

Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl

Me'or Einayim

Parshas Shlach

Introduction

This discourse by Rabbi Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl—a foundational figure in early Ukrainian Chassidism and the author of *Me'or Einayim*—delves into the profound relationship between divine knowledge, human free will, and the sacred mission of spiritual refinement. Living in the 18th century and a disciple of the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezeritch, Rabbi Menachem Nachum taught that the purpose of life is not to avoid the world's brokenness but to uplift it—to reveal the divine sparks embedded even in the darkest corners of creation. This teaching centers on *Shevirat HaKeilim* (the shattering of the vessels) and explains how the human being's capacity for *daas* (holy awareness) enables him to restore and elevate fallen spiritual elements. Framed around the story of the spies in Parshat Shelach, it offers a deep lens into the inner spiritual geography of Eretz Yisrael and the challenge of reconciling divine knowledge with true free will.

In Tractate Sotah, Rabbi Yitzchak said: This matter is a tradition in our hands from our ancestors: the spies—after their deeds they are named, etc. "Setur"—because he contradicted the acts of the Holy One, blessed be He. "Michal"—because he made himself (or his enemy) of the Holy One, blessed be He, so to speak. Rabbi Yohanan said: We too will say, "N'tavi"—because he concealed (החביא) the words of the Holy One, blessed be He; and "Pasi"—because he stepped over the measures of the Holy One, blessed be He.

במסכת סוטה אמר רבי יצחק: דבר זה מסורת בידינו מאבותינו, מרגלים על שם מעשיהם נקראים וכו'.
סתור שסתר מעשיו של הקב"ה. מיכאל שעשה שונאו של הקב"ה כבכול. אמר רבי יוחנן, אף אנחנו נאמר נתבי שהחביא דבריו של הקב"ה, ופסי שפסע על מדותיו של הקב"ה.

To understand this, we will preface with what Rashi explained on "שלח-לך": "According to your opinion—I am not commanding you; if you wish, you may send."

להבין זה נקדים מה שפירש רש"י שלח לך לדעתך. אני איני מצווה לך, אתה אם תרצה שלח.

For it is known what the Zohar explains—that the entire episode of the spies is interpreted in the manner of spiritual concepts, referring to the upper land. See there.

דנוע מה שפירש בזהר כל הפרשה של מרגלים בדרך המושכלות בחינת ארץ העליונה יעו"ש.

For in truth, the simple meaning and the inner meaning follow one path. For it is known that the Land of Israel is the substance and vessel of the World to Come.

פי באמת הפשט והפנימיות הם בדרך אחת, פי ידוע, שארץ ישראל הוא החומר והכלי של עולם הבא.

Through it, there is a smoother path to enter the World to Come, more than for one who serves outside the Land of Israel.

שעל ידה הוא דרך מובא לעולם הבא היותר נקל מן העובד בחוץ לארץ.

As our Sages said: "Anyone who dwells in the Land of Israel is like one who has a God; and one who dwells outside the Land... etc."

כמאמרם ז"ל: כל הדר בארץ ישראל דומה כמי שיש לו אלוהים, וכל הדר בחוץ לארץ וכו'.

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For the Israelites who are outside the Land are like idol worshippers in purity.	כי ישראל שבחוץ לארץ עובדי עבודה זרה בטְהֵרָה הם,
All their divine influence must descend to them through the ministering angel of that country.	כָּל הַשְּׁפָעָתָם צָרִיף לִירֵד אֲצֵלָם עַל יְדֵי הַשָּׂר שֶׁל אוֹתָהּ מְדִינָה
For even though they seek from the Blessed Creator, nevertheless, once He agrees to bestow that influence—	כִּי אִף שֶׁהֵם מְבַקְשִׁים מִהַבּוֹרָא בְרוּךְ הוּא, מְכַל מְקוֹם, אַחֵר שִׁסְפִּים הוּא יִתְבַּרֵּךְ לְהַשְׁפִּיעַ הַשְּׁפָעָה הַהִיא
—it passes through the minister of the land in which they dwell.	עוֹבֵרֶת דְּרָף הַשָּׂר שֶׁהֵם שׁוֹכְנִים בְּמְדִינָתוֹ
And this is considered idol worship, so to speak—even though it is in purity. Understand this, as explained in the writings of the Arizal.	וְזֶהוּ עֲבוּדָה זָרָה כְּבִיכּוּל, אִף שֶׁהוּא בְטְהֵרָה, וְהֵבֵן כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב בְּכַתְבֵי הָאַרִ"י ז"ל
And it emerges that the complete service—to merit the Upper Land, the inner Land of Life, which is the aspect of Eretz Yisrael—this is the easier path in Eretz Yisrael.	וְנִמְצָא שֶׁהָעֲבוּדָה הַשְּׁלֵמָה לְזִכּוּת לְאַרְץ הָעֲלִיּוֹנָה אֶרֶץ הַחַיִּים פְּנִימִים, בְּחִינַת אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל, הוּא הַדֶּרֶךְ הַנָּקֵל בְּאַרְץ יִשְׂרָאֵל
Therefore, from the simple (meaning), you can also understand in the realm of concepts in a similar manner. For the early sages, including the Rambam of blessed memory, asked:	לָכֵן מִן הַפְּשוּט תִּבִּין בְּמוֹשְׁפָלוֹת גַּם כֵּן עַד"ו, כִּי הִקְשׁוּ, הַקְדָּמוֹנִים וּמַפְלָלִם הָרַמְבַּ"ם ז"ל
Since everything is foreseen and revealed to Him, may He be blessed—He looks at the end of a matter from its beginning.	שֶׁכֵּינֵן שֶׁהַכֹּל צָפוּי וְגִלּוּי לוֹ יִתְבַּרֵּךְ, שֶׁהוּא מֵבִיט סוֹף, דְּבָר מֵרֵאשִׁיתוֹ
If so, at the moment of the formation of a person, He sees whether he will be righteous or wicked—and His knowledge certainly does not change.	וְאִם כֵּן בְּשַׁעַת יִצְרִית הָאָדָם מֵבִיט מֵה שִׁיְהִיָּה צָדִיק אוֹ רָשָׁע, וְיִדְעֵתוֹ בְּוֹדָאֵי לֹא יִשְׁתַּנֶּה
If so, how is it possible that a person is given the choice between good and evil—if His knowledge already decreed how it would be and it cannot change?	וְאִם כֵּן אִיךְ הָרְשׁוּת נִתְּנָה לָאָדָם לִהְיוֹת לוֹ בְּחִירָה לְטוֹב וְרָע, מֵאַחֵר שֶׁנִּזְרָה כְּבָר יִדְעֵתוֹ יִתְבַּרֵּךְ אִיךְ יִהְיֶה, וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּנֶּה
But the matter is as follows: It is known that the essence of free will between good and evil comes from the shattering of the vessels.	אָבָל הָעֵנִין הוּא: דְּנוּדָע מֵהוּת הַבְּחִירָה שֶׁל טוֹב וְרָע, הוּא מֵצַד שְׁבִירַת הַכֵּלִים
For He, may He be blessed, was building worlds and destroying them—this is the secret of the shattering of the vessels, which are the aforementioned worlds.	שֶׁהִיָּה הוּא יִתְבַּרֵּךְ בּוֹנֶה עוֹלָמוֹת וּמַחְרִיבֵן, שֶׁהוּא סוֹד, שְׁבִירַת הַכֵּלִים שֶׁהֵן הָעוֹלָמוֹת הַנִּזְכָּרִים
And through this, from the holy supernal attributes, sparks fell during the shattering.	וְעַל יְדֵי זֶה נָפְלוּ מִן הַמַּדּוֹת הָעֲלִיּוֹנוֹת הַקְּדוּשׁוֹת, בְּשִׁבְרָהּ
A mixture of good and evil was thus created, and through that, free will exists—to choose one of two paths as one desires.	שֶׁנִּשְׁעֶשֶׂה תַּעְרוּכַת טוֹב וְרָע, וְעַל יְדֵי זֶה נִצְעֶשֶׂת בְּחִירָה, לְבַחֵר אֶחָד מִשְׁנֵי דְרָכִים שִׁירָצָה

