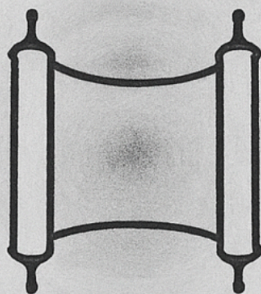


בס"ד

**Rebbe Elimelech
of Lizhensk
Parshas Bereshis**



Dedicated In Honor Of:

לע"נ

רבי לוי יצחק בן רבי מאיר

מברדיטשוב

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The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Bereshis

מאמר א

Introduction

Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk (1717–1787), one of the foremost disciples of the Maggid of Mezritch, was a foundational figure in early Chassidus and a central link in transmitting its inner path to future generations. Known as *the Noam Elimelech*, he transformed Chassidus into a living system of *avodah*—refinement of heart, thought, and action—focusing on *deveikus* (cleaving to God) through prayer, humility, and elevating the physical world to holiness. He established in Lizhensk a center of holiness that trained many of the great tzaddikim who would shape Eastern European Chassidus. The segment before us, centered on “*Bereishis bara Elokim*,” weaves a profound vision of man’s purpose—to unite Torah, prayer, and kindness in a single continuous ascent toward God.

In the beginning, God created, etc. See Rashi’s explanation:
“In the beginning” — for the sake of Israel, who are called
“the beginning,” and for the sake of the Torah, which is
called “the beginning.”

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹקִים כו' עֵין פְּרוּשׁ רַשִׁי'
 בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּשִׁבִּיל יִשְׂרָאֵל הַנִּקְרָאִים רֵאשִׁית
 וּבְשִׁבִּיל הַתּוֹרָה הַנִּקְרָאתָ רֵאשִׁית.

And in the Midrash it is also stated: for the sake of the mitzvah of the first fruits (bikkurim), which are called “the beginning.” And it may be said that all of them intended one and the same thing, for one said one expression and another said another, but they do not differ.

וּבַמִּדְרָשׁ נִמְי אֵיתָא בְּבִשְׁבִּיל מִצְוַת בִּכּוּרִים שֶׁנִּקְרָאוּ
 רֵאשִׁית, וַיֵּשׁ לומר וְכָלם לְדַבֵּר אֶחָד נִתְפָּנְנוּ, דְּמַר
 אָמַר תָּדָא וְאִמַּר אָמַר תָּדָא וְלֹא פְּלִיגִי.

For it is stated in the Mishnah (Avos 1): “On three things the world stands — on Torah, on service, and on acts of kindness.” And it is stated in another Mishnah (Avos 1): “On three things the world endures — on judgment, on truth, and on peace.”

דְּאֵיתָא בְּמִשְׁנָה (אבות פ"א) עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים
 הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד, עַל הַתּוֹרָה וְעַל הָעֲבוּדָה וְעַל גְּמִילוּת
 חֲסָדִים, וְאֵיתָא בְּמִשְׁנָה (שם) עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים
 הָעוֹלָם קָיָם, עַל הַדִּין וְעַל הָאֱמֶת וְעַל הַשְּׁלוֹם.

And it may also be said that they too intended the same thing. For behold, before us are three levels in the service of the Creator, exalted be He: one, Torah study for its own sake.

וַיֵּשׁ לומר נִמְי דְּלְדַבֵּר אֶחָד נִתְפָּנְנוּ, דְּהֵנָּה לְפָנֵינוּ ג'
 מַדְרָגוֹת הָעֲבוּרוֹת הַבוֹרָא יִתְעַלֶּה, הָאֶחָד הַתּוֹרָה
 לְלִמּוּד לְשֵׁמָּה.

And indeed our Sages permitted us even to learn not for its own sake, as they said, “A person should always engage [in Torah and mitzvos] even not for its own sake.”

וּבְאַמְתַּת הַתִּירוּ לָנוּ חַז"ל אָפְלוּ שְׁלֹא לְשֵׁמָּה,
 'כִּמְאֻמָּרם לְעוֹלָם יַעֲסוּק אָדָם כו'

If one has not yet reached the level of learning for its own sake, nonetheless do not let go of it, for a person does not quickly reach learning for its own sake except through great effort in serving the Blessed One with all good qualities.

אִם לֹא הִגִּיעַ לְמַדְרַגַּת לְמּוּד לְשֵׁמָּה, עַל כָּל פָּנִים
 מִזֶּה אַל תִּנָּח יָדָה, כִּי לֹא בְּמַהֲרָה יִגִּיעַ אָדָם לְלִמּוּד
 לְשֵׁמָּה, כִּי אִם עַל יְדֵי הִתְאַמְּצוֹת גְּדוֹל בְּעֲבוּדָתוֹ
 יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ בְּכָל הַמְּדוֹת הַטּוֹבוֹת.

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And the second level is service — prayer — which is the primary service of the heart, as it is written: “And to serve Him with all your heart” (Devarim 11:13). This refers to prayer, for the heart understands.

