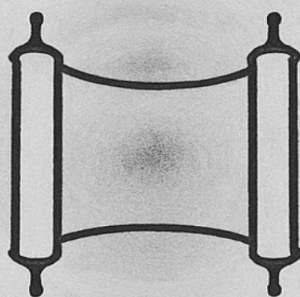


בס"ד

**Alter Rebbe
Likkutei Torah
Parshas Balak**

ולכן לא ראה עמל בישראל



לע"נ

אסתר בת יצחק

Dedicated By:

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Introduction

This profound discourse by the **Alter Rebbe**, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745–1812), founder of Chabad Chassidus and author of the *Tanya*, explores the spiritual distinction between the weekdays and Shabbos. It analyzes how Divine concealment (symbolized by the Name Elokim) is transcended on Shabbos, leading to a state of Divine delight and revelation, represented by the Name Havayah. The teaching moves between the levels of “Yaakov” and “Yisrael,” between effortful work and pure revelation, showing how our weekday service enables the elevation of Shabbos, and how Shabbos empowers us for the coming week.

And therefore, “He has not seen toil in Israel” Bamidbar (Numbers) 23:21.— because the Divine service [on Shabbos] is not in a mode of toil at all, but rather to delight in God, “and you shall call the Shabbos a delight.”	ולכן לא ראה עמל בישראל. כי אין העבודה בבחי' עמל כלל רק להתענג על ה' וקראת לשבת ענג.
And the reason that on Shabbos there is no need for the toil and effort mentioned above (which apply during the weekdays) is because: Shabbos [שבת] shares letters with “return” [תשב, teshav].	והטעם לזה שא"צ בשבת לבחי' עמל ויגיעה הנ"ל שבחול הוא כי הנה שבת אותיות תשב.
This is because during the weekdays, there is a descent of vitality — “her legs go down...” — meaning that the Name Elokim acts as a concealment, as is known regarding “the sun and a shield.”	והיינו שבחול הוא בחי' ירידת החיות רגליה יורדות כו'. והיינו ששם אלקים הוא המסתיר כו' וכנודע 'בענין שמש ומגן כו'.
Therefore, during the week, there must be an outcry in prayer to break out of the concealment.	'לכן צ"ל הצעקה בתפלה לצאת מן ההסתר כו'
And this is the meaning of “a servant of Elokim” — to repair the concealment and obscuring that stems from the Name Elokim, such that it no longer conceals and obscures.	וזהו פי' עובד אלקים לתקן ההסתר וההעלם הנמשך משם אלקים שלא יהיה מסתיר ומעלים.
But on Shabbos it is written, “Vayechal Elokim” — meaning that the aspect and level of the tzimtzum (contraction) and concealment of the Name Elokim has come to an end, and the revelation of the Name Havayah is drawn forth: “a Shabbos for Havayah.” As explained elsewhere in the discourse “Basi Legani.”	אבל בשבת כתיב ויכל אלקים פי' שכלתה בחי' ומדרגת מדת הצמצום וההסתר דשם אלקים ונמשך התגלות שם הוי' שבת להוי' וכמ"ש במ"א בד"ה 'באתי לגני כו'.
And this is the meaning of “Shabbos” as the letters of “teshav” — a return, an elevation of the worlds.	וזהו שבת אותיות תשב עליות העולמות
Therefore it is called “Shir Kel” (a song to the Name Kel), and not “Shir Elokim,” because one ascends from the aspect of concealment.	לכך נק' שיר אל ולא שיר אלקים כי יוצאים מבחי' 'ההסתר כו'