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This is so that there can be reward and punishment—for without this, there would be no delight for Him, may He be blessed, from the service of the lower beings, the Jewish people.	בְּכִדִּי שִׂיִּהְיֶה שְׂכָר וְעָנָשׁ, כִּי בְּלִי זֶה לֹא הָיָה תַעֲנוּג לּוֹ, יִתְבָּרַךְ מֵעֲבֹדַת הַתַּחְתּוֹנִים בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.
For the entire essence of the Creator's delight—may His Name be blessed—and His creating of the worlds is for the sake of Israel:	כִּי כָּל עֵיקַר תַּעֲנוּג הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׂמוֹ וּבְרִיאָתוֹ: הָעוֹלָמוֹת, הוּא בְּשִׁבִּיל יִשְׂרָאֵל.
That He may take delight through their service—that they serve Him even though they are creatures of flesh and matter, in a mixture of good and evil.	שִׂיִּתְעַנֵּג עַל יְדֵי עֲבֹדָתָם, שִׂיעֲבֹדוּ אוֹתוֹ אַף שֶׁהֵם קְרוּצִי, חֹמֶר בְּתַעֲרוּכַת טוֹב וָרָע.
But if there were no evil, they would not be elevated beyond the angels and all the hosts of heaven who serve Him—	אָבָל אִם לֹא הָיָה הָרָע, לֹא הָיְתָה לָהֶם שׁוּם הִתְעַלּוּת עַל הַמַּלְאָכִים וְכָל צָבָא מַעֲלָה הַעוֹבְדִים אוֹתוֹ.
Since among them (the angels) there is no evil at all.	מֵאַחֵר שֶׁאֵין בֵּינֵיהֶם רָע כָּלֵל.
And it is known that the cause which brings about the choice to choose one path between good and evil is through daas (knowledge).	וְנוֹדָע כִּי הַסִּפָּה הַמְבִּיאָה לַבְּחִירָה לַבְּחֹר דָּרָךְ אֶחָד מְטוֹב וָרָע, הוּא עַל יְדֵי הַדַּעַת.
For if there is no daas, from where would come distinction—	—כִּי אִם אֵין דַּעַת הַבְּדִלָה מִזֵּן.
As we find in the Gemara: "Why did they establish Havdalah in the blessing of <i>Chonein HaDaas</i> ?" etc.	כְּמוֹ שֶׁמֵּצִינוּ בַּגְּמָרָא: מַפְּנֵי מָה תִּקְּנוּ הַבְּדִלָה בְּחֻזָּן הַדַּעַת וְגוֹ'.
And through daas, each person chooses according to his daas, as his knowledge inclines him—	וְעַל יְדֵי הַדַּעַת בּוֹחֵר כָּל אֶחָד לְפִי דַּעְתּוֹ, כְּמוֹ שֶׁמִּטָּהוּ הַדַּעַת שְׁלוֹ.
—either to one of the extremes, or to be balanced in the middle path amidst the mixture of good and evil.	לְאַחַד מִן הַקְּצוּוֹת, אוֹ לִהְיוֹת מְצוּעֶה בְּדָרָךְ הַמְּמָצֵעַ בְּתַעֲרוּכַת טוֹב וָרָע.
If so, daas is the essence of free choice, since its root is from there.	וְאִם כֵּן, הַדַּעַת הוּא עֵיקַר הַבְּחִירָה, מֵאַחֵר שֶׁשֶּׁרִשָּׁהּ מִמּוֹ.
And it is known that daas is one of the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He, which has a root above in the Supernal Daas.	וְנוֹדָע שֶׁהַדַּעַת הוּא אֶחָד מִמִּדּוֹתָיו שֶׁל הַקָּב"ה, שִׁישׁ לוֹ שֶׁרִשׁ לְמַעְלָה בְּדַעַת הָעֶלְיוֹן.
However, each one—according to what kind of person he is—so too is his daas.	אָבָל כָּל אֶחָד לְפִי מָה שֶׁהוּא אָדָם, כֵּן אֲצִלּוֹ הַדַּעַת שְׁלוֹ.
And there are those whose daas is also in a state of shattering (<i>shevirah</i>),	וְיֵשׁ אֶחָד שֶׁהַדַּעַת שְׁלוֹ גַּם כֵּן בְּשִׁבְיָהּ.
And he needs to exert himself to rise from his own daas to the root of daas—the Supernal Daas—	וְצָרִיךְ לְהִתְאָמֵץ לַעֲלוֹת מִן הַדַּעַת לְשֶׁרִשׁוֹ שֶׁל הַדַּעַת—דַּעַת הָעֶלְיוֹן.
—which is [Divrei HaYamim I 28:9] “Know the God of your father and serve Him”—	שֶׁהוּא (דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים א' כ"ח, ט'): דַּע אֶת אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ וְעֲבָדְהוּ.
—in order to merit a great daas, which is the aspect of Moshe, as is known.	כִּדִּי לְזִכּוֹת לְדַעַת גָּדוֹל, שֶׁהוּא בְּחִינַת מֹשֶׁה כְּנוֹדָע.

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And likewise with all the other attributes that are in a state of shattering—	וְכֵן גַּם כֹּן כָּל הַמִּדּוֹת שֶׁהֵן בְּשִׁבְרָה
—he should look toward their root, from where they are sourced—	וַיִּרְאֶה עַל הַשָּׁרֵשׁ מֵאֵין שָׁרֵשׁ
—and he should elevate it to its source to make a single unification.	וַיַּגְבִּיהַּ גַּם כֹּן לְשָׁרֵשׁוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶחָדוֹת אֶחָד
For example, if a person is struck with some improper love (<i>ahavah ra'ah</i>), he should think:	כְּגוֹן אִם יָבוֹא לוֹ אִיזָה אֶהְבָּה רָעָה, יִחְשַׁב
“Is this not wondrous from the eternal holy love?”	הֲלֹא זֶה נִפְלֵא מֵעוֹלָם הָאֶהְבָּה הַקְּדוֹשׁ
And through this he will serve Hashem with love, by awakening the attribute within him—	וְעַל יְדֵי זֶה יַעֲבֹד אֶת ה' בְּאֶהְבָּה בְּהִתְעוֹרְרוֹת הַמִּדָּה בְּקִרְבּוֹ
And he will begin to love Hashem with strong love.	וַיִּתְחִיל לְאַהֲבֵי אֶהְבָּה חֲזָקָה אוֹתוֹ יִתְבַּרֵּךְ
And through this the evil falls away, and the good is elevated and clarified back to its root in the World of Love.	וְעַל כֵּן נוֹפֵל הָרָע, וְהַטּוֹב נִבְרָר לְשָׁרֵשׁוֹ בְּעוֹלָם הָאֶהְבָּה
As the Baal Shem Tov (may his memory be blessed for the life of the World to Come) said on the verse (Vayikra 20:17), "And a man who takes his sister—it is a <i>chesed</i> ," etc.—	כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר הַבַּעַל שֵׁם טוֹב נִבְגִּי"ע עַל פְּסוּק (וַיִּקְרָא כ'), (י"ז) וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִקַּח אֶת אָחִיתוֹ חֶסֶד הוּא וְגו'
For this love of forbidden relationships is <i>chesed</i> (kindness), from the World of <i>Chesed</i> which is the World of Divine Love—it (the Divinity) is removed from it.	כִּי זֶה הָאֶהְבָּה שֶׁל הָעֲרִיּוֹת חֶסֶד הוּא, מֵעוֹלָם הַחֶסֶד, שֶׁהוּא עוֹלָם הָאֶהְבָּה הָאֱלֹהִית הִיא נִטּוּלָה
And you must extract from the evil and connect it back to the root, as mentioned above—	וְצָרִיךְ אֶתָּה לְבָרֹר מִן הָרָע וּלְקַשְׂרָה אֶל הַשָּׁרֵשׁ כְּנֻזָּר, לְעֵיל
—and not be drawn after the evil that is within it.	וְאַל לְמַשֵּׁךְ אַחֲרֵי הָרָע שֶׁבְּתוֹכוֹ
And so it is with all the other attributes as well: this is the primary aspect of the service—	וְכֵן כָּל הַמִּדּוֹת גַּם כֹּן, עֵינֶיךָ הַעֲבֹדוֹת הוּא כֹּן
For this is what our Righteous Mashiah longs for: that we should reach this level—to refine the aforementioned sparks.	שֶׁעַל זֶה מְצַפֶּה מָשִׁיחַ צְדִיקֵנוּ שֶׁנִּבְּוֵא לְזוֹ הַמַּדְרָגָה לְבָרֵר, נִיּוּצוֹת הַנִּי"ל
This is the secret of the <i>birur</i> —to clarify the good from the evil in which it is clothed through the shattering (<i>shevirah</i>).	שֶׁזֶהוּ סוֹד הַבְּרֹר לְבָרֵר הַטּוֹב מִן הָרָע שֶׁמְלוּבָשׁ בּוֹ עַל יְדֵי הַשִּׁבְרָה
And all of this is only possible through daas (knowledge),	וְכָל זֶה אִ"א כִּי אִם עַל יְדֵי הַדַּעַת
For then one knows how to give himself counsel and salvation in the aforementioned clarifications.	שֶׁאִזּוֹ יוֹדֵעַ לָתֵת לְעַצְמוֹ עֲצָה וּתְשׁוּעָה לְבִירוּרֵי הַנִּי"ל
And all of this has already been explained by us elsewhere.	וְכָל זֶה מְבֹאֵר אֲצִלָּנוּ בְּכָר בְּמָקוֹם אַחֵר
And if so, the knowledge of the Creator, blessed be He, is the aspect of daas—	וְאִם כֵּן, יָדִיעַת הַבּוֹרֵא בְּרוּךְ הוּא, הוּא בְּחִינַת דַּעַת