ומדרגה שנית עבודה היא התפלה, שהיא עיקר עבודה שבלב, כמו שכתוב ולעבדו בכל לבבכם (דברים י"א, י"ג) זו תפלה, כי הלב מבין.

Through it one can ascend to cleave to the Creator and bind oneself to Him, for the word “tefillah” means “connection” — to bind oneself to the Blessed Creator with great attachment.

ובה יוכל לעלות לדבקות הבורא, ולקשר עצמו בו יתברך, דתפלה הוא לשון קשר, שמרבה עצמו בבורא ברוך הוא בדבקות גדולה.

And this alludes to the knot of the hand-tefillin — to bind the thought of the heart to Him, exalted be He.

וזה מרמז לנו קשר של תפלין של יד, לקשר המחשבה שבלב בו יתעלה.

Therefore, one must exert even greater effort to pray constantly to the Blessed Name, that He should assist him so that the evil inclination not separate him from cleaving to the Creator.

ולזה צריך התאמצות יותר להתפלל תמיד לה' יתברך ברוך הוא שיהיה בעזרו לבלתי יפרידו היצר הרע מדבקות הבורא.

For it is the nature of man that his thoughts are prone to become involved in the affairs of this world.

כי טבע האדם שעלול הוא במחשבותיו בעניני עסקי העולם הזה.

And this is the explanation of the verse (Bereishis 6:5): “And Hashem saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth,” meaning: so long as he is on the earth, man’s evil increases.

והוא פרוש הפסוק (בראשית ו', ה') וירא ה' כי רבה רעת האדם בארץ, רוצה לומר כל זמן שהוא בארץ רבה רעת האדם.

And through this, even one who wishes to serve Hashem and does not do evil—nonetheless, his thought draws him only toward evil all the day.

ועל ידי זה גם הרוצה לעבד השם יתברך ואינו עושה רע, אף על פי כן מחשבתו מושכתו רק רע כל היום.

“And Hashem regretted” (Bereishis 6:6) — meaning, there was consolation for Him, blessed be He, in that man has an excuse before Him, for He made man.

וינחם ה' (בראשית ו', ו') פרוש נחמה היתה לו יתברך בזה שיש לו לאדם התנצלות לפניו יתברך, כי עשה את האדם.

Meaning, as our Sages said: “If not for three verses, the world could not endure,” and one of them is (Michah 4:6): “That I have caused evil,” i.e., the heart that I have given them — the evil inclination.

רוצה לומר כמאמר חז"ל אלמלא שלשה מקראות כו', והאחד מהם (מיכה ד', ו') ואשר הרעותי — את לבם שנתתי להם יצר הרע.

“And He grieved to His heart” — meaning, that Hashem grieved on account of man’s heart, that He gave him such a stony heart.

ויתעצב אל לבו — פרוש שהשם יתברך התעצב בשביל לבו של אדם שנתן לו לב אבן כזה.

“And Noach found favor” (Bereishis 6:8) — meaning, that Noach was a righteous man who transformed himself from the natural tendency of being drawn away from the Creator to cleaving to Him.

ונח מצא חן (בראשית ו', ח') פרוש שנח היה צדיק והפך את עצמו מטבע העלול להפרידו מדבקות הבורא יתעלה.

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He strengthened himself to cleave to the Creator, and “Noach found favor” — by reversing the letters of “chein,” meaning that he found favor in the eyes of Hashem.

והתחזק להדבק בבורא, ומצא חן — נח, בהפוך אתרינו חן, להיות לו חן בעיני השם יתברך.

The third level is acts of kindness. Behold, in the higher worlds, “compassion” means love — that the Blessed One loves the righteous according to their holy deeds which they perform on earth.

מדרגה שלישית גמילות חסדים, והנה בעולמות העליונים שם רחמים שהוא אהבה ורחימא, שהשם יתברך אוהב את הצדיק לפי מעשיו הקדושים אשר בארץ עשה.

But in this world, it is called “kindness” — for even to one who is undeserving, Hashem bestows gratuitous kindness, giving him all that he lacks.

אבל בעולם הזה נקראים חסד, דהנה אף למי שאינו הגון — השם יתברך עושה לו חסד חנם לתת לו די מחסורו.

However, the righteous person who has attained the level that he can elevate all material things upward — that is, to raise from their physicality the holy sparks that are within them, meaning, in his eating and drinking and the like —

אף הצדיק שהגיע למדרגה שיוכל להעלות כל הדברים הגשמיים למעלה, דהינו להעלות מהמריות הניצוצות הקדושות שיש בהם, דהינו במאכלו ושתיתו וכדומה.

And all his thoughts, at the time when he does material things, are only to elevate the holy sparks that are in them.

וכל מחשבותיו בעת שעושה הדברים הגשמיים, אינם אלא להעלות הניצוצות קדושה שבהם.

