

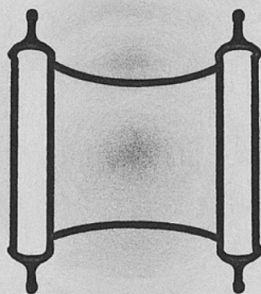
בס"ד

Alter Rebbe

Torah Ohr

Parshas Chaya Sarah

וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לְשׁוֹחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה כּו



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Introduction

In this Maamer, the Alter Rebbe explores the deep meaning of the verse “ויצא יצחק לשוח בשדה” — “And Yitzchak went out to converse in the field.” What seems like a simple description of prayer in the field becomes, under his explanation, a grand metaphor for the descent of Torah into the “field” — the realm of concealment, struggle, and refinement — and for the soul’s task of transforming darkness into light through awe of Hashem and devoted action. The Maamer contrasts Mishnah and Beraisa, intellect and deed, inner joy and simple obedience, revealing that the truest service lies not in understanding or inspiration, but in the act itself — in serving Hashem beyond reason, with pure fear and acceptance.

“And Yitzchak went out to converse in the field...” To

explain this: there is a distinction between the Mishnah and the Beraisa. The Beraisa explains the Mishnah, for the Mishnah is the general principle, while the Beraisa is the detailed expression of that principle—and “there is nothing included in the general except what is contained in the particular.”

At first glance, it would seem that the Beraisa is on a lower level than the Mishnah, since it extends downward to greater detail. But in truth, the Beraisa is higher, for “the end of action is first in thought.”

For the Torah descended even into matters that appear entirely mundane—even falsehood—such as “this one says: I found it...” (Bava Metzia 2a).

Although it seems to be a great descent, in truth it is exalted—for “the end of action is first in thought.”

This is like the example of a tube (shfoferes): the first thing inserted is the last to emerge. So too man—though he is the last of all creations, he is in fact the highest, for everything was created for his sake.

Therefore the entire world is found within man, to indicate that everything was created for him—for “this is the whole of man.”

This is also the meaning of our Sages’ saying, “Better one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world than all the life of the World to Come.”

ויצא יצחק לשוח בשדה כו. לְבָאָר זֶה, דְּהֵנָּה יֵשׁ מְשֻׁנָּה וּבְרִייתָא. וּבְרִייתָא פִּירוּשׁ מְשֻׁנָּה, כִּי הַמְשֻׁנָּה הִיא הַכָּלָל, וּבְרִייתָא הִיא הַפֶּרֶט שֶׁל הַמְשֻׁנָּה, וְאִין בְּכָלֵל אֵלָּא מֵה שֶׁבַּפֶּרֶט.

וּלְכַאוּרָה, הַבְּרִייתָא הִיא לְמַטָּה מִן הַמְשֻׁנָּה, שֶׁנִּשְׁתַּלְשְׁלָה יוֹתֵר לְמַטָּה, אֲבָל הָאֻמָּת הִיא, שֶׁהַבְּרִייתָא גְבוּהָהּ יוֹתֵר, דְּסוּף מַעֲשֵׂה בְּמַחֲשָׁבָה תַּחֲלָה.

דְּהֵנָּה, הַתּוֹרָה נִשְׁתַּלְשְׁלָה לְמַטָּה אֲפִלּוּ בְּדָבָר שָׁמֶר, 'כְּגוֹן' זֶה אוֹמֵר אֲנִי מִצְאָתִיהָ כו

וְלִפִּי הַנִּרְאָה, הִיא יְרִידָה לְמַטָּה מְאֹד, וּמִכָּל מְקוֹם הִיא גְבוּהָהּ, כִּי סוּף מַעֲשֵׂה בְּמַחֲשָׁבָה תַּחֲלָה.

וּכְמוֹ הַמְשָׁל שֶׁבִּשְׂפוּפֶרֶת, הַנִּכְנָס רֵאשׁוֹן יוֹצֵא אַחֲרוֹן. וְכֵן הָאָדָם, שֶׁהוּא סוּף כָּל הַנִּבְרָאִים, וְהוּא בְּמַעֲלָה עַל כָּלֵם, וְהַכָּל נִבְרָא בְּעִבּוּרוֹ.