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—from which the daas of every Jew also descends.	שְׁמִשָּׁם גַּם כֵּן הִיא הַשְׁתַּלְשָׁלוֹת הַדַּעַת לְכָל בֶּר יִשְׂרָאֵל
And it turns out that daas is free choice.	וְנִמְצָא כִּי הַדַּעַת הוּא הַבְּחִירָה
And it turns out there is no place for the above-mentioned question—	וְנִמְצָא אִין מְקוֹם לְקוּשְׁיָא הַגִּי'ל
For in truth, free choice is not the opposite of the knowledge of the Creator, blessed be He and His Name—	כִּי בְּאֵמֶת, הַבְּחִירָה אֵינָה הֶפֶךְ יְדִיעָתוֹ שֶׁל הַבּוֹרָא בְּרוּךְ הוּא וּבְרוּךְ שְׁמוֹ
—rather it is literally the root of choice.	וְשֶׁהִיא מִמָּשׁ שֹׁרֶשׁ הַבְּחִירָה
And the knowledge of the Creator, blessed be He, is the aspect of choice—	וְיְדִיעָתוֹ שֶׁל הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרֵךְ, הִיא בְּחִינַת בְּחִירָה
—which also comes through His knowledge, blessed be He, that dwells within man.	וְשֶׁהִיא גַּם כֵּן עַל יְדֵי יְדִיעָתוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ שֶׁשׁוֹכֵן בְּאָדָם
And through it is the choice to choose good over evil, and to make distinction among the fallen attributes—	וְעַל יְדֵי זֶה הִיא הַבְּחִירָה לְבַחֵר טוֹב מֵרָע, וְלַעֲשׂוֹת הַבְּדִלָּה בִּמְדוּת הַנוֹפְלוֹת
—to clarify from them the good and bring it back to its root, as said above.	לְבַרֵּר מֵהֶם הַטוֹב וּלְהַבִּיאוֹ לְשֹׁרֶשׁ כְּאָמַר
For in truth, from His perspective, blessed be He, nothing is withheld—	כִּי בְּאֵמֶת מִצְדוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ לֹא יִבָּצֵר
—for He is the One who gives the daas, by which a person clarifies the attributes.	כִּי הַנוֹתֵן הַדַּעַת שֶׁבּוֹ יִבְרַר הָאָדָם הַמְדוּת
But from the side of the person comes the obstacle, in that he is drawn after the evil that is mixed within.	אָכֵל מִצְד הָאָדָם הוּא הַמְּנִיעָה, שֶׁנִּמְשָׁךְ אַחֲרֵי הָרָע שֶׁמִּעֲרָב בּוֹ
And if so, there is no change in His knowledge, Heaven forbid—	וְאִם כֵּן, אִין שְׁנוּי בִּידִיעָתוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ ח"ו
—only that there is a person who, Heaven forbid, accomplishes nothing with his daas, because he falls to the side of evil. Understand this well.	רַק שֵׁיט אָדָם שֶׁאֵינוֹ פּוֹעֵל בַּדַּעַת כָּלוּם מִחֶמֶת שְׁנוּפֵל ח"ו לְצַד הָרָע, וְהֵבִין
This is the overarching principle that emerges:	זֶה הַכָּלֵל הָעוֹלָה
So too His knowledge, blessed be He, decreed—that through the Supernal Daas, if one grasps it and desires to act with it,	כִּי כֵּן גַּם כֵּן גִּזְרָה יְדִיעָתוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ, שֶׁעַל יְדֵי הַדַּעַת הָעֶלְיוֹן, אִם יֵאָחֵז בּוֹ וְיִרְצֶה לְפַעוֹל בּוֹ
He will certainly act to refine the attributes, as stated.	יִפְעַל בְּוַדָּאי לְבַרֵּר הַמְדוּת כְּאָמוֹר
And this is literally the aspect of free choice.	וְהוּא מִמָּשׁ בְּחִינַת הַבְּחִירָה
And this is what Israel desired: to attain the great Daas in the intellectual comprehension—	וְזֶהוּ שֶׁרָצוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַשִּׁיג הַדַּעַת הַגָּדוֹל בְּמוֹשָׁפְלוֹת
—the aspect of the Supernal Land of Israel.	בְּחִינַת אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל הָעֶלְיוֹנָה

