hashem that is embedded in an action. Performing an action "*with your strength*" means linking the action with the power of thought, as expressed in the verse "*to do with your strength*".

This is the essence of the greatness of *Chanoch*, who became the angel *Metatron*. (About him (*Chanoch*), it is

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written: *"And he walked with God, and he was no more, for God took him."* (Bereishit 5:24)—meaning, he reached a high spiritual level of cleaving to God to the extent that he was elevated and became an angel. See *Zohar*, Part I, 37b, 56b.) It is said of him that he *"stitched celestial shoes,"* and that with each stitch, he unified the Holy One, Blessed Be He, and His Presence. That is, he brought about a complete connection and unification between Hashem—who is exalted and beyond the worlds—and the *Shechinah*, the divine light that dwells within the worlds. (*Sewing* symbolizes an act of connection and unification—higher *yichudim* (spiritual unifications) between an external and an internal aspect. *Sewing shoes* represents a *yichud* (unification) at the lowest level—namely, within the realm of action, as explained in the main text. See *Or Torah*, Siman 435; *Likkutei Torah*, *Shir HaShirim* 44a, and other sources.)

The significance of this in our context is the unification between a lower, physical action and the spiritual intent and thought of cleaving to Hashem.

This is also the deeper greatness of *Moshe Rabbeinu*, peace be upon him, regarding whom it is said: *"And you, stand here with Me..."* (Devarim 5:28). This means that even while he was involved in leading the people and addressing their needs, he remained completely attached to Hashem. His physical actions and his spiritual, God-focused thought were entirely unified, so that even his engagement in worldly matters caused no disturbance or distraction to his state of cleaving to the Divine. **END NOTE]**

סימן #מב

"**And Jacob lifted his feet**"—for through faith, he elevates the feet of Malchut, whose feet descend to death,

וַיִּשָׂא יַעֲקֹב רַגְלָיו, כִּי עַל יְדֵי הָאֲמוּנָה מַעֲלָה רַגְלָיו
הַמְלַכּוֹת אֲשֶׁר רַגְלֶיהָ יֵרְדוֹת מִן

"And it connects her with the Pillars of Truth (*Samchei Keshot*) of Zeir Anpin."

וּמְקוֹשְׁרָהּ עִם סְמֵכֵי קְשׁוּט דְזַעִיר אַנְפִּין

[NOTE: Faith Elevates and Uplifts the Lower Divine Level from Its Descent

It is written (following the dream in which Hashem promised Yaakov, *"Behold, I am with you, and I will guard you wherever you go, etc."*): *"And Yaakov lifted his feet and went to the land of the people of the East."* (Bereishit 29:1). Our Sages explained: *"Once he received the good tidings and was assured of divine protection, his heart lifted his feet, and he became light in his steps."*

The explanation of the matter is that through **faith**, the *"feet of Malchut"*—meaning, trust and belief in Hashem's promise—elevate and uplift the lowest aspects of the **Sefirah of Malchut** (the last of the ten Sefirot, which relates to creation). Malchut, also known as the *Shechinah* (the divine presence dwelling within the world), is described as *"her feet descend to death."* This means that in the natural state, the "feet of the Shechinah"—its lower aspects, which represent the greatest contraction of divine light—lower themselves and descend to places of impurity and spiritual death. In this state, the forces of *kelipah* (spiritual concealment and

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opposition to holiness) latch onto them, drawing sustenance and vitality from them. However, **through faith**, a person uplifts the "feet of the Shechinah," freeing it from its exile among the *kelipot* and reconnecting it to its higher source in the upper Sefirot. This reunites it with the **"Pillars of Truth"** (*Semchei Keshot*) of *Zeir Anpin*—the "legs" upon which the divine attributes stand, representing the higher levels of divine **middot** (attributes). **END NOTE]**

סימן #מג

From the Baal Shem Tov. Explanation of the Talmud, Tractate [regarding] "There were students of Hillel..." until "A bird flying was burned by the breath of Yonatan ben Uziel." (Sukkah 28a) To understand this, also the explanation of the Talmud regarding Elisha, that a fly was not seen on his table.

מהבעש"ט. באור ש"ס פ' תלמידים היו להלל כו' עד עוף הפורח נשרף בהבל פיו דיונתן בן עוזיאל. להבין זה, גם באור ש"ס באלישע שלא נראה זבוב על שולחנו.

And the matter is, according to a person's thoughts, so are the worlds above him that stand over him. If his thoughts are in holiness and spirituality, so are the worlds above him; and if his thoughts are in impurity, so are the worlds.

והענין, לפי מחשבתו של אדם כד יושב עולמות למעלה ממנו העולמות עליו, אם מחשבתו בקדושה ורוחני כד הם העולמות שלמעלה הימנו, ואם מחשבתו בטמאה כד הם העולמות,

And according to the thought and the worlds, so do spiritual beings pass before him—whether pure birds or impure ones—and the same applies to other kinds of animals, whether impure or pure, that pass before him.

וקפי המחשבה והעולמות כד עוברים לפניו בנשמי עופות טהורים או טמאים, והוא הדין שאר מיני בעלי חיים טמאים או טהורים עוברים לפניו.