Such a righteous person does not need kindnesses — meaning free kindness, as mentioned above — to provide him with the things he requires in this world out of compassion,

וצדיק כזה אין צריך לחסדים — פרוש חסד חנם כנ"ל — לתת לו דברים הנצרכים בעולם הזה מצד החסד.

for the Blessed One bestows upon him all his needs according to the strict line of justice that is fitting for him, in accordance with his good deeds.

פי השם יתברך משפיע לו כל צרכו על פי שירתו. הדין הראויה לו על ידי מעשיו הטובים.

And this is the meaning of “gemilus chasadim” (acts of kindness) — from the expression (Bereishis 21:8) “And the child was weaned (ויגמל) Yitzchak,”

וזה פרוש וגמילות חסדים, מלשון (בראשית כ"א, ח.) “ויגמל הילד” — יצחק.

meaning that he no longer needs the levels of kindness, for it comes to him through the love of the Blessed God Himself.

שאינו צריך למדרגות חסדים, פי אם מגיע לו על ידי אהבת האל יתברך אותו.

And through this, the righteous person binds himself ever higher in the eternal life, even while he is in this world; he has already reached the delight of the upper world's eternal life.

ועל ידי זה הצדיק מקשר את עצמו למעלה ממעלה בחיים הנצחיים, אפלו כשהוא בעולם הזה, הגיע לתענוג עולם העליון מחיים הנצחיים.

And this is the meaning of the Gemara (Berachos 17a): “You shall see your world in your lifetime,” meaning that through this — that all his actions and movements are done in holiness and purity and cleaving and joy and love and awe —

וזה פרוש הגמרא עולמך תראה בחיך (ברכות י"ז, א') — פרוש שעל ידי זה שכל מעשיו ותנועותיו שעושה הכל בקדושה ובטהרה ובדבקות ובשמחה ובאהבה וביראה

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from this he attains the delight of the upper world even in this world.

And it may also be said that this is the intention of the verse (Bereishis 4:7)...

“And you who cleave to Hashem your God are all alive today” (Devarim 4:4) — meaning, through cleaving yourselves to the Blessed Creator, you will have eternal life even today, in this world, as mentioned above.

And this too is the meaning of the verse (Devarim 33:4): “Torah tzivah lanu Moshe, morashah kehilas Yaakov” — it also alludes to the three aforementioned levels.

“Torah tzivah lanu” — meaning, to all of us, He commanded to study His Torah even not for its own sake, and this is “for us,” each according to his level.

The second, “morashah” (heritage), refers to the second level mentioned above — to elevate the holy sparks, which are called the inheritance of the fathers, as is known.

And the Blessed Name has given us as an inheritance and possession this power — to elevate the holy sparks upward, and this is “morashah.”

And this is as in the verse (Daniel 12:2): “And He fulfills His faith to those who sleep in the dust,” meaning the holy sparks that have fallen below — the Blessed One fulfills His faith to them, to raise them from the dust to holiness.

And the third level, “kehilas Yaakov,” refers to the complete cleaving that the righteous one has — through this he influences all of Israel with goodness, gathering together the congregations of Yaakov who take shelter under his wings to receive his influence.

And with this, the saying of the Gemara (Shabbos 89a) is explained: “The Satan said, ‘Torah — where is it?’ He [the Blessed One] said to him, ‘Go to the earth.’”

“And you who cleave to Hashem your God are all alive today” (Devarim 4:4) — meaning, through cleaving yourselves to the Blessed Creator, you will have eternal life even today, in this world, as mentioned above.

מזה יגיע לו תענוג עולם העליון בעולם הזה.

(וַיֵּשׁ לומר נְמִי בְּנֵת הַפֶּסוּק (בְּרֵאשִׁית ד', ז

וְאַתֶּם הַדֹּבְקִים בִּה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם חַיִּים כְּלַכְּמֵ הַיּוֹם — פְּרוּשׁ, עַל יְדֵי הַדֹּבְקוֹת שֶׁתִּדְבְּקוּ עִצְמְכֶם בִּבְרֵא בְרוּךְ הוּא, יִהְיוּ לָכֶם חַיִּים נִצְחִיִּים גַּם הַיּוֹם בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה בְּנִי ל

וְזֶה נְמִי פְרוּשׁ הַפֶּסוּק (דְּבָרִים ל"ג, ד') תּוֹרָה צִוָּה לָנוּ מִשָּׁה מוֹרָשָׁה קֹהֶלֶת יַעֲקֹב — רָמַז נְמִי לְג' מִדְּרָגוֹת הַנִּי

תּוֹרָה צִוָּה לָנוּ — פְּרוּשׁ, לְכַלְנוּ צִוָּה לְלִמּוּד תּוֹרָתוֹ. אֲפִלּוּ שְׂלֵא לְשִׁמָּה, וְזֶה “לָנוּ” כָּל אֶחָד לְפִי מִדְּרָגָתוֹ.