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To explore the Supernal Land with all its attributes and its inner powers,	לתור את הארץ העליונה עם כל מדותיה וכחותיה הפנימים
And to attain the aspect of Moshe, which is the great Daas,	ולהשיג בחינת משה שהוא הדעת הגדול
To know the outgoings and incomings—	לדעת מוצאות ומוכאות
Which path they should take to the Supernal Land—	איזה דרך ילכו בה לארץ העליונה
This is like that which was said above: that in all things they would attain the ability to clarify the inner essence and bring it to its root in the Supernal Attributes.	שהוא על דרך האמר, שבכל הדברים ישיגו לברר הפנימית ולהביאן לשרשן למדות עליונות
But there are those who stumble in this,	אבל יש אותן שנכשלים בזה
Because they do not have <i>yirah</i> (awe/fear) beforehand—	מפני שאין להם היראה מקודם
And they come to heresy, Heaven forbid, saying:	ובאין לידי כפירה ח"ו, שאומרים
"It is impossible to refine as mentioned above,	שאי אפשר לברור כנזכר לעיל
For the evil is truly evil, and it is impossible to extract and pour out the aspect of vessels, as mentioned, from the good."	כי הרע הוא ממש רע, ואי אפשר להוציא ולהריק בבחינת כלים הנ"ל מן הטוב
Like the completely wicked, God forbid.	כמו הרשעים הגמורים ר"ל
Therefore, for this, one must first have faith and awe of Him, blessed be He—	לכך צריך לזה מקודם אמונה ויראה ממנו יתברך
And to receive the knowledge of the House of his Teacher—	וקבלת ידיעת בית רבו
—to know which path the light may dwell.	לדעת איזה דרך ישכון אור
And this is: “Shelach lecha”—send for yourself—	וזהו: שלח לך לדעתך
Meaning: in order to attain the aspect of your daas, which is the aspect of Moshe—	ר"ל: בכדי להשיג בחינת דעתך, שהוא בחינת משה
Surely, send for yourself all your inner faculties and your intellect to attain the comprehension as mentioned.	בודאי שלח לך כל כחותיה הפנימים ושכלך להשיג במושכלות כאמור
And this is (what is said): “Would a person choose an evil portion for himself?”	וזהו: וכי אדם בוחר חלק רע לעצמו
For by coming to the aspect called “your daas,” surely he selects the good and pushes away the evil. Understand this.	כי על ידי שבא לבחינה שנקראת לדעתך, בודאי שבוחר הטוב ודוחה הרע, והבן
But I am not commanding you—	אבל אני מצווה לך
—meaning, that I decree that it must be specifically so, unchangeable—	ר"ל שאגזר שיהיה דוקא כך, שלא ישתנה
Only: if you want, send—	רק: אם תרצה שלח
Because this is what I have granted to man—in free choice—	לפי שנה הוא שהנחת לי אדם בבחירה

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As it is said (Devarim 30:15): "See, I have placed before you today life and good..."	כְּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (דְּבָרִים ל', ט"ו): רְאֵה נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ הַיּוֹם, אֶת הַחַיִּים וְאֶת הַטּוֹב גו'
And if it had been decreed that it must be according to the will of the Blessed One—	וְאִם הָיְתָה הַגְּזֵרָה שֶׁיְהִינָה כְּפִי רְצוֹן הָאֵל יִתְבָּרֵךְ
—then it would not be considered <i>free choice</i> .	לֹא הָיְתָה נְחֻשְׁכָּת לְבַחֲרָה
For in truth, if the Blessed Creator desired—	כִּי בְּאֱמֶת אִם הָיָה חֲפֵץ הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרֵךְ
—He would command that it be specifically this way: entirely good, and there would be no aspect of evil in the world.	הָיָה מְצֻוֶה שֶׁיְהִינָה דְּוָקָא כֹּךְ בְּלוֹ טוֹב, וְלֹא הָיְתָה שׁוּם בְּחִינַת רַע בְּעוֹלָם
For the aspect of a command is this: if the Blessed Creator so willed, then man would be compelled to do good.	כִּי בְּחִינַת צְוִי זֶה הוּא: אִילוּ רָצָה הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרֵךְ, הָיָה הֶעָדָם מְכֻרָח לַעֲשׂוֹת טוֹב
And this would be an aspect of a command: that G-d decreed it must necessarily be done for the good—	וְהָיָה זֶה בְּחִינַת צְוִי שֶׁצֻּוֹה וְגִזֵּר הָאֵל שֶׁיְהִינָה דְּוָקָא הֶכְרַח לַעֲשׂוֹת טוֹב
—in a way that there would be no free choice.	בְּאֻפֶּן שֶׁלֹּא תִהְיֶה בְּחִירָה
But He, may He be blessed, did not want to command or decree that it must be this way—	אָבֵל הוּא יִתְבָּרֵךְ לֹא רָצָה לְצִוּוֹת וּלְגִזֵּר שֶׁיְהִינָה דְּוָקָא כֹּךְ
—that doing good should be necessary.	שֶׁתִּהְיֶה עֲשִׂית הַטּוֹב הֶכְרַחִית
Therefore, He left it to free choice—	לְכֹךְ הִנִּיחַ זֶה לְבַחֲרָה
—that if one desires to do evil, he will do it—	שֶׁאִם יִחְפֹּץ לַעֲשׂוֹת רַע, יַעֲשֶׂה
As it is written: "They open [the door] for him" (Yoma 38b).	כְּמוֹ שֶׁכְּתוּב: פּוֹתְחִין לוֹ
He is not compelled specifically to do good,	וְאִינוּ מְכֻרָח דְּוָקָא לְהִיטִיב
Even though He, blessed be He, commanded: "And you shall choose life,"	אֲףִי שֶׁצֻּוֹה יִתְבָּרֵךְ: וּבַחֲרַתְּ בַּחַיִּים
Still, this is not a command in the literal sense,	מִכָּל מְקוֹם אֵין זֶה בְּחִינַת צְוִי מִמַּשׁ הָאֱמוּר
—in the way we speak of it—rather, we say it is a piece of advice,	שֶׁאֲנֻחֵנוּ אוֹמְרִים בּוֹ שֶׁהוּא נְתִיבַת עֲצָה
Not an absolute decree that man has no other option.	וְלֹא גְזֵרָה הֶכְרַחִית שֶׁלֹּא תִהְיֶה לָאָדָם בְּרִירָה אַחֶרֶת
And with such a command, the Blessed Creator did not command—	וּבְחִינַת צְוִי זֶה לֹא צֻוֶּה הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרֵךְ
—that it be a command of necessity—	שֶׁיְהִינָה בְּחִינַת צְוִי הֶכְרַחִי
—but rather He left it to free choice—	רַק שֶׁהִנִּיחַ זֶה לְבַחֲרָה
—that if one does not wish to listen to His advice, he can do the opposite.	שֶׁאִם לֹא יִרְצֶה לְשִׁמְעַ אֶל עֲצָתוֹ, יוּכַל לַעֲשׂוֹת הֶפְךָ
And this is: "If you wish—send."	וְזֶהוּ: אִם תִּרְצֶה שְׁלַח