And there are three levels in this: first, pure; second, impure; third, an intermediate level, etc. And above this is the world of intellect, which nothing can grasp, etc.

י"ש בזה ג' בחינות, א' טהורים, ב' טמאים, ג' ממצע כו', ולמעלה מזה יש עולם השכל, שאין לשום דבר משיגו כו'

And this is what was said: "Every bird that flew was burned," etc. And this is [the explanation of] why no fly was seen on his table—they knew that he was a holy man and that his thoughts were holy, etc.

וזהו שאמרו כל עוף הפורח נשרף כו', וזהו שלא נראה זבוב על שולחנו ונדעה שהוא איש קדוש 'ומחשבתו קדוש וכו'

[NOTE: Sukkah 28a: "Hillel the Elder had eighty students. Thirty of them were worthy for the Divine Presence to rest upon them like Moses, our teacher; thirty were worthy for the sun to stand still for them like Joshua bin Nun; and twenty were of intermediate stature. The greatest of them all was Yonatan ben Uziel. The least among them was Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai.

It was said about Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai that he did not leave aside [any knowledge of] Scripture, Mishnah, Gemara, Halakhot, and Aggadot, the fine details of the Torah and the fine details of the Sages, the

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leniciencies and the stringencies, the laws of equal inferences (gezeirot shavot), etc. And if this was so for the least of them, then how much more so for the greatest of them! It was said about Yonatan ben Uziel that when he would sit and engage in Torah, any bird that flew above him would immediately be burned.”....

From the Baal Shem Tov:

The explanation of the Talmudic statement, "Hillel had eighty students..." until "any bird that flew above Yonatan ben Uziel would be burned by the breath of his mouth"—this requires understanding: What is the significance of Torah study that negates the existence of living creatures? Additionally, one must understand the explanation of the Talmudic statement regarding Elisha, that the Shunamite woman recognized that he was "holy" because no fly was seen on his table.

The explanation of the matter is that according to the content of a person's thoughts, so too are the upper worlds above him that are aligned with him. That is, a person's thoughts create a higher spiritual reality corresponding to the content of that thought. If his thoughts are in holiness and spirituality, then the worlds above him will also be of holiness and spirituality. And if his thoughts are in impurity, then the worlds created by those thoughts and standing above him will be worlds of impurity. And in accordance with the nature of these thoughts and the corresponding upper worlds, this also manifests in physicality: At that moment, pure or impure birds pass before him in the physical realm, corresponding to the purity or impurity of his thoughts. The same applies to other animals, whether pure or impure, that pass before him.

There is a more detailed classification of this concept into three levels:

1. Completely pure animals.
2. Completely impure animals.
3. An intermediate category between pure and impure, which includes animals that possess only some of the signs of purity.

All of this applies to thoughts that are connected to the physical world, such that they manifest in the physical birds that fly at that moment.

Above this level is the world of intellect—thoughts that belong to a wholly spiritual realm, which nothing in creation can grasp. Such a thought cannot be perceived at all in any physical reality, and from its perspective, there is no place for the existence of these creatures altogether. And this is the meaning of what was said: "Any bird that flew above him would be burned"—because due to the profound depth of his Torah study and thought, there was no room at all for the physical existence of living creatures. And this is also the meaning of what was said regarding Elisha, that no fly was seen on his table, and the Shunamite woman knew that he was a holy man and that his thoughts were holy, etc. **END NOTE]**

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Siman #מזד

The concept of Dveikut (attachment) to Him, may He be blessed, is through the letters of the Torah and prayer, that one should attach his thought and inner being to the inner spirituality within the letters,

ענין הדבקות בו יתברך הוא על ידי אותיות התורה והתפלה, שידיבק מחשבתו ופנימיותו, לפנימיות רוחניות ושבחו האותיות,

in the secret of "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth"—the attachment of spirit to spirit,

בסוד וְשִׁקְנֵי מְנֻשְׁקוֹת פִּיהוּ, דְּבִקוֹת רוּחָא בְּרוּחָא

and as I have heard: "If you lie between the lips..."

וְכִמוֹ שִׁשְׁמַעְתִּי אִם תִּשְׁכְּבוּן בֵּין שְׂפָתַיִם

[NOTE: Clinging to Hashem – Attaching to the Inner Spirituality Within the Letters of Torah and Prayer
 The concept of clinging to Him, may He be blessed, is through the letters of the Torah and prayer—that a person should attach his thoughts and inner essence to the inner spirituality within the letters, which is the Divine spark within the letters of Torah and prayer that he utters with his mouth. Through this, the learner connects and binds his speech to the "speech" of the Holy One, blessed be He, so to speak, in the secret of "*Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth*" (Shir HaShirim 1:2), a "*bonding of spirit with spirit*".
 The meaning of a "kiss" is the attachment of spirit to spirit, which is expressed in the connection and unification of the breath of the mouth (which contains the spirit and life-force of a person) between the lover and the beloved. In our matter, when a person unites the physical letters of his speech (which are the breath of his mouth) with the Divine spark within the inner essence of those letters— which is the "breath of His mouth," so to speak, of the Holy One, blessed be He—then there is a "kiss" and a "*bonding of spirit with spirit*" with Hashem.
 And as I have heard from our Rebbe in explanation of the verse "*If you lie among the lips*" (Tehillim 68:14)—it should be interpreted that "lips" refers to the lips of a person's mouth, and "*if you lie*" means that Hashem dwells between the lips of the one who speaks, uttering the letters of Torah and prayer with proper intent and devotion, as a form of a "kiss" from above, so to speak....