שְׁנִית “מורשה” — זֶה מִדְּרָגָה שְׁנִית הַנִּי, לְהַעֲלוֹת הַנִּיצוּצוֹת קְדוּשָׁה, שֶׁהֵם נִקְרָאִים נַחֲלַת אֲבוֹת בְּיָדוּעַ.

וְנָתַן לָנוּ הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ נַחֲלָה וִירָשָׁה זֹה, לְהַעֲלוֹת הַנִּיצוּצוֹת קְדוּשָׁה לְמַעַלָּה, וְזֶה “מורשה”

וְזֶה כְּנֶאֱמַר וּמְקִיָּם אֲמוֹנָתוֹ לִישְׁנֵי עָפָר — רוּצָה לומר, הַנִּיצוּצוֹת קְדוּשָׁה שֶׁנִּפְלוּ לְמַטָּה, הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ מְקִיָּם אֲמוֹנָתוֹ לָהֶם, לְהַעֲלוֹתָם מֵעָפָר אֶל הַקְּדוּשָׁה.

וּמִדְּרָגָה שְׁלִישִׁית “קֹהֶלֶת יַעֲקֹב” — הֵינּוּ הַדֹּבְקוֹת גָּמוּר שֵׁשׁ לְצַדִּיק, עַל יְדֵי זֶה הוּא מְשַׁפִּיעַ לְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּל טוֹב, וְהֵרִי הוּא מְקַהֵל קֹהֶלֶת יַעֲקֹב שֶׁהֵם מְסֻתָּפִים תַּחַת צֵל כְּנָפָיו לְהַשְׁפִּיעַ לָהֶם.

וְכֵן בְּאוֹר מֵאֵמַר הַגִּמְרָא (שָׁבַת פ"ט, א') — אָמַר הַשָּׁטָן: “תּוֹרָה, הֵיכָן הִיא?” אָמַר לוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: “לֵךְ אֶל הָאָרֶץ

וְאַתֶּם הַדֹּבְקִים בִּה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם חַיִּים כְּלַכְּמֵ הַיּוֹם — פְּרוּשׁ, עַל יְדֵי הַדֹּבְקוֹת שֶׁתִּדְבְּקוּ עִצְמְכֶם בִּבְרֵא בְרוּךְ הוּא, יִהְיוּ לָכֶם חַיִּים נִצְחִיִּים גַּם הַיּוֹם בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה בְּנִי ל

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And this is as in the verse (Daniel 12:2): “And He fulfills His faith to those who sleep in the dust,” meaning the holy sparks that have fallen below — the Blessed One fulfills His faith to them, to raise them from the dust to holiness.

And the third level, “kehilas Yaakov,” refers to the complete cleaving that the righteous one has — through this he influences all of Israel with goodness, gathering together the congregations of Yaakov who take shelter under his wings to receive his influence.

And with this, the saying of the Gemara (Shabbos 89a) is explained: “The Satan said, ‘Torah — where is it?’ He [the Blessed One] said to him, ‘Go to the earth.’”

And the earth said, “It is not with me; go to the sea.” And the sea said, “It is not with me; go to the son of Amram.”

And it must be understood: how could the Blessed One say something that is not so?

What appears to me is this: the Blessed One said to the Satan, the accuser, “Go to the earth” — meaning, that even Torah study in materiality and corporeality, that is, not for its own sake, also brings satisfaction before Me.

And you have no permission to accuse the Children of Israel.

And the earth said, “It is not with me” — meaning, that the ultimate purpose is not in materiality, as mentioned above, but “Go to the sea,”

וְזֶה נִמְי פִּירוּשׁ הַפְּסוּק (דְּבָרִים ל"ג, ד') תּוֹרָה צִוָּה לָנוּ מֹשֶׁה מוֹרְשָׁה קֹהֵלֶת יַעֲקֹב — רִמְזוּ נִמְי לְג' מִדְּרָגוֹת הַנִּזְכָּר.

תּוֹרָה צִוָּה לָנוּ — פִּירוּשׁ, לְכַלְנוּ צִוָּה לְלִמּוּד תּוֹרָתוֹ. אֲפִלּוּ שְׂלֵא לְשִׁמָּה, וְזֶה “לָנוּ” כָּל אֶחָד לְפִי מִדְּרָגָתוֹ.

שְׁנִית “מוֹרְשָׁה” — זֶה מִדְּרָגָה שְׁנִית הַנִּזְכָּר, לְהַעֲלוֹת הַנִּיצוּצוֹת קְדוּשָׁה, שֶׁהֵם נִקְרָאִים נַחֲלַת אֲבוֹת בְּיָדוּעַ.

וְנִתַּן לָנוּ הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ נַחֲלָה וִירְשָׁה זֹה, לְהַעֲלוֹת הַנִּיצוּצוֹת קְדוּשָׁה לְמַעַלָּה, וְזֶה “מוֹרְשָׁה.”