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And therefore, crying out is not relevant, but on the contrary, there is delighting in God from the revelation that is revealed on Shabbos.	ולכן אין שייך צעקה רק אדרבה ההתענגות בה' מן הגילוי שמתגלה בשבת
And this is also the distinction between the level of “Yaakov” and the level of “Yisrael” (see Zohar Vayishlach 174a), as it says “Your name shall no longer be called Yaakov but Yisrael... for you have prevailed over Elokim...” — meaning that one rules over the Name Elokim, the concealment, so that it no longer conceals, and there will be a revelation of the Name Havayah.	וזהו ג"כ ממש ההפרש בין בחי' יעקב לבחי' ישראל [ועיין בזהר וישלח דקע"ד א'] וכמ"ש לא יקרא שמך עוד יעקב כ"א ישראל כו' כי שרית עם אלקים כו'. היינו שמשתרר על שם אלקים המסתיר שלא יהיה 'מסתיר עוד ויהיה גילוי שם הוי
This is through having already overcome the concealment of the animal soul.	'והיינו ע"י שכבר נצח את הסתר הנה"ב כו
And this is the meaning of “Hashem, his God, is with him” — with him literally, that on Shabbos the aspect of Elokus is revealed in his soul in actual revelation.	וז"ש הוי' אלקיו עמו. עמו ממש שבשבת מתגלה בנפשו בחי' אלקות בבחי' גילוי ממש
Whereas during the weekdays, Elokus is not revealed in his soul in an open way — rather, he cries out from the depths of his heart to God, desiring that it be revealed to him openly.	משא"כ בחול אין מתגלה אלקות בנפשו בבחי' גילוי כ"א הוא צועק מנקודת לבבו לה' ורוצה שיתגלה בו בבחי' גילוי
But on Shabbos, there is actual revelation — and this is the meaning of “Hashem, his God, is with him.”	אבל בשבת הוא הגילוי ממש וז"ש הוי' אלקיו עמו
(See what is explained in Parshas Tetzaveh in the discourse “Zachor es asher asah lecha Amalek...” — about the two levels of “face” and “back” in holiness, and how “Amalek” corresponds to the back.	ועמ"ש בפ' תצוה בד"ה זכור את אשר עשה לך] עמלק בדרך כו' ענין ב' המדרגות בחי' פנים ובחי' אחר שיש בקדושה
And that the “back” of holiness is confronted by Amalek, whereas the “face” is not, etc. There it also explains that the root of Amalek is “amal” (toil).	וזהו ענין ב' הבחי' דישראל ויעקב. ובחי' אחר דקדושה עומד לנגדו בחי' עמלק משא"כ בבחי' פנים כו' ע"ש. והנה עמלק ראשיתו הוא בחי' עמל
Therefore, in Israel specifically it says, “He has not seen toil in Israel,” whereas by Yaakov, who is still in the mode of effort and labor in holiness, the toil (amal) of the opposing side (Amalek) still stands opposite — even though he cannot prevail, for “Hashem wages war with Amalek,” etc.	ולכן בישראל דייקא נאמר ולא ראה עמל בישראל כו' משא"כ בבחי' יעקב כיון שיעקב הוא עדיין בחי' עבודה ויגיעה דקדושה ע"כ עומד לנגדו העמל דלעומת זה שמבחי' עמלק אלא שלא יוכל לו כי מלחמה לה' בעמלק כו' ע"ש
However, one cannot reach the level of “Yisrael,” which is the Shabbos state, without first going through the level of “Yaakov,”	אך א"א להגיע לבחי' ישראל שהוא בחי' שבת אם לא ע"י קדימת בחי' יעקב שהוא עבודה דחול על דרך מי שטרח בע"ש דוקא אז יאכל בשבת