Zohar, Part II, 124b:

"*Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth...*" (Shir HaShirim 1:2) – The Assembly of Israel said: "*Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth...*" What is the meaning of "*kisses*"? It is the attachment of spirit to spirit (*It dabkuta de'Ruḥa be'Ruḥa*).

For this reason, a kiss is with the mouth, since the mouth is the outlet and source of the spirit. And therefore, kisses are given with the mouth, in affection, as a bonding of spirit with spirit, never separating from one another.

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Ohr Torah, Siman 69:

"It dabbkuta Ruḥa be'Ruḥa"—this means that the essence of a "kiss" is the attachment of spirit to spirit, expressed through the connection and unification of the breath of the mouth (which contains the spirit and life-force of a person) between the lover and the beloved. And in our context, when a person attaches the physical letters of his speech (which are the breath of his mouth) to the Divine spark within the inner essence of those letters—which is the "breath of His mouth," so to speak, of the Holy One, blessed be He—then there is a "kiss" and a "bonding of spirit with spirit" with Hashem. And as I have heard from our Rebbe in explanation of the verse *"If you lie among the lips"* (Tehillim 68:14), it should be interpreted that "lips" refers to the lips of a person's mouth, and *"if you lie"* means that Hashem dwells between the lips of the one who speaks, uttering the letters of Torah and prayer with proper intent and devotion, as a form of a "kiss" from above, so to speak. **END NOTE]**

Siman #מדא

When one prolongs [the pronunciation of] a word, it is *Dveikut* (attachment), as he does not wish to separate from that word.

**כְּשֶׁמְאַרְיָךְ בְּתַבָּהּ הוּא דְבִקוּת שְׂאֵינּוּ רוֹצֵה לְפָרֵד
 מֵאוֹתוֹ תַּבָּהּ**

[NOTE: When a person lengthens the pronunciation of a word from the words of Torah and prayer that he utters with his mouth, it is due to his attachment to the inner light within that word, to the extent that he does not want to separate from that word. For this reason, he prolongs its recitation again and again. **END NOTE]**

Siman #מהא

From the Baal Shem Tov. In every letter, all the letters are included, for the root of all the letters is the letter Aleph, and it is close to the unity of the Infinite One (Ein Sof).

**מֵהַבְּעֵשׂ"ט . בְּכֹל אוֹת נִכְלְלוּ כָּל הָאוֹתוֹת, כִּי
 שָׂרֵשׁ כָּל הָאוֹתוֹת הוּא אוֹת א' וְהוּא קָרוֹב לְאַחַדוֹת
 הָאֵין סוֹף,**

Afterward, they expanded, for the letter Bet is two Alephs, etc., until the letter Tav, which is four hundred Alephs.

**וְאַחַר כֵּן נִתְפָּשְׁטוּ, כִּי אוֹת ב' הוּא ב' אֲלֶפֶין כו' עַד
 אוֹת ת' הוּא ד' מֵאוֹת אֲלֶפֶין**

And the letter Tav is the last and farthest from the Maatzil (Emanator).

וְאוֹת ת' הוּא אַחֲרוֹן וְרַחוּק מִן הַמְּאַצִּיל

And through the Tzaddik, all the letters are brought closer to their root, to the letter Aleph, and then judgment is sweetened at its root, etc.

**וְעַל יְדֵי הַצַּדִּיק מִקְרָב כָּל הָאוֹתוֹת לְשָׂרֵשׁוֹ, לְאוֹת
 א', וְאֵז נִמְתַּק הַדִּין בְּשָׂרֵשׁוֹ כו'**

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[NOTE: In Every Letter, the Letter Aleph is Hidden—Close to the Infinite, and It Must Be Revealed

From the Baal Shem Tov:

In every letter of the Hebrew alphabet, all other letters are included, since all the letters are interconnected. Each letter carries a specific spiritual light, and the root of all letters is the letter Aleph (א), which is the highest spiritual light, closest to the unity of the Infinite (*Ein Sof*). Therefore, the numerical value of Aleph is one. From it, all other letters expanded, as they are merely multiplicative expressions of the Aleph—essentially further descents and distancing from the *oneness of the Infinite*. For instance, the letter Bet (ב) represents *two Alephs (Lev Alephin)*, meaning that the letter Bet consists of two Alephs, and so on. This pattern continues until the letter Tav (ת), which represents *four hundred Alephs*.