וְזֶה כְּנֶאֱמַר וּמְקִיָּם אֲמוֹנָתוֹ לִישְׁנֵי עָפָר — רוּצָה לִוְמַר, הַנִּיצוּצוֹת קְדוּשָׁה שֶׁנִּפְּלוּ לַמָּטָה, הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ מְקִיָּם אֲמוֹנָתוֹ לָהֶם, לְהַעֲלוֹתָם מֵעָפָר אֶל הַקְּדוּשָׁה.

וּמִדְּרָגָה שְׁלִישִׁית “קֹהֵלֶת יַעֲקֹב” — הֵינּוּ הַדְּבָקוֹת גָּמוּר שֵׁישׁ לְצִדִּיק, עַל יְדֵי זֶה הוּא מְשַׁפִּיעַ לְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּל טוֹב, וְהָרִי הוּא מְקַהֵל קֹהֲלוֹת יַעֲקֹב שֶׁהֵם מְסֻתּוֹפִים תַּחַת צֶל כְּנָפָיו לְהַשְׁפִּיעַ לָהֶם.

וּבִזְוָה יְבוֹאֵר מֵאִמֶּר הַגְּמָרָא (שָׁבֵת פ"ט, א') — אֲמַר הַשָּׁטָן: “תּוֹרָה, הֵיכָן הִיא?” אֲמַר לוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא: “לֵךְ אֶל הָאֶרֶץ.”

וְאִמְרָה הָאֶרֶץ, אֵין בִּי — לֵךְ אֶל הַיָּם. וְהָיָם אֲמַר, אֵין בִּי — לֵךְ אֶצֶל בֶּן עַמְרָם.

וְיֵשׁ לְהַבִּין, הֵיאֵךְ יֹאמֵר הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ דְּבַר שְׂאִינוּ?

וְהַנִּרְאָה לִי, שֶׁהַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ אֲמַר אֶל הַשָּׁטָן הַמְקַטְרֵג, לֵךְ אֶל הָאֶרֶץ — דֹּאפְלוּ לִימוּד תּוֹרָה בְּאַרְצִיּוֹת וְחוּמָר, הֵינּוּ שְׂלֵא לְשִׁמָּה, גַּם כֵּן מְקַבֵּל לְפָנֵי נַחַת רִיחַ.

וְאֵין לֵךְ לְהַשְׁטִין עַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

וְהָאֶרֶץ אֲמְרָה, אֵין בִּי — פִּירוּשׁ, דְּעַקֵּר הַתְּקָלִית אֵין בְּאַרְצִיּוֹת כַּנִּזְכָּר, רַק לֵךְ אֶל הַיָּם.

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meaning, to the righteous one who elevates the sparks to the supernal sea, for there is their ascent.

הַיְנוּ, הַצַּדִּיק שֶׁהוּא מַעֲלֶה הַנִּיצוּצוֹת אֶל הַיָּם הָעֲלִיוֹן, שְׁלֹשָׁם הִיא עֲלִיתָן.

The righteous person who attains this level — he is the very essence of the purpose.

הַצַּדִּיק שֶׁהִגִּיעַ אֶל הַמַּדְרָגָה הַזֹּה, הוּא עֶקֶר הַמַּכְלִית.

And this is what is meant by the verse (Koheles 1:7): “All the rivers go to the sea” — meaning, “rivers” (נְהָלִים) is from the expression “inheritance” (נַחֲלָה),

וְזֶה אָמְרוּ “כָּל הַנְּחָלִים הוֹלְכִים אֶל הַיָּם” (קִהְלֹת א', ו.) — פִּירוּשׁ, הַנְּחָלִים לְשׁוֹן נַחֲלָה וִירֶשֶׁה

that is, the elevation of holy sparks is called “inheritance,” as mentioned above — they “go to the supernal sea.”

דִּהְיִנוּ, הַעֲלָאת נִיצוּצוֹת קְדוּשָׁה נִקְרָאִים יְרוּשָׁה כַּנִּל — הוֹלְכִים אֶל הַיָּם הָעֲלִיוֹן.

And the sea said, “It is not with me; go to the son of Amram” — meaning, there is still above this the level of Moshe Rabbeinu, peace be upon him,

וְהַיָּם אָמַר, אֵין בִּי — לֵךְ אֶצֶל בֶּן עַמְרָם. פִּירוּשׁ, שֵׁשׁ עוֹד לְמַעַל מִזֶּה מַדְרָגָה, כְּמוֹ מַדְרָגַת מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּנוּ. עָלָיו הַשְּׁלוֹם.

who attained the highest level of cleaving to the Blessed Creator in eternal life.

שֶׁהִגִּיעַ לְמַעְלוֹת הַדְּבָקוֹת בַּבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ בְּחַיִּים הַנִּצְחָיִים.

[NOTE Summary

Rabbi Elimelech begins with the verse *Bereishis bara Elokim* and its Midrashic interpretations—“for the sake of Israel,” “for the sake of Torah,” and “for the sake of the mitzvah of bikkurim (first fruits).” Though these seem distinct, he shows they express one unified intent: the world’s creation is sustained by three pillars—Torah, *avodah* (service), and acts of kindness (Avos 1:2). These, he teaches, are not abstract virtues but ascending modes of divine attachment.