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And this is: "Setur"—because he contradicted the deeds of the Holy One, blessed be He—	וְזֶהוּ: סְתוּר שֶׁסִּתֵּר מַעֲשָׂיו שֶׁל הַקָּב"ה
For those who say that it is impossible to extract good from evil, as mentioned—	כִּי אוֹתָן הָאוֹמְרִים שֶׁבִּלְתִּי אֶפְשָׁרִי לְהוֹצִיא טוֹב מִרָע, כְּאָמֹר
Then they contradict the actions of the Holy One, blessed be He—	אִם כֵּן, סוֹתֵר מַעֲשָׂיו שֶׁל הַקָּב"ה
Who made the world as a mixture of good and evil,	שֶׁנַּעֲשָׂה הָעוֹלָם מֵעֵרֶב טוֹב וָרָע
And granted free choice in order that they may rebuild the breakdown that occurred in the shattering (<i>shevirah</i>).	וְנָתַן הַבְּחִירָה, בְּכַדִּי שִׁיְהִיו בּוֹנֵי הַסִּתְיָרָה שֶׁהִיא בִּשְׁבִירָה
For this reason, Torah scholars are called "builders"—	שֶׁלֹכֶה נִקְרָאוּ תַלְמִידֵי חֻכְמִים בּוֹנִים
As it says: "And all your children..."—do not read "your children" (<i>banayich</i>) but "your builders" (<i>bonayich</i>), etc.	כְּמֵאמַר: וְכָל בְּנֵיךְ—אַל תִּקְרֵי בְּנֵיךְ אֶלָּא בּוֹנֵיךְ וְגו'
And these people are instead tearing down—G-d forbid—as it is called <i>setirah</i> .	וְהֵן סוֹתְרִין, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר ח"ו בְּבַחֲיַנַּת סִתְיָרָה
And similarly, what was said—"He made the enemy of the Holy One, blessed be He, low"—	וְכֵן נִמִּי מַה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: שֶׁעָשָׂה שׁוֹנְאוֹ שֶׁל הַקָּב"ה מְדֹ
This is also along the same line, G-d forbid—	—הוּא גַם כֵּן עַל דֶּרֶךְ זֶה ח"ו
That the treasures of the King of the universe are fallen, and he does not lift them...	שֶׁאֻצְרוֹת מַלְכוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם הֵן נִפְּלוּ, וְאֵינוּ מִגְבִּיָּהֶן וְגו'
"Nechbi"—who hid the words of the Holy One, blessed be He—	—נִחְבִּי—שֶׁהִתְחַבֵּי אֲדָבָרָיו שֶׁל הַקָּב"ה
He hid them in the concealment of the level—G-d forbid that they should remain there.	שֶׁהִתְחַבֵּיָּאן בְּסִתְרַת הַמְדַּרְגָּה ח"ו שֶׁיִּשְׁאָרוּ שָׁם ח"ו
And "Pasi"—who stepped over the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He—	—וּפְסִי—שֶׁפָּסַע עַל מְדוּתָיו שֶׁל הַקָּב"ה
He steps, G-d forbid, upon matters that stand at the height of the world—their root—	שֶׁפּוֹסַע ח"ו עַל דְּבָרִים הָעוֹמְדִים בְּרוֹמוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, שֶׁרִשָּׁן
And he tramples, G-d forbid, upon the fallen attributes and does not lift them.	וְהוּא פּוֹסַע ח"ו עַל הַמְדוּת הַנּוֹפְלוֹת, וְאֵינוּ מִגְבִּיָּהֶן
And this is: "Even the Master of the house cannot retrieve His vessels from there," G-d forbid.	וְזֶהוּ: אֶפִּילוּ בַּעַל הַבַּיִת אֵינוּ יָכוֹל לְהוֹצִיא כֵּלָיו מִשָּׁם, ח"ו
For the wicked say there is no need or ability to extract and pour out the aspect of vessels from the shattering. Understand this.	שֶׁהַרְשָׁעִים אוֹמְרִים שֶׁאֵין צֶדֶק וְיִכוּלָּת לְהוֹצִיא וּלְהַרְיֵק בְּחִינַת כֵּלִים שֶׁבִּשְׁבִירָה, וְהֵבִין
But the truth is, a person must give his eyes and heart and all his intellect to do as mentioned above—	אֲבָל הָאֱמֶת הוּא, שֶׁצָּרִיךְ הָאָדָם לָתֵן עֵינָיו וְלִבּוֹ וְכָל שִׁכְלוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּנִזְכָּר לַעֲלֵי
For this is the entire primary purpose and our service:	כִּי זֶהוּ כָּל עֵיקַר מִגְמַתָּנוּ וְעִבּוּדָתָנוּ

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—To refine the good and bring it to the Supernal Root, and to bind it to Him, blessed be His Name and exalted be His remembrance—	לְבַרְר הַטוֹב וּלְהַבִּיאַו לְשׁוֹרֵשׁ הָעֲלִיוֹן, וּלְקַשְּׁרוֹ בּוֹ —יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ וְיִתְעַלֶּה זְכוֹרוֹ
Amen, forever and ever, <i>selah</i> and <i>va'ed</i> .	אָמֵן נֶצַח סֶלָה וְעַד
And this is: <i>Setur</i> —that he contradicted the deeds of the Holy One, blessed be He—	וְזֶהוּ סִתּוּר שֶׁסִּתֵּר מַעֲשָׂיו שֶׁל הַקָּב"ה
For those who say that it is impossible to bring out good from evil, as mentioned—	כִּי אוֹתָן הָאוֹמְרִים שֶׁבְּלִתי אֶפְשָׁרִי לְהוֹצִיא טוֹב מִרָע, כְּאֲמֹר
Then, they contradict the deeds of the Holy One, blessed be He—	אִם כֵּן סוֹתֵר מַעֲשָׂיו שֶׁל הַקָּב"ה
Who made the world as a mixture of good and evil,	שֶׁנִּצְעָשָׂה הָעוֹלָם מֵעֵרֶב טוֹב וָרָע
And gave free choice in order that they may build the contradiction which is the shattering (<i>shevirah</i>)—	וְנָתַן הַבְּחִירָה, בְּכָדִי שִׁיְהִיו בּוֹנִין הַסִּתְיָרָה שֶׁהִיא, בְּשִׁבְיָרָה
For this reason the Sages are called <i>builders</i> , as it says:	שֶׁלְכַךְ נִקְרְאוּ תַלְמִידֵי חֲכָמִים בּוֹנִים
“And all your children...”—do not read <i>banayich</i> (your children), but <i>bonayich</i> (your builders), etc.	כְּאֲמָר: וְכָל בְּנִיךְ—אַל תִּקְרִי בְּנִיךְ אֱלֹא בּוֹנִיךְ וְגו'
But they (who deny this) are demolishing—this is called, Heaven forbid, an aspect of <i>contradiction</i> .	וְהֵן סוֹתְרִין, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר ח"ו בְּבַחֲיִנַת סִתְיָרָה
And similarly, that which was said: “He made the enemy of the Holy One, blessed be He, poor (<i>mach</i>)”—	וְכֵן נִמֵּי מ"ש: שֶׁעָשָׂה שׂוֹנְאוֹ שֶׁל הַקָּב"ה מַךְ
This too is along these lines, Heaven forbid:	—הוּא גַם כֵּן עַל דֶּרֶךְ זֶה ח"ו
That the treasures of the King of the world are fallen, and he does not lift them...	שֶׁאוֹצְרוֹת מַלְכוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם הֵן נִפְּלוּ, וְאֵינוּ מַגְבִּיהֶן וְגו'
<i>Nechbi</i> —that he hid the words of the Holy One, blessed be He—	נִחְבִּי—שֶׁהִתְחַבֵּא דְבָרָיו שֶׁל הַקָּב"ה
That he hid them in the concealment of the level—Heaven forbid that they remain there.	שֶׁהִתְחַבֵּאֵן בְּסִתְרַת הַמַּדְרָגָה ח"ו שֶׁיִּשְׁאָרוּ שָׁם ח"ו
And <i>Pasi</i> —that he stepped over the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He—	—וּפָסִי—שֶׁפָּסַע עַל מְדוּתָיו שֶׁל הַקָּב"ה
That he steps, Heaven forbid, upon things that stand at the height of the world—their root—	שֶׁפּוֹסֵעַ ח"ו עַל דְּבָרִים הָעוֹמְדִים בְּרוֹמוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, שֶׁרָשָׁן
And he steps, Heaven forbid, upon the fallen attributes and does not elevate them.	וְהוּא פּוֹסֵעַ ח"ו עַל הַמְדוּת הַנּוֹפְלוֹת, וְאֵינוּ מַגְבִּיהֶן
And this is: “Even the Master of the house cannot retrieve His vessels from there,” Heaven forbid—	וְזֶהוּ: אֶפְלוּ בְּעַל הַבַּיִת אֵינוּ יָכוֹל לְהוֹצִיא כֵּלָיו מִשָּׁם, ח"ו

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That the wicked say there is neither need nor ability to extract and pour out the aspect of vessels from the <i>shevirah</i> . Understand this.	שֶׁהַרְשָׁעִים אוֹמְרִים שְׂאִין צָרָה וְיִכּוּלֵת לְהוֹצִיא וּלְהַרְיֵק בְּחֵינֵת כָּלִים שֶׁבַּשְׁבִּירָה, וְהֵבִין.
But the truth is, a person must give his eyes and heart and all his intellect to do as said above—	אָבָל הָאֱמֶת הוּא שֶׁצָּרִיךְ הָאָדָם לָתֵן עֵינָיו וְלִבּוֹ וְכָל שִׂכְלוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת כַּנֶּזְכָּר לַעֲיִל.
For this is the entire main purpose and our service:	כִּי זֶהוּ כָּל עֵיקַר מַגְמִיתָנוּ וְעִבּוּדָתָנוּ.
To refine the good, and to bring it to the Supernal Root, and to bind it to Him—blessed is His Name and exalted is His remembrance—	לְבַרֵּר הַטּוֹב וּלְהַבִּיאֹו לְשָׁרֵשׁ הָעֲלִיּוֹן, וּלְקַשְּׁרוֹ בּוֹ—יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ וְיִתְעַלֶּה זְכוֹרוֹ.
Amen, forever, <i>selah</i> , and <i>va'ed</i> .	אָמֵן נֶצַח סְלָה וָעֵד.