וְלִכֵּן נִמְצָא הָעוֹלָם כֻּלּוֹ בְּאָדָם אֶחָד, לְהוֹרוֹת שֶׁהַכָּל נִבְרָא בְּעִבּוּרוֹ, כִּי "זֶה כָּל הָאָדָם"

זֶהוּ מֵאִמֶּר חֲזוֹ"ל "כִּפֹּה שְׂעָה אַחַת שֶׁל תְּשׁוּבָה וּמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה מְכַל חַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא."

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For in the World to Come, “the righteous sit and enjoy the radiance of the Shechinah”—which is only the backside (achorayim), as it is written, “And you shall see My back...” (Shemos 33:23).

דהנה, בעולם הבא, “צדיקים יושבים ונהנים מזיו השכינה” — והוא רק בחינת אחוריים, כמו (שנאמר “וראית את אחורי” (שמות ל”ג, כ”ג).

The pleasure a person experiences from his service is also of this aspect of the backside; the face—the innermost level—cannot be attained, for “no man shall see Me and live.”

והתענוג שמשיג האדם בעבודתו, הוא גם בן בחינת אחוריים, ופני אינו באפשר להשיג, כי “לא יראני האדם וחי”

Likewise, the revelation in Gan Eden is only a radiance, an illumination—therefore, “one hour of action” in this world, performed without spiritual pleasure or intellectual grasp, is superior to all the life of the World to Come.

ועל דרך זה גם הגלוי בגן עדן, הוא רק בחינת זיו והארה לבד, ולכן “יפה שעה אחת של מעשה עצמו,” בלי תענוג ובלי שכל, מכל חיי העולם הבא, דסוף מעשה במחשבה תחלה.

This is also the meaning of the relationship between the Mishnah and the Beraisa: the Mishnah is the general principle (for example, “the four fringes of the tzitzis are indispensable”), and likewise, “a sukkah that is higher than [twenty cubits is invalid]...”

וזהו גם בן ענין משנה וברייתא — שהמשנה היא הכלל, כמו “ארבע ציצית מעכבות,” וכן “סכה” “שהיא גבוהה” כו

One can find a reason for this, similar to the idea of *tekheiles*, which resembles the sea, etc.; and concerning the *sukkah*, there is a reason—“so that your generations shall know...”—that up to twenty cubits one still knows, etc.

ויש למצוא טעם לזה, כענין תכלת דומה לים כו', וגבי סכה יש טעם “למען ידעו דורותיכם עד עשרים אמה” כו

But the *Beraisa* is the detailed explanation of the *Mishnah* in every nuance and particular—such as the cases of *Sukkas Ganbach* and *Rakavash*—where there is no revealed reason at all.

אבל הברייתא היא פרט לבאר המשנה בכל דקדוקים ופרטים, כמו סכת גנב”ד ורקב”ש, שאין טעם לדבר

And this is visibly above reason and intellect. This is the meaning of “there is nothing in the general except what is in the particular”—that there is nothing in the *Mishnah* beyond what is found in the *Beraisa*.

ונראה בחוש שהוא למעלה מן השכל והטעם, וזהו “אין בכלל אלא מה שבפרט” — שאין במשנה הכלל יותר מפרט הברייתא

That which has not had its reason revealed is therefore on a higher level, for the reasons of the commandments were not disclosed; in the future, with G-d’s help, they will be revealed.

ומה שלא נתגלה טעמה, הוא יותר גבוה, כי טעמי המצוות לא נתגלו, ולעתיד, אם יהיה רצון ה', יתגלו

This is the meaning of what is said, that Rabbi Shimon expounded the reasons of the verses—that is, he revealed that the *taam* (reason) stated in the verse is not the *essence* of the

וזהו רבי שמעון דריש טעמי דקראי, שדרש שמה שנאמר בפסוק טעם של דבר, לא זהו העקר, רק יש טעם בזה גבוה יותר, למעלה מן הטעם

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matter, but that within it lies a higher, hidden reason beyond comprehension.

Thus, a mitzvah whose reason we cannot grasp is actually higher; and that which one comprehends and delights in is but the aspect of *achorayim* (the outer dimension).

And not as people think—that the main thing is the heart’s feeling of delight and fiery enthusiasm. This is not the truth; the essence is the *action* itself, without delight. The heart is only a *wing* to assist the deed.

The *Mishnah* is therefore called “city,” and the *Beraisa* is “field,” from the word *bar*—outside the city.