The first level is **Torah**, the service of study—learning *lishmah* (for its own sake). While most begin *shelo lishmah*, even that has value if pursued with persistence, since only through steady refinement of the heart and traits can one come to learn purely for the sake of Heaven. The second level is **Avodah**, prayer—the labor of the heart. In prayer, the heart becomes a vessel for understanding and connection, binding the soul to its Creator, as the word *tefillah* (from *tofel*, to bind) implies. Even the knot of the *tefillin shel yad* alludes to binding the thought of the heart to God.

Because man’s nature draws his thoughts toward worldly matters, he must continually pray for divine assistance, lest the *yetzer hara* separate him from God. The verse “*And Hashem saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth*” (Bereishis 6:5) describes this human tendency—while on earth, his mind gravitates downward. Yet even so, God finds consolation (*vayinachem Hashem*)—that man’s frailty justifies mercy, for the Creator Himself implanted the evil inclination within him. Still, like Noach who found favor, one can reverse that tendency—transforming attachment to earthliness into cleaving to God. Such a person lives with divine grace (*chein*), turning the natural pull downward into ascent.

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The third level is **Gemilus Chasadim**, loving-kindness. In the higher worlds, kindness is synonymous with love—God’s response to the righteous according to their holy deeds. But in this world, *chesed* means undeserved mercy: God grants sustenance even to the unworthy. The *tzaddik*, however, who has refined his nature and elevates the sparks within all material acts—his eating, drinking, and even his thoughts—no longer needs unearned kindness, for his blessings flow through the channel of justice itself. God provides for him according to the merit of his deeds, as it says, *Gemilus Chasadim*—from *vayigamal*, “the child was weaned” (Bereishis 21:8). He has outgrown dependence on grace, receiving instead through divine love earned by closeness.

Such a *tzaddik* lives eternal life even in this world, as in *And you who cleave to Hashem your God are alive today* (Devarim 4:4). His every act is in holiness and joy, allowing him to “see his world in his lifetime” (Berachos 17a). The verse *Torah tzivah lanu Moshe morashah kehilas Yaakov* (Devarim 33:4) thus encodes the three levels: **Torah**—study for all; **Morashah**—inheritance, the elevation of sparks; and **Kehilas Yaakov**—the ultimate unity where the *tzaddik* gathers souls beneath his wings to draw them divine blessing. In this way, the world’s creation “for Torah, for Israel, and for bikkurim” becomes one: Torah is study, Israel is prayer, and *bikkurim*—the first yield of life—is kindness and elevation.

Finally, the Midrash that the Satan sought the Torah and was told, “Go to the earth,” and then to the sea, and then to “the son of Amram,” symbolizes these levels. God tells the Satan: even Torah studied with earthliness (*shelo lishmah*) brings Me joy; yet the earth admits, “Not with me”—its end lies beyond materiality, in the *tzaddik* who raises sparks to the “supernal sea.” Still, the sea points higher—to Moshe Rabbeinu, who reached perfect *deveikus* in eternal life. Thus, the full journey of creation is an ascent—from earthly study, to purified prayer, to sublime unity—culminating in Moshe’s total cleaving to God.

Practical Takeaway

Every person journeys through these three levels: learning Torah even imperfectly, praying with striving heart, and performing acts of kindness with intention to elevate and unite. The goal is to transform the physical world itself into holiness, so that even eating and daily labor become offerings of *deveikus*. Over time, the outer becomes inner, and one begins to live, like the *tzaddik*, the verse “You are alive today”—tasting eternal life within this world.

Chassidic Story

Once, a disciple asked Rabbi Elimelech how a person could reach *deveikus* while eating or walking. The Rebbe replied, “When you taste the bread, know that it too desires to rise to its Maker. You are only the hand that lifts it.” He then told of his brother, the holy Reb Zusha, who once wept before eating a crust of bread. “Zusha,” he said, “feels that this bread has waited its whole life to sing *Shema Yisrael* through me.” (Noam Elimelech, *Likutei Shoshana*, and oral traditions of Lizhensk) **END NOTE]**

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מאמר ב

And we shall return to the first topic — “Upon three things the world endures: upon judgment, upon truth, and upon peace.” Judgment refers to Torah, for Torah too is called “judgment,” in whatever manner it is studied, as mentioned above.

“Upon truth” refers to the level of Yaakov, who is the intermediary attribute of Rachamim (compassion), as it is written (Michah 7:20), “Give truth to Yaakov.” For through his elevating of the holy sparks, he arouses compassion and thus has no need for kindnesses, as explained above.

“Upon peace” refers to deveikus—the attachment that binds itself with the Blessed Creator, for His Name is “Peace.”