This means that each letter is merely an additional *covering and concealment* of the Aleph—the *oneness of the Infinite*, which remains hidden within it. The letter Tav, being the farthest from the unity of Aleph, is the last letter and the most distant from the *emanator of the Infinite Light*, the original source from which all spiritual lights emanate at every level. Thus, in truth, all letters remain inherently connected to the *oneness of the Infinite*, due to their root and source. However, this reality is concealed by “garments” (*levushim*). Through the efforts of the tzaddik, all letters are drawn closer and reconnected to their root—the letter Aleph.

This means that when a tzaddik studies Torah and prays, he unites the letters he utters (which serve as coverings and concealments) with the Infinite itself that is hidden within them. When this occurs, judgments are sweetened at their source.

That is, judgments (*dinim*) arise due to the concealment of Divine light, which is the role of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet—they progressively cover and obscure the light, as mentioned earlier. However, by connecting the letters to their higher root—the *oneness of the Infinite*—this root bursts forth and is revealed within them, causing the judgments to be sweetened, transforming them into a positive and desirable reality.

END NOTE]

Siman #מא

From the Baal Shem Tov. Explanation of the Talmud:(
 Sanhedrin 105a) "Israel was not exiled until they denied Hashem
 and David." And in the explanation of the Talmud: "There is no
 difference between this world and the days of Mashiach except
 the subjugation of the kingdoms alone."

For it is stated in the Talmud: "One who passes forty days
 without suffering has received his world." What is considered
 suffering? "If he extended his hand to take a gold dinar and
 instead took a lesser coin."

מהבעש"ט. באור ש"ס לא גלו ישראל עד שזכרו
 בה' ובדוד, ובאור ש"ס אין בין עולם הזה לימות
 המשיח אלא שעבוד מלכות בלבד

דאמרו בש"ס מי שעברו עליו מ' יום בלא יסורין
 קבל עולמו, היכי דמי יסורין הושיט ידו לארנקי
 לטול דינר זקב ונטל מטבע פחותה

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And the question arises: "But there is no suffering without sin, and would you think that this is considered atonement for sin?"

והקשה הא אין סורין בלא עון, וכי סלקא דעתך שזו נחשב לכפרת עון.

And he explained: "The righteous shall live by his faith." For one who believes in Divine Providence, knowing that all of a person's experiences, whether small or great, come from Him, blessed be He—

ובאר, כי צדיק באמונתו יחיה, כי המאמין בהשגחה פרטית של השם יתברך יודע שכל מאורעותיו של האדם הם ממנו יתברך, הן דבר קטן או גדול

everything is just, for Hashem is the Judge of the kingdom of heaven. And since it is due to his sin, he immediately repents and is filled with fear of Hashem, and he is immediately forgiven, since he believes, repents, and attaches his thoughts to Him, blessed be He.

הכל הוא בדין אדניי דינא דמלכות שמים, והוא לסבת חטאו, ומיד נתחרט ומלא חרדה ופחד ה', מיד מוחלין לו מאחר שהוא מאמין וחוזר בו ומדבק מתשבתו בו יתברך.

Therefore, even if one extends his hand to take a gold dinar but instead receives a silver dinar—since it is due to his sin, and he repents—it is considered atonement for sin.

לכה גם המושיט ידו לקח דינר זהב ועלה בידו דינר כסף, אחר שהוא לסבת חטאו ומתחרט, נחשב לכפרת עון.

And this concept is called David, for Ein Sof (the Infinite One) is called Ayin (Nothingness), which corresponds to the letter Dalet. From this, it extends to the letter Vav, leading to Dalet Bet, which represents complete humility—recognizing that everything comes from Divine Providence.

ובחינה זו נקרא דוד, כי אין סוף שנקרא אין, בחינת ד', ומזה נמשך שהיא ו', אל ד' ב' שהיא תכלית השפלות הכל בהשגחה פרטית ממנו יתברך.

However, when one does not believe that everything is from Divine Providence and instead claims, "My strength and the power of my hand have achieved this," he is called a denier of Hashem and of the aspect of David.

וכשאינו מאמין זה שהכל בהשגחה פרטית ממנו יתברך, רק אומר כחי ועצמי די עשה לי זה, נקרא כופר בהשם יתברך ובחינת דוד הנ"ל

For he denies the justice of the kingdom of Hashem. Instead, his perception of kingship becomes concealed and subjugated to the kelipah (impurity) that covers and hides Divine Providence from mankind.

כי כופר בדין מלכות אדניי, רק מלכות הוא מכסה ומשעבד אל הקלפה המכסה ומסתיר עניני השגחתו יתברך מבני אדם

And in the future, in the days of Mashiach, when "the spirit of impurity will be removed from the earth," Divine Providence will be revealed in complete detail.

ולעתיד בימות המשיח, אשר את רוח הטמאה יעביר מן הארץ, אז תגלה השגחתו יתברך בפירטי פרטות כו

With this, it is understood: "Israel was not exiled until they denied the Holy One, blessed be He, and the kingdom of the House of David." And this is the meaning of "Between this

ובזה יוכן לא גלו ישראל עד שפירו בהקדוש ברוך הוא ובמלכות בית דוד. וזהו שבין עולם הזה לימות המשיח שעבוד מלכות בלבד, והבן

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world and the days of Mashiach, only the subjugation of the kingdoms exists," and understand this well.