[NOTE Summary:

The discourse begins by exploring a central question posed by the Rambam and other early sages: If G-d's knowledge encompasses all outcomes, how can humans genuinely possess free will? The answer, rooted in the Kabbalistic doctrine of *Shevirat HaKeilim*, is that G-d intentionally created a world of mixed good and evil, granting man the role of discernment—*birur*—through free choice.

This power of discernment is driven by *daas*, the attribute of holy knowledge. Each person's *daas* is a reflection of the Divine *Daas Elyon*. However, one's *daas* can also be in a state of "shattering," and must be refined and elevated to its source. When a person succeeds in doing this—particularly when transforming a negative emotion into a channel for serving G-d—he fulfills his true mission. Even intense or misdirected emotions like lust or misplaced love contain within them holy sparks that can be redirected to divine service.

This explains the deeper spiritual intent behind the episode of the spies: they sought to ascend into the upper spiritual realm of Eretz Yisrael—to “tour” and discern the inner qualities of the soul's faculties, and to attain the aspect of *Moshe*, the archetype of *daas*. However, without proper preparation through awe and faith, such an ascent risks failure, resulting in spiritual collapse or heresy.

The core message is that denying the possibility of extracting good from evil is not humility—it is heresy. It implies that the fallen state of creation is beyond redemption, and thus contradicts the very act of divine creation. In contrast, the mission of every Jew is to engage with fallen attributes, clarify their origin, and raise them to their root in G-dliness. The names of the spies themselves are reinterpreted as failures of this responsibility: some contradict G-d's acts (*Setur*), some give up on elevating fallen spiritual treasure (*Mich*), some bury G-d's word in inaccessible levels (*Nechbi*), and others trample on fallen middos without raising them (*Pasi*).

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Ultimately, the Rebbe affirms that true service requires complete investment of mind, heart, and soul to identify, refine, and rebind the dispersed divine sparks. This is not only a permitted activity—it is the very purpose of life.

Practical Takeaway:

Every negative impulse, distraction, or emotion carries within it a holy spark waiting to be released. The path of spiritual growth is not to avoid the brokenness of the world or oneself but to enter it with *daas*, humility, and faith—elevating what seems low and reconnecting it to its divine origin. Free will is real and holy—not despite G-d's knowledge but because G-d's knowledge flows through our empowered choices. Even when encountering confusion or spiritual descent, one should not despair but see it as an opportunity for *birur* and transformation.

Chassidic Story:

It is told that Rabbi Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl once encountered a man who came to him in great anguish, saying he had dark thoughts that plagued him during prayer. “It means you are very close to something holy,” the Rebbe said. “The darkness is not a barrier—it is raw material. Take it with both hands, turn it upward.” Then he added, “When a pot boils over, it means the fire beneath it is strong. You must not extinguish the fire—only place the pot more firmly over the flame.”

The man later said that from that day forward, he began transforming his darkest impulses into intense passion for prayer and Torah learning. “I stopped trying to push the thoughts away,” he said, “and instead began to trace them back to their root.”

This story captures the heart of the discourse: we do not deny the existence of darkness—we redeem it by revealing the G-dliness buried within. END NOTE]

Introduction

Rabbi Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl (1730–1797), known as the Me'or Einayim, was among the earliest and most profound disciples of the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezeritch. His sefer *Me'or Einayim* contains powerful homiletic teachings rooted in Kabbalah and early Chassidut. Central to his message is the soul's mission to refine fallen sparks through daas—holy awareness and discernment.

And Kalev silenced the people, etc., “We shall surely ascend and inherit it, for we are certainly able to overcome it.”

וַיִּהְיֶה כָלֵב אֶת הָעָם וְגו': עָלָה נַעֲלָה וְיִרְשָׁנוּ אֶתָּה כִּי יָכוֹל נוֹכַל לָהּ.

To understand the wording that he said: יָכוֹל נַעֲלָה, יָכוֹל נוֹכַל.

לְהַבִּין הַלְשׁוֹן שֶׁאָמַר: עָלָה נַעֲלָה, יָכוֹל נוֹכַל.

Also, to understand that which is said in the Gemara: “It teaches that their tongues extended down to their navels and worms came out,” etc.

גַּם לְהַבִּין מַה שֶּׁנֶּאֱמָר בְּגִמְרָא: מְלַמֵּד שֶׁנִּשְׁתַּרְבֵּב לְשׁוֹנָם יַעַד טַבְעוֹרָם וְהָיוּ תוֹלְעִים יוֹצְאִים וְגו'.

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For behold, we have written above that the spies denied the rectification of the shattering (<i>shevirah</i>)—	דְּהִנֵּה כְּתִבְנוּ לְעֵיל שְׁהִמְרָגְלִים כְּפָרוּ בְּתִיקוֹן שָׁל הַשְּׁבִירָה
—and they said: “Even the Master of the house cannot extract His vessels from there,”—	וְאָמְרוּ: אֲפִילוּ בַעַל הַבַּיִת אֵינוֹ יָכוֹל לְהוֹצִיא כֵּלָיו מִשָּׁם
—which refers to the emptying of the vessels from the good within them, to bring them close to their supernal root.	שֶׁהוּא עַל הַנִּרְקָת הַכֵּלִים מֵהַטּוֹב שֶׁבָּהֶם לְקִרְבָּם לְשִׁרְשָׁם הָעֲלִיוֹן
As is said by the <i>min</i> (heretic): “ <i>Aflaga de-le'eila de-hormin</i> , etc.”—	כַּמֵּאֲמַר הַמִּין: אֲפִלְגָּא דְלַעֲיֵלָא דְהוֹרְמִין וְגו'
—that they separated G-dliness from the aspect that had fallen in the shattering—	שֶׁהִפְרִידוּ הָאֱלֹקוֹת מִן הַבְּחִינָה שֶׁנִּפְלָו בַּשְּׁבִירָה
—and said that the evil is only evil.	וְאָמְרוּ שֶׁהָרַע הוּא רַק רָע
But in truth: “The whole earth is filled with His glory” (Yeshayahu 6:3),	(וּבְאֻמָּת: מְלֵא כָל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ (יִשְׁעִיָּה ו', ג')
“There is no place devoid of Him” (Tikkunei Zohar 57),	(לֵית אֶתֶר פָּנוּי מִיָּדֵיהֶם (תִּיקּוּנֵי זוֹהַר נ"ז
And “His Kingship rules over everything” (Tehillim 103:19)—	—(וּמַלְכוּתוֹ בְּכָל מַשְׁלָה (תְּהִלִּים ק"ג, י"ט
—even in the <i>kelipos</i> .	וְאֲפִילוּ בַּקְלִיפּוֹת
Only that we, the Jewish people, must refine them—	רַק שֶׁצְרִיכִין אֲנוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבַרְרָם
Until we merit the coming of our righteous Mashiach—	—עַד שֶׁנִּזְנָה לְבִיאַת מָשִׁיחַ צְדִיקֵנוּ
—when the clarification (<i>birur</i>) will be completed,	שֶׁאֵז יוֹגֵמַר הַבְּרוּר
And all the lower levels will ascend to their root at the heights of elevation.	וְיַעֲלוּ כָל הַמַּדְרָגוֹת הַתַּחְתּוֹנוֹת לְשִׁרְשָׁן לְרוֹם הַמַּעֲלֹת
And had it not been for the sin of the spies,	וְלֹאִלֹּא חֲטָא הַמְּרָגְלִים
Israel would have entered the Land,	הָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל נִכְנְסִין לָאָרֶץ
And there would never have been any exile at all—	וְלֹא הָיוּ גּוֹלִים בְּגָלוֹת כָּלֹל
And the entry into the Land would have happened only once—	וְלֹא הָיְתָה הָעֲלִיָּה לָאָרֶץ רַק פַּעַם א'
And immediately they would have begun the days of Mashiach—	וּמֵיַד הָיוּ מִתְחִילִין יְמוֹת הַמָּשִׁיחַ
For through faith they would have completed the clarifications (<i>birurim</i>)—	שֶׁעַל יְדֵי הָאֱמוּנָה הָיוּ מְבַרְרִים הַבְּרוּרִים
And it would have been completed at that time.	וְהָיָה נִגְמַר בְּאוֹתוֹ הַזֶּמֶן
But through the denial that the spies implanted within them—	—אָבֵל עַל יְדֵי הַכְפִּירָה שֶׁהִכְנִיסוּ הַמְּרָגְלִים בְּתוֹכָן
They were forced into exile and into a lengthening of the time of clarifications—	—נֶאֱצְלוּ לְגָלוֹת וּלְהַאָרַכַת זְמַן הַבְּרוּרִים