And with this we can understand the sacred verses of this parashah (Bereishis 2:16–17): “And Hashem commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may surely eat; but of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it, for on the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die.”

There are several points of difficulty: (a) the doubling of expression “*achol tochel*,” (b) the apparently superfluous word “*mimenu*,” (c) the double phrase “*mot tamut*,” and (d) Rashi’s explanation that by adding to the command, they came to diminish it.

This is difficult: surely she knew truly that Hashem had never commanded regarding touching at all, and if so, there is no proof from touching to eating; for concerning eating, there truly was a command and warning.

It appears that the root of the matter is as follows: the Blessed Creator said, “Of every tree of the garden you may surely eat,” alluding to the Torah, which is called “the Tree of Life.”

“*Achol*” (you may eat) is in the hidden form, meaning study for its own sake—this is the root and essence of the warning of the Blessed One.

וְנִחְזֹר לְעֵנִין הָרִאשׁוֹן — עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹלָם קָיָם: עַל הַדִּין, וְעַל הָאֱמֶת, וְעַל הַשְּׁלוֹם. עַל הַדִּין — זֶה תוֹרָה, כִּי תוֹרָה נִמְי אֶקְרִי דִין, בְּאַיִזָּה אֶפֶן שִׁיחִיָּה כַּנ"ל.

וְעַל הָאֱמֶת — הֵינּוּ לְמַדְרַגַּת יַעֲקֹב, שֶׁהוּא הַמְּמַצֵּעַ שֶׁהוּא רַחֲמִים, כְּמוֹ שְׁנֵאמַר (מִיכָה ז', כ') תִּתֵּן אֱמֶת לַיַּעֲקֹב. דָּעַל יְדֵי שְׁמִיעָלָה נִיצוּצוֹת קְדוּשָׁה, מְעוֹרֵר רַחֲמִים, וְאִין צָרִיד לְהַסְדִּים כַּנ"ל.

וְעַל הַשְּׁלוֹם — הֵינּוּ דְּבָקוּת, שֶׁרְבוּק עֲצָמוּ בְּבוֹרָא בְּרוּךְ הוּא, שֶׁשְּׁמוֹ שְׁלוֹם.

וּבְזֶה יוֹבֵן מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ שֶׁבְּפִרְשָׁה זֶה (בְּרֵאשִׁית ב', ט"ז–י"ז): וַיֹּצֵא ה' אֱלֹקִים עַל הָאָדָם לֵאמֹר — מִכָּל עֵץ הַגָּן אָכַל תֹּאכַל. וּמִעֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וָרָע לֹא תֹאכַל. מִמֶּנּוּ, כִּי בְיוֹם אֲכָלְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת תָּמוּת.

הַדְּקֻדָּקִים רַבִּים: (א) כְּפֻלּוֹי הַלְשׁוֹן “אָכַל תֹּאכַל” (ב) שֶׁהַמֶּלֶךְ “מִמֶּנּוּ” נִרְאִית מִיתְרָה; (ג) כְּפֻל “מוֹת תָּמוּת” (ד) מַה שֶּׁפִּרֵּשׁ רַשִׁי ז"ל — עַל יְדֵי שֶׁהוֹסִיפוּ עַל הַצֻּוֹי בָּאוּ לְיַדֵּי גִרְעוֹן.

דְּקוּשָׁה — הֵלֵא הִיָּתָה יוֹדַעַת בְּאֶמֶת שֶׁלֹּא צָוָה עָלֶיהָ הַשֵּׁם בְּעֵנִין הַנִּגִּיעָה מֵעוֹלָם, וְאִם כֵּן אִין רֵאזָה מִנִּגִּיעָה לֹאכִילָה, כִּי עַל אֲכִילָה בְּאֶמֶת הִיא מִצְוָה וְנִזְהָרָת.

וְנִרְאֶה לְפָרֵשׁ שֶׁשֶּׁרְשׁוֹ שֶׁל הָעֵנִין כֹּה: שֶׁהַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ אָמַר “מִכָּל עֵץ הַגָּן אָכַל תֹּאכַל” — רִמָּז לַתוֹרָה, שֶׁהִיא עֵץ הַחַיִּים.

אָכַל” — לְשׁוֹן נִסְתָּר, פָּרוּשׁ לְמוֹד לְשִׁמָּה, וְזֶהוּ “הַשֶּׁרֶשׁ וְהַעֲקָר שֶׁהִזְהִיר הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ בְּרוּךְ הוּא.

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And nevertheless, if you have not yet reached the level of studying Torah for its own sake, still—“*to'chel*” (you shall eat)—study for your benefit, meaning *not for its own sake*, but do not turn away from the Torah.

ועל כל פנים, אם לא הגעת עדין ללמוד תורה לשמה, על כל פנים “תאכל” — רוצה לומר, להנאתך תלמד, דהינו שלא לשמה, והוא “תאכל” לנוכח, ולא תמוש מתורתך.

“And of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat *mimenu*” — precisely from it.