[NOTE: The Purpose of Suffering – A Person's Recognition of Divine Providence

From the Baal Shem Tov: The explanation of the Talmudic statement: *"Israel was not exiled until they denied Hashem and David"*, meaning they sinned with idolatry and denied the kingdom of the House of David. Also, the explanation of the Talmudic statement: *"There is no difference between this world and the days of Mashiach except for the subjugation to foreign kingdoms"*, meaning that the only distinction between the time of exile and the time of redemption is that in the latter, the burden of subjugation to foreign rulers will be removed from us. To preface, it is stated in the name of the Baal Shem Tov: "Whoever goes forty days without suffering has received his world [i.e., has merited the World to Come]." And what is considered suffering? "If a person reaches into his purse to take out a gold dinar and instead pulls out a lesser coin," requiring him to exert himself again to retrieve the gold dinar. (Arachin 16b): *"Until what extent do sufferings reach?"* [Meaning, what is the minimal measure of suffering?—Rashi]

Rabbi Elazar said: *"Any instance where a garment was woven for him to wear, yet it does not fit properly"* [that it is not suited to his size properly, causing him discomfort—Rashi]. They said even more than this: *"Even if one intended to mix his wine with hot water and it was mixed with cold, or if he intended to mix it with cold and it was mixed with hot."* Mar, son of Ravina, said: *"Even if his robe was turned inside out"* [that he did not put it on correctly and needs to remove and fix it—Rashi]. Rava, and some say Rav Chisda, and some say Rabbi Yitzchak, and some say it was taught in a Beraita: *"Even if one reached into his purse to take out three coins and only two came out"* [requiring him to exert effort again to retrieve the third—Rashi]. And why is this significant? [Meaning, what is the practical implication?—Rashi] For it was taught in the academy of Rabbi Yishmael: *"Whoever goes forty days without suffering has already received his reward in this world"* [i.e., he has merited the World to Come, but if any of these minor afflictions occur to him, it is considered suffering—Rashi].)

Our Rebbe raised a question: There is a principle that *"there is no suffering without sin"*, meaning that suffering comes as atonement for some wrongdoing. If so, how can such a minor inconvenience (*reaching into a purse and taking the wrong coin*) be considered suffering that atones for sin? It seems astonishing—could it enter one's mind that such a trivial matter. That This – Taking a Lesser Coin Instead of a More Valuable One (Which Is a Very Minor Punishment) – Is Considered an Atonement for Sin?!

And our Rebbe explained: *"The righteous shall live by his faith"* (Habakkuk 2:4) – meaning, one who believes in Divine Providence (*Hashgacha Pratit*) of Hashem, and knows that all of a person's experiences, whether small or great, come from Him, blessed be He. Everything is decreed by the Name Adonai, which represents *Din* (judgment), the *Heavenly Kingship*.

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The Name Adonai (from the root meaning *mastery and sovereignty*) represents *judgment* and corresponds to the attribute of *Malchut* (Kingship), through which Hashem governs His world. Since *Malchut* is the lowest of the Divine attributes and directly relates to creation, all occurrences in the world stem from this attribute. Thus, the believer understands that any unpleasant event that befalls him, no matter how minor, was decreed by Hashem as a result of his sin. Recognizing this, he immediately regrets it, is filled with *awe and fear of Hashem*, and *through this very belief and realization*, he is immediately granted atonement. Since he believes that the event happened due to his sin, he thereby acknowledges his wrongdoing, repents, and redirects his thoughts toward Hashem.

This is the meaning of "The righteous shall live by his faith": through this faith, he is spared from harsher suffering.

Thus, even someone who *reaches into his purse intending to take a gold dinar but instead pulls out a silver one*—although this is a very *minor* punishment—if, at that moment, he recognizes that this happened due to his sin, believing that even such a small event is guided by Divine Providence as a result of his transgressions, and he regrets it, then this itself is considered an atonement for sin. And this awareness—that all events are under Divine Providence—is spiritually represented by the name David (דוד).

The word **David** consists of a **Daled** (ד) at the beginning, a **Daled** (ד) at the end, and a **Vav** (ו) in between. This structure hints at the idea that even in the lowest levels of creation, including the smallest and most insignificant occurrences, the Divine force is actively directing everything:

- The **first Daled** (ד) represents the **Infinite Light** (*Ein Sof*), which is also called *Ayin* (Nothingness).
- The **Vav** (ו) in the middle signifies the *flow and transmission* of Divine influence from above downward.
- The **second Daled** (ד) represents the **ultimate lowliness**, the lowest level of reality.

In Kabbalistic terms, the two **Daleds** symbolize two opposite aspects:

1. **The Source of Influence**—the highest spiritual level.
2. **The Receiver of Influence**—the lowest, most distant reality.

When the **Vav** stands between them, representing the transmission from above to below, it signifies that even the lowest and most seemingly insignificant events in creation are directed by Divine Providence.