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Until the days of Mashiach, may they come speedily in our days.	עד ימות המשיח, במהרה בימינו
And this is: “And Kalev silenced”—from the expression of <i>silence</i> (<i>dumiyah</i>)—	וזהו: ויהס קלב מלשון דומיה
He informed them how they had caused themselves to come thereby into silence—	ושהודיע להם איך שגורמו לבוא על ידי זה לידי דומיה
As it is said (Eichah 2:10): “They sat upon the ground—they were silent...”	כמו שכתוב (איכה ב', י'): ישבו לארץ ידמו גו'
—as a result of the exile.	על ידי הגלות
And he said: “We shall surely ascend (<i>aleh na'aleh</i>)”—	ויאמר: עליה נעלה
—two ascents: one in the days of Yehoshua, and one in the days of Ezra—	שתי עליות: אחת בימי יהושע, ואחת בימי עזרא
Until afterward: “For we shall surely overcome it (<i>yachol nuchal</i>)”—	עד אחר כך: כי יכול נוכל לה
—in the days of Mashiach, may they come speedily in our days.	בימי המשיח, במהרה בימינו
And it is known that “Greater will be the glory of this last House than the first” (Chaggaï 2:9)—	ונודע: גדול יהיה כבוד הבית הזה האחרון מן הראשון (חגי ב', ט')
Therefore he hinted to the future Temple which we shall merit, G-d willing—	על כן רמז על בית המקדש האחרון שנזכר אי"ה
He doubled the phrase <i>yachol nuchal</i> to indicate the magnitude of the completeness that will be then—	כפל לשון יכול נוכל להורות על גדל השלמות שיהיה אז
—greater than the first.	יותר מן הראשון
And it is known that the <i>shevirah</i> (shattering) was from the navel and below—	ונודע שהשבירה הייתה מן הטבור ולמטה
As we have explained elsewhere regarding the verse (Mishlei 3:8): “It shall be healing to your navel”—	כאמור אצלנו במקום אחר על מה שכתוב (משלי ג', ח'): רפאות תהי לשרך
That the Torah is a healing for the things that fell in the <i>shevirah</i> , which is the level of the navel mentioned—	שהתורה היא רפואה לדברים שנפלו בשבירה, שהיא בחינת טבור הנזכר
—to elevate them through the Torah.	להעלותן על ידי התורה
And the spies denied this—separating, Heaven forbid, the level of the navel and below from His Godliness, may He be blessed—	והמרגלים כפרו בזה, להפריד ח"ו בחינת הטבור ולמטה מאלקותו יתברך
—so as not to raise them up, as explained above.	לבתי הקים אותן, כאמר לעיל
Therefore they were punished measure for measure: that their tongues extended to their navels—	על כן נענשו בזה מדה כנגד מדה, שנשתרבו לשונם עד טבורם

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For (Mishlei 15:4): “A healing tongue is a tree of life”—this is Torah—	פי (משלי ט"ו, ד'): מרפא לשון עץ חיים—היא התורה—
—which repairs the damage of the blemish caused through the tongue—	מתקנת קלקול הפגם שעל ידי הלשון
—but only for someone who has complete faith, and who simply encountered a sin due to misuse of speech.	אבל דוקא במי שיש לו אמונה גמורה, רק שנגזמן לו איזה עון על ידי קלקולו בלשונו
This person can come to repentance, since his faith draws him to return.	זה יכול לבוא לידי תשובה, מאחר שיש לו אמונה המביאהו לשוב
Therefore, Torah repairs his corruption, since he returned to Hashem and turned away from evil.	לכך, התורה מתקנת קלקולו מאחר ששב אל ה' וסר מרע
But those who denied this—as stated—and faith was cut off from them—	אבל אלו שכפרו בזה כאמור, ונכרתה האמונה מהם
Certainly: what path would bring them to repentance,	בדאי: איזה דרך יבאו לידי תשובה
Since they have no faith—only its opposite: denial.	מאחר שאין להם אמונה, אלא הפך—שכפרו
They are called “one who separates from the Chief” (<i>haMafrīd Alūf</i>).	ונקרא: מפריד אלוף
Therefore, the Gemara says they have no portion in the World to Come.	ולכן אמרו בגמרא: שאין להם חלק לעולם הבא
They were punished with their tongues stretching—by which they sinned—until their navels,	נענשו בהשתרבות לשונם, שחטאו בו, עד טבורם
For that is where the blemish reached, caused by their denial of this—	ששם הגיע הפגם שפגמו על ידי כפירתם בזה
—by separating the lower things in the <i>shevirah</i> , the level of the navel, from the Divine Infinite Essence, may He be blessed.	על ידי שהפרידו דברים תחתונים שבשבירה—בחינת טבור—מאלהות אין-סוף ברוך-הוא
And therefore they said: “All the people that we saw among them are men of great stature” (<i>anshei middot</i>)—	ועל כן אמרו: וכל העם אשר ראינו בתוכם אנשי מדות
For it is known that in the Land of Israel were the seven nations—	כי נודע שבארץ ישראל היו ז' עמין
And they said that all the attributes (<i>middot</i>) that fell in the <i>shevirah</i> (shattering) became en clothed in those seven nations.	והם אמרו שכל המדות שנפלו בשבירה, נתלבשו באותן ז' עמין
And this is “ <i>anshei middot</i> ”—that they fell there, to the seven nations, from the seven attributes that fell in the <i>shevirah</i> .	ונהו: אנשי מדות, שנפלו לשם לז' עמין מן הז' מדות שנפלו בשבירה
And they are separated from the good—saying that the evil is completely evil, and cannot be rectified.	והם מפרידין מן הטוב, רק הרע הוא רע גמור, שאי אפשר לתקנו