At first glance, the city seems primary, since that is where people dwell—but consider: who sustains them? The field outside the city, from which comes the grain.

So too, the *Beraisa* gives life to the *Mishnah*, explaining the law more specifically—how to fulfill it in detail—for “the Tannaim who teach from the Mishnah [alone] destroy the world.”

This is the meaning of “And Yitzchak went out to converse (*lasuach*) in the field.” *Lasuach* is an expression of speech and conversation, and also related to *swimming downward* (*leshocheh*), from the verse “and the pride of man shall be bowed down” (Yeshayahu 25).

“In the field” (*basadeh*)—this refers to *bar*, outside the city—and “toward evening” (*lifnos erev*), means turning the darkness.

For the Torah descended into darkness, as it is written, “He has set me in darkness”—this refers to the Babylonian Talmud, which descended so low that it deals even with arguments of falsehood.

And why is it so?—in order to clear away the darkness, so that “at evening time there shall be light.”

For one who wishes to clear away something must enter into it in order to remove it—but not remain within it.

נמצא, שבמצוה שאין משיג בה טעם, היא יותר גבוהה, ומה שמשיג טעם ותענוג, הוא רק בחינת אחרים.

ולא כמו שחושבים העולם, שהעקר הוא הלב המשיג תענוג ועובד בהתלהבות—ואינו כן האמת. רק העקר הוא המעשה בלי תענוג, והלב אינו אלא סיוע, בחינת גדפין.

והנה, משנה נקראת עיר, ובריייתא בחינת שדה, לשון “בר”—חוץ לעיר.

ולכאורה, העיר היא העקר, שדברים בה בני אדם. אבל ראה, מי הוא המחיה אותם? השדה שחוץ לעיר, שמביאים משם את התבואה.

כך היא הבריייתא מחיה המשנה, ומבארת ההלכה יותר בפירוט, איך לעשותה, כי “התנאים המשנים מן המשנה [בלי פירוש] מבילים את העולם.”

וזהו “ויצא יצחק לשוית בשדה”—“לשוית” הוא לשון דבור ושיחה, ולשוין שחייה למטה מלשוין “ושח רום אנשים,” וכן “פאשר יפרש השוחה לשחות” ((ישעיהו כ”ה).

בשדה” הוא לשון “בר,” חוץ לעיר, ו“לפנות” ערב—לפנות הערב והחשך.

דהנה, התורה נשתלשלה בחשך, כמאמר “במחשכים הושיבני”—זה תלמוד בבלי, שנשתלשל למטה אפלו בטענות שקר.

ולמה הוא כך? כדי לפנות החשך, ויהי אור, כמאמר “לעת ערב יהיה אור.”

כי מי שרוצה לפנות דבר, צריך לבוא בתוכו כדי לפנותו, אבל לא להשאיר בתוכו.

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So too, the Torah's descent and its enclothment in the darkness of false arguments is in order to remove that darkness—to transform darkness into light.

וכן, מה שנשתלשלה התורה ונתלבשה בחשך של טענות שקר, הוא כדי לפנות החשך—לאפכא חשוכא לנהורא.

Likewise, the occupation in Torah is to dispel the darkness of questions that conceal the understanding of the true law—to uncover the Divine Will, as it is written, “And the wise shall shine...” (Daniel 12:3).

וכן, העסק בתורה הוא לדחות החשך והקשיות המסתירים על השכלת הדין האמת לאמתו, ולמצא האמת—גלוי רצון עליון ותברר, כמו שנאמר (“והמשפילים יזהירו” (דניאל י"ב:ג).

And this is the meaning of “And Yitzchak went out to converse.” For in order to clear away the evening and the darkness and rectify it, this is accomplished through *Yitzchak*—the attribute of awe and fear of G-d, as it is said, “If there is no fear, there is no wisdom” (Avos 3:17).

וזהו "ויצא יצחק לשוית", כי כדי לפנות הערב והחשך ולתקנו, הוא על-ידי יצחק שהוא בחינת פחד ויראת ה', וכמאמר "אם אין יראה אין חכמה" (עין 'בזהר בראשית דף כ"א עמוד א).

This is also the meaning of the saying, “One who says: ‘I have only Torah’—even Torah he does not have,” for such a person remains in darkness.

וזהו גם כן מה שאמר: "האומר אין לי אלא תורה—אפלו תורה אין לו", שנשאר בחשך.