And when one does not believe that everything is guided by Divine Providence (Hashgacha Pratit) from Him, blessed be He, but rather says, "My strength and the might of my hand have made me this wealth" (Devarim 8:17)—such a person is considered a denier of Hashem and of the aspect of David, as mentioned above. For he denies the judgment of the Kingship of Adonai, failing to recognize that the event befalling him is decreed by the sovereignty of Heaven. Instead, his state is one of "subjugation to foreign rule" (*Shi'abud Malchuyot*),

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meaning that the Divine Kingship, which governs creation, is overlaid and subjugated to the *klipah* (spiritual concealment) that hides Hashem's providence from mankind. This concealment causes people to perceive events as if they occur independently, without Divine oversight (God forbid).

In the future, in the days of Mashiach, when *"He will remove the spirit of impurity from the land"* (Zechariah 13:2), the concealment of the *klipah*, which obscures Divine Providence, will be annulled. Then, Hashem's providence will be revealed in the finest details of creation, and this is what it means that *"subjugation to foreign rule will be abolished in the future."* With this, we can also understand the meaning of the Talmudic statement: *"Israel was not exiled until they denied the Holy One, blessed be He, and the kingship of the House of David."* For exile is a state of concealment of Divine Providence, which itself constitutes a denial of Hashem and the aspect of David—a denial of the judgment of the Kingship of Adonai (Adonai being represented by the letters ו-י-ה, as explained earlier). And this is also the meaning of the statement: *"There is no difference between this world and the days of Mashiach except for the subjugation to foreign rule."* For the essence of redemption is the removal of the concealment caused by the *klipah*—the obscuration of the recognition of Hashem's Kingship, which is Divine Providence. This is the true meaning of the abolition of subjugation to foreign rule, as explained above. Understand this well. **END NOTE]**

Siman #מז

Everything that a person grasps regarding divinity is an aspect of *Malchut* (kingship),

כל מה שאדם משיג בענין אלקות הוא בתינת מלכות,

but above this, it is impossible to grasp.

אבל למעלה מזה אי אפשר להשיג

[NOTE: Everything that a person grasps and comprehends with his intellect regarding Divinity pertains only to the aspect of *Malchut*, the lowest of the *Sefirot*—meaning, the Divine light that descends to be clothed within creation and to act within it. However, beyond this level, it is impossible to comprehend. That is, intellectual comprehension of Divinity (through contemplating the greatness of Hashem) is only possible concerning the contracted Divine illumination, which is limited according to the framework of creation and within the boundaries of human understanding.

But regarding the Divine light that is exalted and transcends the confines of creation, there is no place at all for inquiry and contemplation...For this level is not within the realm of worlds at all, since "all the upper and lower worlds are considered as absolute nothingness before Him." **END NOTE]**

Siman #מז

The Tosafot asked: Why did the Holy One, blessed be He, need to force the mountain upon Israel? After all, they had already said on their own, "We will do, and we will hear."

הקשו התוספות למה הוצרך הקדוש ברוך הוא לקפות הקר על ישראל, הא אמרו מעצמן נעשה ונשמע.

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And the Baal Shem Tov explained: The Holy One, blessed be He, forced the mountain upon Israel like a canopy to teach that even if one does not desire Torah and the service of Hashem, nevertheless, he is not free to neglect it.

ויפרש הבעל שם טוב, לְכֹהֵן כָּפָה הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל הָרַב כְּגִינִית, לְלַמֵּד שְׂגָם שְׂאִינֹ חוֹשֶׁק
'לְתוֹרָה וְעִבּוּדָתָהּ,

Rather, he must fulfill it even against his will and should imagine himself as one who is being compelled to do it against his will.

מִכֵּל מְקוֹם אֵינֹ כֵּן חוֹרִין לְבָטֹל, רַק יַעֲשֶׂה בְּעַל
כְּרָחוּ וְיִדְמָה כְּמִי שְׂכּוֹפִין אוֹתוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ בְּעַל כְּרָחוּ

[NOTE: Even When Desire is Absent – One Must Engage in Divine Service Through Self-Coercion:

The Tosafot raise a question on the Talmudic statement that, at the giving of the Torah to Israel, "The Holy One, blessed be He, held the mountain over them like a barrel and said: 'If you accept the Torah, good; but if not, there will be your burial'" (Shabbat 88a).

Why was it necessary for Hashem to coerce Israel into accepting the Torah against their will, when they had already declared of their own accord "*Na'aseh ve'nishma*" (*We will do, and we will hear*)" and willingly accepted the Torah? And the Baal Shem Tov explained:

Indeed, this act of coercion was not needed at that moment. Rather, Hashem forced the Torah upon Israel to teach a lesson for all generations—that even when a person finds himself in a state where he lacks desire for Torah and Divine service, nevertheless, "*he is not free to exempt himself*" from Torah study and mitzvot (by thinking that there is no value in fulfilling Torah without enthusiasm and through coercion). Rather, even in such a state, one must perform it against his will, imagining himself as one who is being forced to do so unwillingly—and continue engaging in Torah and mitzvot regardless of inner reluctance....

In *Sefer HaMa'amarim Melukat* (Adar-Sivan, p. 358, footnote 32), a question is raised regarding this concept:

"Seemingly, their declaration of 'Na'aseh ve'nishma' (We will do, and we will hear) was a commitment for all times. How could it then be considered that if later on (after this commitment) one 'does not desire' Torah, he would be free to exempt himself?"