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which is the weekday labor — just as “one who toils on Erev Shabbos will eat on Shabbos.”	
Therefore, one who calls “Yisrael” by the name “Yaakov” is not transgressing a positive command like one who calls “Avraham” by “Avram,” because the name “Yaakov” was not completely nullified in “Yisrael.”	ולכן הקורא לישראל יעקב אינו עובר בעשה כמו הקורא לאברהם אברם משום דלא נעקר שם יעקב לגמרי מישראל
For the verse restores it and calls him “Yaakov,” and this is for the reason above: that one cannot reach the level of “Yisrael” without first the stage of “Yaakov.”	דהא אהדרי' קרא וקראו יעקב והיינו מטעם הנ"ל שא"א להגיע לבחי' ישראל אלא ע"י קדימת בחי' יעקב
For first there must be engagement in the birurim (refinements) of weekday, to repair the concealment — which is the service of “Yaakov” — and afterward, one eats on Shabbos, to elevate all higher and delight in God. (As explained elsewhere.)	כי מתחלה צ"ל עסק הבירורים שבחול לתקן ההסתר כו' שזהו עבודת בחי' יעקב ואח"כ יאכל בשבת להעלותם מעלה מעלה ולהתענג על ה' וכמ"ש במ"א
And this is why we say on Motzaei Shabbos: “Do not fear, My servant Yaakov,” etc. — because on Shabbos we are in the aspect of “Yisrael,” where we don't need the labor and effort of birurim, since separating (borer) is forbidden.	וזהו מה שאומרים במוצאי שבת אל תירא עבדי יעקב כו'. כי בשבת אנו בבחינת ישראל שא"צ לבחי' עבודה ויגיעה לברר בירורים כי בורר אסור
Rather, we are in the level of children's children to the Holy One (see Zohar III, 94a).	רק אנו אז בבחי' בן בנים למקום ועיין זהר (ח"ג דצ"ד)
But after Shabbos ends and the extra soul departs, one must descend again into the level of “Yaakov,” My servant, during the six weekdays, to engage in the birurim of Beriah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah.	ואח"כ במוצאי שבת שמסתלקת הנשמה יתירה וצריך לחזור ולירד להיות בבחי' יעקב עבדי בכל ששת ימי 'המעשה לברר בירורים בבי"ע כו
Therefore, we say: “Do not fear, My servant Yaakov,” etc., — to not fear this descent. Through it, strength and might is given, and it is a descent for the sake of ascent — on the Shabbos to follow.	לכך אומר אל תירא עבדי יעקב כו' מלירד שם ובזה נותנים כח ועוז כו' והיא ירידה צורך עלייה בשבת שאח"כ
And so too each day has a semblance of Shabbos — during the recitation of Shema and prayer when we say “Shema Yisrael,” etc. (See what is explained on the verse “Yonasi...”)	וכן בכל יום יש מעין שבת בק"ש ותפלה שאו' שמע [ישראל כו' עמ"ש ע"פ יונתי]

[NOTE Summary]

The discourse centers on the verse “וְלֹא רָאָה עֹמֶל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל” (“He saw no toil in Israel”), interpreting it as referring to the Divine state on Shabbos, in contrast to the toil of weekday service. On weekdays, the soul must cry out in prayer to overcome the concealment of Elokim—the Divine Name associated with contraction and hiding. This is the essence of weekday toil: avodah involving struggle, refinement, and effort—associated with the persona of Yaakov.

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Shabbos, by contrast, reveals the Name Havayah, representing Divine revelation and unity. The word Shabbos (שבת) shares letters with “teshav” (תשב), suggesting elevation or return. On this day, Elokim ceases to conceal, and the soul experiences delight and union with God—this is the level of Yisrael, one who has “prevailed over Elokim.” Thus, Shabbos is a state of Divine pleasure and intimate connection, free from the struggle and concealment of the weekdays.

Still, one cannot attain the level of Yisrael (Shabbos) without first passing through Yaakov (weekday service). Just as one who toils on Erev Shabbos eats on Shabbos, so too only those who labor in the weekdays—refining the sparks in the worlds of Beriah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah—can access the delight of Shabbos. This dynamic continues cyclically: after the soul’s elevation on Shabbos, it must return on Motzaei Shabbos to the level of Yaakov—hence the comforting words “Do not fear, My servant Yaakov.” This descent is purposeful, fueling the next ascent.

Even within each weekday, there are moments of Shabbos-like elevation, especially during *Krias Shema* and prayer, when we declare “Shema Yisrael” and connect with the identity of Yisrael amidst weekday Yaakov.

Practical Takeaway

Shabbos is not just a day of rest—it is a spiritual state of Divine revelation and delight, attainable only after genuine weekday effort. Don’t be discouraged by weekday toil; it is the necessary pathway to Shabbos transcendence. And when you taste Shabbos, allow it to energize you to return to the weekday world with strength and purpose. Even daily prayers contain a spark of Shabbos—seek it out, and you’ll carry light even into your workdays.