Yet in truth, it is written: “He made darkness His hiding place” (Tehillim 18:12)—even though it is darkness, still it is His concealment, His secret dwelling.

אבל באמת כתוב: "ישת חשך סתרו" (תהלים י"ח:י"ב)—אף שהוא חשך, מכל מקום הוא סתרו, מעונו הנסתר.

This is the meaning of “to turn the evening and the darkness”—that “at evening time there shall be light” (Zechariah 14:7), referring to the clarification of the halachah (*libun halakhta*), the illumination of law from the concealment.

וזהו "לפנות הערב והחשך"—"ולעת ערב יהיה אור" (זכריה י"ד:ז), הינו ליבון הלכתא, הארת הדין מן הסתר.

And this, too, is the explanation of “Bless the Lord in the Torah”—that through Torah one reveals this hidden light from within the darkness.

וגם זה פירוש "ברכו בתורה"—שעל-ידי התורה נגלה אור הנעלם מתוך החשך.

(And see what is explained on the verses *Kol Dodi* and *Shishim Heimah Malkos* for further elaboration.)

ועין מה שנתבאר על פסוק "קול דודי" ועל פסוק ("ששים המה מלכות" להבהיר יותר הענין).

[NOTE Summary

The Alter Rebbe explains that the Mishnah represents the general principles of Torah, while the Beraisa expounds upon them with detailed laws and applications. Although at first glance these details seem lower, they are in fact higher, for “the end of action is first in thought.” The Torah's descent into the most material, even false-seeming matters — such as disputes about ownership or uncleanness — is not a degradation but a revelation of its ultimate purpose: to sanctify the physical and illuminate darkness.

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He teaches that a mitzvah whose reason is not understood stands on a higher level than one whose meaning is revealed, since the hidden essence of a commandment lies beyond intellect. Thus, the truest connection to Hashem occurs not through pleasure, understanding, or emotional fervor, but through the simplicity of *maaseh* — pure deed. The heart's feeling is only a wing (*gadfin*) that aids the ascent of the action, not its essence.

The *Mishnah* is likened to a “city” — organized and comprehensible — while the *Beraisa* is a “field,” unbounded and teeming with the raw vitality of divine will. The field provides sustenance to the city, just as the *Beraisa* gives life and specificity to the *Mishnah*. Hence, “Yitzchak went out to converse in the field” — symbolizing the descent of holiness into the field of worldly concealment. Torah must enter the “evening” and “darkness” — the realm of questions, contradictions, and human imperfection — not to remain there, but to purify and illuminate it.

Yitzchak, representing awe and restraint (*yirah*), is the power that accomplishes this purification. Only through *pachad Yitzchak*, the trembling awareness of Hashem's greatness, can one reveal the hidden light within darkness. This is the meaning of “לפנות ערב והחשך” — “to turn the evening and the darkness,” transforming confusion into clarity. Even “He made darkness His concealment” — that darkness itself becomes His secret dwelling. The ultimate revelation comes through the *libun halakhta* — the clarification of halachah — the light that emerges precisely from within the obscurity of intellectual struggle.

Practical Takeaway

True service of Hashem is not measured by inspiration or emotional delight but by steadfast, awe-filled action. The greatest holiness is found in doing a mitzvah precisely when one does not understand its reason, or when enthusiasm is absent. The Alter Rebbe's message is that holiness resides in obedience beyond comprehension — that even in the concealment of darkness, Hashem is hidden there, waiting to be revealed through our steady performance of Torah and mitzvos. In this way, every act of faith, every halachic clarification, and every moment of perseverance becomes a ray of light that turns the evening into day.

Chassidic Story

Once, during a cold winter night in Liadi, the Alter Rebbe noticed a faint light flickering from a small window behind the shul. Curious, he entered and found an old tailor bent over his workbench, mending torn garments by candlelight. “Why are you working so late?” the Rebbe asked. The man replied, “Rebbe, as long as the candle burns, there is time to mend.” The Alter Rebbe stood still, deeply moved, and later repeated the words in his teachings: “*As long as the candle burns, there is still time to repair.*” He explained to his students that the soul is the candle of Hashem, and the world — though dark and cold — is the field where one must repair and refine through deed. The tailor had revealed the essence of Yitzchak's *sicha basadeh* — to enter the darkness not to despair in it, but to turn it into light.

END NOTE]