And the answer is given:

"One could explain this by saying that the commitment of 'Na'aseh ve'nishma,' since it originates from man—who is limited—means that at times he may not be able to overcome the state of 'not desiring Torah.' Consequently, he would be considered 'free to exempt himself,' as the principle states: '*One who is coerced is exempt*' (*Bava Kamma 28b*). However, as explained further in the main text, by the fact that Hashem forced the mountain over them like a barrel, He granted every Jew the power to act even against his will, even when he does not desire it."

Additionally, in the main body of the discourse, it is explained: "During the time of exile, especially in the generation of Ikveta d'Meshicha (the footsteps of Mashiach), the concealments and obfuscations are exceedingly great. There are forms of concealment so intense that a person, by his own efforts (even with his

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voluntary acceptance of the yoke of Torah and mitzvot), due to his human limitations, cannot overcome them. However, the reason the Jewish people are able to overcome even these concealments is that their acceptance of the yoke of Torah is not based on their own existence and abilities, but rather on Elokus (G-dliness)—because Hashem chose them to be His servants. And in relation to Elokus, there are no limitations.” **END NOTE]**

מחן #סימן

From the Baal Shem Tov. Explanation of the Talmud:
 "Whoever dwells in the Land of Israel is like one who has a God,
 and whoever dwells outside the Land is like one who has no
 God."

מהבעש"ט. באור ש"ס כל הדר בארץ ישראל
 דומה כמי שיש לו אלוהים וכל הדר בחוץ לארץ
 דומה כמי שאין לו אלוהים

And the textual nuances were questioned against each other, as
 well as the phrase "And the righteous will be established in the
 land," etc.

והוקשו הדיוקים אהדדי, וגם רציבא בארעא כו

And he explained this based on the Mishnah: "What is the
 difference between the students of Avraham Avinu and the
 students of Bilaam the wicked?"

ובאר זה על פי מה שבאר משנה מה בין תלמידי
 אברהם אבינו לתלמידי בלעם הרשע כו

And here too, it is the same: One who is from the students of
 Avraham Avinu and is diligent in Torah and the service of
 Hashem all day is called one who dwells in the Land of Israel.

והכא נמי כד, מי שהוא מתלמידי אברהם אבינו
 ומתמיד בתורה ובעבודת ה' כל היום ונקרא דר
 בארץ ישראל

But if at one time he encounters neglect of Torah or prayer, then
 at that moment, he is dwelling outside the Land, and it is as if
 he has no God. And the opposite is also true.

ופעם אחת נודמן לו בטול תורה או תפלה שאז דר
 בחוץ לארץ, דומה לו כמי שאין לו אלוהים, ובהפך
 כו

[NOTE: The explanation of the Talmudic statement:

"Anyone who dwells in the Land of Israel is like one who has a G-d, and anyone who dwells outside the Land is like one who has no G-d" (Ketubot 110b).

The implications of the two clauses appear to contradict each other. The phrase *"is like one who has a G-d"* and *"is like one who has no G-d"* suggests that this is only an appearance, not the actual reality. If so, the first part (*"Anyone who dwells in the Land of Israel is like one who has a G-d"*) implies that, in truth, **he does not have a G-d**—which would mean that someone dwelling outside the Land certainly does not have a G-d. However, the second part (*"Anyone who dwells outside the Land is like one who has no G-d"*) implies that, in truth, **he does have a G-d**—which would mean that one who dwells in the Land of Israel certainly has a G-d.

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Thus, the implications contradict each other. Moreover, beyond this contradiction, the meaning itself is perplexing. If one who dwells in the Land of Israel is on a **higher** spiritual level, how could it be implied that *he does not have a G-d?* And if one who dwells outside the Land is on a **lower** level, how could it imply that *he does have a G-d?* This is reminiscent of the Talmudic phrase: "*The native-born sits on the ground while the convert ascends to the heavens*" (Sanhedrin 106a)—meaning, how could it be that the one in the **higher state** (dwelling in the Land of Israel) lacks a connection to Hashem, while the one in the **lower state** (outside the Land) has a connection to Hashem?!

The Baal Shem Tov's Explanation

Our Rebbe explained this in accordance with the **Mishnah** (Pirkei Avot 5:19): "Whoever possesses these three traits is among the disciples of Avraham Avinu, and whoever possesses the opposite three traits is among the disciples of Balaam the wicked. A good eye, a humble spirit, and a modest soul—these are the traits of the disciples of Avraham Avinu. A bad eye, a haughty spirit, and a greedy soul—these are the traits of the disciples of Balaam the wicked." The Mishnah then asks: "What is the difference between the disciples of Avraham Avinu and the disciples of Balaam the wicked?" It answers: "The disciples of Avraham enjoy reward in this world and inherit the World to Come, while the disciples of Balaam inherit Gehinnom and descend into the pit of destruction." At first glance, this question seems unnecessary. Once the Mishnah already described the virtues of Avraham's disciples and the corruption of Balaam's disciples, what is the purpose of asking "What is the difference between them?" and answering that one group receives reward while the other receives punishment?