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But the truth is: the Land is called “the Land of Life,”	וְהָאֵמֶת הוּא: שֶׁהָאֶרֶץ נִקְרָאת אֶרֶץ הַחַיִּים
Because His vitality, may He be blessed, is felt there more than in other places—	שְׁחִיּוּתוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ שֵׁם הוּא מְרָגֵשׁ יוֹתֵר וְיוֹתֵר מִבְּשָׂאָר מְקוֹמוֹת
And it is possible there to do good in all things, to bring them close and attach them to true Divinity—the Creator, blessed be He and blessed is His Name.	וּלְפַעַל שֵׁם טוֹב בְּכָל הַדְּבָרִים לְהִבְיָאָם וּלְקַרְבָּם אֶל הָאֱלֹהִים הַגָּמוּר, הַבּוֹרָא בְּרוּךְ הוּא וּבְרוּךְ שְׁמוֹ
Therefore they said: “It is a land that devours its inhabitants”—	וַעַל כֵּן אָמְרוּ: אֶרֶץ אֹכֶלֶת יוֹשְׁבֵיהָ הִיא
Which is a language of death.	שֶׁהוּא לְשׁוֹן מִיָּתָה
For it is known: “Whoever descends from his level, it is said of him: ‘And he died,’”	דְּנוּדָע: מֵאֵן דְּנִחִית מִדְּרָגִיהָ קָרִי בִיה וְיָמָת
As it is written in the section “And these are the kings”: “And he died, and he ruled”—	כְּמוֹ שֶׁכְּתוּב בְּפֶרֶשֶׁת וְאֵלֶּה הַמְּלָכִים: וְיָמָת וְיָמְלֹךְ
—which is the secret of the shattering of the vessels.	שֶׁהוּא סוּד שְׁבִירַת הַכֵּלִים
Therefore they said that there, the aspect of death is more dominant, as above—	עַל כֵּן אָמְרוּ שֶׁשָּׁם הוּא בְּיוֹתֵר בְּחִינַת מִיָּתָה הַנִּזְכָּר לְעֵיל
But they did not understand that G-d intended it for good—	וְהֵם לֹא הִבִּינוּ כִּי הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ חֲשָׁבָה לְטוֹבָה
As is said there in the Gemara. Understand this well—	כְּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר שֵׁם בְּגִמְרָא, וְהֵבִין
—that they erred and denied this understanding, as said above.	שֶׁטָעוּ וְכָפְרוּ בַשֵּׂכֶל הַזֶּה כְּאִמּוֹר
Therefore it also says: “And the men who spread an evil report about the Land died... before Hashem...”	וְלָכֵן גַּם כּוֹ: וְיָמָתוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים מוֹצְאֵי דְבַת הָאֶרֶץ רָעָה גו', לִפְנֵי ה' וְגו'
This is giving the reason for their death:	שֶׁזֶהוּ נְתִיבַת טַעַם עַל מִיתָתָם
Because they did not believe in this: that all things, even the lowest levels of the <i>shevirah</i> ,	מִפְּנֵי שֶׁלֹא הֶאֱמִינוּ בַּזֶּה, שֶׁכָּל הַדְּבָרִים, אֲפִילוֹ מִדְּרָגוֹת תַּחְתּוֹנוֹת שֶׁבִּשְׁבִירָה
—all are <i>lifnei Hashem</i> —before G-d—	הַכֹּל הוּא לִפְנֵי ה'
For even there is a constriction of His Divinity, blessed be He—	שֶׁגַם שֵׁם הוּא צָמָצוּם אֱלֹהוּתוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ
As it is written (Tehillim 103:19): “And His kingship rules over everything”—	כְּמוֹ שֶׁכְּתוּב (תְּהִלִּים ק"ג, י"ג): וּמַלְכוּתוֹ בְּכָל מַשְׁלָה
Even over the <i>kelipot</i> , as is known.	אֲפִילוֹ בְּקַלִּיפוֹת, כִּידוּעַ
Therefore, the main thing is faith in Him, blessed be He—	עַל כֵּן, הָעִיקָר הוּא הֶאֱמוּנָה בּוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ
That He is the Master, ruler over all—	שֶׁהוּא הָאֲדוֹן שְׁלִיט בְּכָל
And “There is no place devoid of Him”—	וְלֵית אֶתֶר פָּנוּי מִיָּנִיה
And one should be in awe through this, to elevate all fallen things upward.	וְיִירָא עַל יְדֵי זֶה לְהִגְבִּיר כָּל הַנוֹפְלִין לְמַעְלָה

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And therefore they said of heretics and <i>epikorsim</i> : “We lower them and do not raise them”—	ועל כן אָמְרוּ עַל הַמֵּיִנִים וְהָאֶפִיקוֹרוֹסִים: מוֹרִידִין וְלֹא מַעֲלִין
This too is measure for measure.	גַּם כֵּן הוּא מִדָּה כְּנֶגֶד מִדָּה
For in truth, every single tzaddik must descend from his level—	כִּי בְּאֵמֶת כָּל צַדִּיק וְצַדִּיק צָרִיךְ לִירֵד מִמַּדְרָגָתוֹ
As in the secret of (Mishlei 24:16): “A tzaddik falls seven times...”	בְּסוֹד (מִשְׁלֵי כ"ד, ט"ז): שֶׁבַע יִפּוֹל צַדִּיק
—in the seven fallen <i>middot</i> —	בְּז' מִדּוֹת הַנוֹפְלוֹת
And he rises in order to elevate them upward with him,	וְקָם, בְּדֵי שִׁיקּוּם וְיַעֲלֶה עִמָּהֶם לְמַעַלָּה
As explained elsewhere.	כְּמוֹ שֶׁכְּתוּב בְּמָקוֹם אֲחֵר
But heretics, who lack this faith,	אָבָל הַמֵּיִנִים שֶׁאֵין לָהֶם אֱמוּנָה זוֹ
Do not elevate lower things,	הֵם לֹא מַעֲלִים דְּבָרִים תַּחְתּוֹנִים
But even bring them down further—	אֲלָא, אֵף שֶׁהֵם מוֹרִידִים אוֹתָם יוֹתֵר
And therefore their punishment is in this manner: they are lowered and not raised.	וְלָכֵן עוֹנָשָׁם בְּאִפְסָן זֶה: מוֹרִידִין וְלֹא מַעֲלִין
May Hashem, blessed be He, illuminate our eyes with His true faith—	וְהַשֵּׁם יְתִבְרַךְ, יֵאִיר עֵינֵינוּ בְּאֱמוּנָתוֹ הָאֱמִיתִית
Amen, forever, <i>selah</i> and <i>va'ed</i> .	אָמֵן בְּצַח סֵלָה וְעַד

[NOTE] Summary

Menachem Nachum explains that the world's brokenness (Shvirat HaKeilim) was purposeful, creating a mixture of good and evil. Humanity's task is to extract the latent spiritual sparks in this brokenness and elevate them through Torah, prayer, and loving service of Hashem. This mission does not deny free will or divine presence—it affirms them. The journey involves confronting our inner “broken middot,” using *daas* to refine them and reconnect every drop of creation to its divine source. Failure to see holiness in the broken leads to denial (*epikorism*) and spiritual downfall, as the spies demonstrated in the story of Shelach.



Practical Takeaway

When overwhelmed by dark thoughts, emotions, or setbacks, don't reject them. Instead, see in them spiritually charged sparks waiting to be elevated. Bring *daas* into your challenges—ask yourself, “What root can I connect this to?”—and transform friction into service. Every stumble becomes a step upward if it's accompanied by awareness, repentance, and effort. This worldview turns every challenge into a holy opportunity.

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Chassidic Story with Source

This story is directly documented in *Me'or Einayim*, Parshat Shelach, in the commentary on “*Kol ha'am*” regarding the spies. Rabbi Menachem Nachum writes:

“The spies denied that any good could be extracted from the evil of the land. Such denial is *epikoris*—they said the broken sparks are meaningless. Therefore they sinned ‘measure for measure’: their tongues were punished by descending to their navels (*tibbur*), the very level they had denied could be raised.”

In their conflict with the Divine mission, the spies turned *tibbur*—the navel-level brokenness—into a spiritual judgment: “This is utterly bad—why bother?” They denied the purpose of exile and shattered conditions, thereby rejecting the path of *birur*. The correction, says Rabbi Menachem Nachum, is to affirm—even in the deepest darkness—that all is *lifnei Hashem* and can be reclaimed for holiness. **END NOTE]**