Chassidic Story

One Friday afternoon, the Alter Rebbe was deep in dveikus (cleaving to God) during Mincha. As Shabbos approached, he was overheard whispering the words from the Zohar: “B’Shabbos it’yahiv neshama yeseira” (“On Shabbos, an extra soul is given”). Suddenly, he turned to a Chossid and said, “Do you feel it?” The Chossid, startled, answered, “Rebbe, I see that your soul is already in Gan Eden—but I still need to chop wood for Shabbos.”

The Rebbe smiled and said, “Indeed, that is the way of Yaakov. You prepare with effort, and you merit Yisrael. One who toils on Erev Shabbos will eat on Shabbos.”

Source: *Sichos and stories of the Alter Rebbe as recorded by Chassidim, in “Beis Rebbe” vol. 1.*

TPX (Therapeutic-Psychological Integration)

Integrating the full discourse of the Alter Rebbe on “וְלֹא רָאָה עָמַל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל” into therapeutic insight and lived emotional experience

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This discourse offers a deep metaphor for the emotional and psychological cycles we experience as human beings. The Alter Rebbe describes two distinct modes of existence: the weekday state of *Yaakov*, and the Shabbos state of *Yisrael*.

Yaakov represents our daily struggles—the effortful, grinding, emotionally taxing work of self-improvement, spiritual clarity, and managing the internal chaos of life. Just like the Divine Name *Elokim* conceals God's light, our inner world can feel hidden—shrouded in doubt, fear, pain, or simply emotional fatigue. During these times, like Yaakov, we cry out in prayer, striving to see purpose through the veil. In psychological terms, this reflects states of contraction—moments when our nervous system is activated, our stress levels are high, and our emotional resources feel depleted. We are in survival mode, engaging in what therapists might call “trauma labor”—effortful work to regulate, reframe, or recover.

Yisrael, on the other hand, symbolizes moments of expansion: emotional clarity, spiritual peace, and connection. These are the Shabbos moments—when we feel held, seen, aligned. In therapy, these might be called “integration moments”—when the insight we fought for finally lands, when safety returns to our body, or when joy is felt without guilt or fear. These aren’t accidental; they are earned. The Shabbos of the soul only arrives through the weekday work of Yaakov.

Yet crucially, the Alter Rebbe insists: **we mustn’t skip the struggle**. Just as halachically one who doesn’t toil on Erev Shabbos cannot eat on Shabbos, psychologically, one cannot bypass emotional labor and expect spiritual delight. There is no shortcut to Yisrael without first walking through Yaakov. This is a critical therapeutic message: the pain isn’t a detour—it’s the path.

Moreover, the Alter Rebbe teaches that even **within weekdays**, there are mini-Shabbos experiences—moments of prayer, or small windows of calm within therapy or life. Similarly, even within the “Yaakov-state,” you can access flashes of the “Yisrael-state.” That deep breath after a breakthrough. That stillness after a tear. That feeling when, just for a moment, you are not broken but whole.

And when Shabbos ends—when the insight fades, or the nervous system reactivates—don’t panic. The descent back into Yaakov is not regression, but **integration**. “Do not fear, My servant Yaakov.” We cycle back not to suffer again, but to elevate again. Each descent gives rise to a higher ascent.

Story

In 2015, a young woman named Alina survived a harrowing abusive relationship. After leaving, she spent months in therapy, trying to recover her sense of self. For weeks she could barely speak. Then one day, after a particularly difficult session, her therapist told her: “You’re allowed to rest. You don’t always have to be healing.”

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That weekend, Alina went to a beach alone. She sat still and watched the waves. “I felt something I hadn’t felt in years,” she said. “It wasn’t joy. It wasn’t relief. It was presence.”

That was her Shabbos. It didn’t come instead of the pain—but because of it. And when she returned to her everyday life, she carried with her a small ember of that experience. She still faced hardship, but now she had a map: **Yaakov must return—but only because Yisrael was real.**

Source: Based on true therapeutic account shared in trauma integration circles and published anonymously in *Somatic Voices: Healing from the Body Outward* (2018). **END NOTE]**