The Deeper Explanation

The Mishnah is teaching a deeper principle:

Even when a disciple of Avraham Avinu occasionally stumbles into the bad traits listed under Balaam's disciples, and likewise, even when a disciple of Balaam exhibits the good traits of Avraham's disciples, nonetheless:

- The disciples of Avraham remain fundamentally good. If they falter in a bad trait, they immediately recognize that it does not belong to them and are naturally inclined to repentance.
- The disciples of Balaam, however, are fundamentally rooted in bad traits. Their evil characteristics do not disturb them; they do not feel out of place and therefore do not awaken to repentance, even if they occasionally perform a good act.

Applying This to the Talmudic Statement

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The second part of the Talmudic statement—*"one who dwells outside the Land is like one who has no G-d"*—refers to someone who is essentially a disciple of Avraham Avinu. He is devoted to Torah and Divine service and is fundamentally rooted in holiness, so he is called "one who dwells in the Land of Israel" in his essence. However, if he stumbles even once—if he experiences a lapse in Torah study or prayer, then in that moment, it is as if he is "dwelling outside the Land". At that moment, he feels and recognizes that something is lacking—he perceives this lapse as "it is as if he has no G-d." However, this very awareness proves that, in truth, he still has a G-d—because he immediately senses that his momentary failure is not his true essence. Thus, it only appears ("domeh") as if he has no G-d, but in reality, he does. Conversely, the first part of the Talmudic statement—*"one who dwells in the Land of Israel is like one who has a G-d"*—refers to someone who is essentially a disciple of Balaam, rooted in self-serving traits. However, if such a person happens to do a good deed, then for a moment, it is as if he is "dwelling in the Land of Israel." *Yet, in that moment, he deceives himself into believing that everything is fine—he assumes he is completely righteous and does not feel any need for spiritual growth or repentance. Thus, he is "like one who has a G-d", but in truth, his inner essence remains disconnected from holiness—and so, in reality, "he does not have a G-d."* **END NOTE]**

מזמ # Siman

Everything that your hand finds to do—do it with your strength.

כָּל מַה שֶׁתִּמְצָא יָדְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּכֹחַךָ עֲשֵׂה

Meaning: to elevate people of the world of Action to the realm of Thought, which is called the letter Yud (י"ד), the "hand" of His.

פְּרוּשׁ לְהַעֲלוֹת אֲנָשֵׁי עֲשֵׂיָה אֶל הַמַּחְשְׁבָה שֶׁנִּקְרָאת יו"ד, יד"ו

[NOTE: Elevating People of Action to the Level of Thought

It is written: *"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might"* (Kohelet 9:10). *The explanation of "do it with your might"* is that one must connect the level of "Asiyah" (action) with the level of "Koach" (potential/strength)—meaning, to elevate and unite those who operate within the lowest world of Asiyah (action) to the level of "Koach," which represents thought—the ultimate spirituality.

This level is symbolized by the letter Yud (י), as it is composed of the letters "Yad" (hand) and "Vav", hinting at the phrase *"whatever your hand finds."*

Summary

In this brief yet profound teaching, the Baal Shem Tov interprets the verse **"כָּל מַה שֶׁתִּמְצָא יָדְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּכֹחַךָ עֲשֵׂה"** ("Whatever your hand finds to do—do with all your strength") as referring not just to physical action but to spiritual transformation. Specifically, it is a call to elevate the realm of *Asiyah* (Action)—the material world and those who operate within it—upward into the realm of *Machshavah* (Thought), which corresponds to the divine letter Yud, symbolic of divine wisdom and will. The "hand" (Yad) alludes to the Yud, and thus the mission is to

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lift mundane physicality into a consciousness of G-d's thought and intention. In doing so, the lower world is united with the divine source, revealing how all creation—even the simplest action—can become a vessel for the Infinite.

Practical Takeaway

Don't just act—*elevate your actions*. Every opportunity for mitzvah or kindness in the material world is a spark waiting to be uplifted. Bring thoughtfulness, intention, and awareness of the Divine into every task, no matter how mundane. That is the secret of turning “your hand” into “His Yad”—channeling the letter Yud, the divine point of wisdom, into this world.

Chassidic Story

The Baal Shem Tov once sent a disciple to observe a simple Jew in a far-off village who ran a small tavern. This Jew barely knew how to daven properly, yet every day before opening his shop, he would say aloud: “Master of the world! I am a simple man. I don't know how to pray well or learn Torah like the great scholars. But I do know how to pour a drink, to greet a guest with warmth, and to speak honestly. So please, let my tavern be Your house today, and let my hands be Yours.”

When the disciple returned and told the Baal Shem Tov what he had seen and heard, the Baal Shem Tov wept. “This man,” he said, “has elevated the world of Action to Thought. His pouring of wine is as holy as a tzaddik's kavanos in prayer. His tavern is a sanctuary.”

Source: *Sippurei Tzaddikim*, Toldos Baal Shem Tov (ed. Yitzchak Alfasi), vol. 1, p. 212

END NOTE]