ומעץ הדעת טוב ורע לא תאכל — “ממנו” דיקא.

Meaning: “From it you shall not eat” refers to the spiritual elements within physical things, wherein both good and evil are mixed. The “good” are the holy sparks present in all material entities.

רוצה לומר, דברי הנשמיות אשר בתוכם מערב גם פן טוב — דהם הניצוצות הקדושות אשר בכל דבר בגשמיות.

“From it you shall not eat” therefore means: do not make your intention arise from materiality and physicality alone, but only from the spiritual essence within it — namely, from the holy sparks that it contains.

לא תאכל ממנו — פרוש, שלא יהיה פונתך מחמירות ומגשמיות לבד, רק מרוחניות שבו, הינו הניצוצות קדושה שבו — מזה תאכל.

“For on the day you eat from it, you shall surely die” — means you will die in the World to Come, that is, in the eternal life; and the word “die” itself, written in hidden form, hints at the concealed world of everlasting life.

כי ביום אכלך ממנו מות תמות — פרוש, “מות” בעולם הבא, בחיים הנצחיים; ולשון “מות” הוא גם פן נסתר — רמז לעולם הבא, חיים הנצחיים.

“You shall die” — in this world.

תמות — בעולם הזה.

And behold, Chavah (Eve) heard two levels in this command — that is, two modes of Torah study: learning in any form as mentioned above, and also the elevation of sparks.

והנה חנה שמעה שתי מדרגות — דהינו למוד התורה באיזה אופן שלומד כנ"ל, וגם העלאת הניצוצות.

From this she understood that there must be yet a higher level — complete cleaving (*deveikus*) to the Blessed Creator.

ממילא הבינה שיש עוד מדרגה אחת, והיא הדבקות הגמורה בפורא יתברך שמו.

Therefore, when she said, “You shall not eat of it nor touch it,” the “touch” (*nega*) alludes to even a momentary interruption in attachment.

ולכן שאמרה “לא תאכלו ממנו ולא תגעו בו” — פרוש “נגיעה” בעלמא, הינו הפסקה בעלמא מהדבקות.

She meant: do not even momentarily stop your cleaving, lest you die — that is, lest your bond with the Divine be broken.

שגם פן לא תפסק, פן תמתון — דהינו הפסקת הדבקות.

For she thought that this third level — *deveikus* — too had been commanded; but in truth, *deveikus* arises naturally from the two earlier levels, Torah and elevation of sparks.

שהיא סברה שגם על מדרגה שלישית, והיא הדבקות, גם פן נצטווה; ובאמת, הדבקות ממילא באה על ידי שתי המדרגות הנ"ל.

And the serpent pressed her until she touched it and said, “Just as there is no death through this touching,” meaning: you are not separated from *deveikus* through this — “so too there is no death in eating.”

והנחש דחפה עד שנגעה בו, ואמר: כשם שאין מיתה בנגיעה זו — פרוש, שאין את הפסקת על ידי זה מן הדבקות — כך אין מיתה באכילה.

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Meaning: even if you do not eat with the proper intention to elevate the spiritual within, you will not truly die — “you shall not surely die.”

פרוש, גם אם לא תאכלי בכונה הנ"ל להעלות
הרוחניות, לא “מות תמתון”

And this is the meaning of “In the beginning, God created — for the sake of Torah... for the sake of Israel... for the sake of the first fruits.” As mentioned above.

והוא פרוש “בראשית ברא” — בשביל תורה כו',
ובשביל ישראל כו', כנ"ל

“For the sake of Israel” alludes to cleaving to the Creator through song and praise — for *Yisrael* (יִשְׂרָאֵל) hints to *Yashar-El* (יש"ר א"ל), “direct to God.”

ובשביל ישראל — רמז על דבקות בבורא יתברך
והעלה, שדבוק בו יתברך על ידי שירות ותשבחות;
ונה רמז “ישראל” — “יש"ר א"ל”

“For the sake of the first fruits,” which are called “reishis,” alludes to the elevation of holy sparks, as it is written (Shemos 23:19, 34:26), “The first of the first fruits of your land you shall bring to the house of Hashem.”

ובשביל בפורים הנקראים “ראשית” — רמז על
מדרגת העלאת ניצוצות קדושה, כמו שנאמר (שמות
כ"ג, י"ט; ל"ד, כ"ו): “ראשית בכורי אדמתך תביא
ל'בית ה'”

Meaning: the sparks that have fallen below, you shall bring to the house of Hashem — to elevate them from the dust, as explained above.

דהינו, הניצוצות שנפלו למטה, תביא בית ה' —
להעלותם מעפר כנ"ל

May Hashem teach us the path of truth, to serve Him with perfection, in truth and with wholeness. Amen — so may it be His will.

השם יורנו דרך האמת, לעבדו בשלמות, באמת
ובתמים. אמן, כן יהי רצון

[NOTE Summary

In this segment, Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk expounds on the verse concerning the Tree of Knowledge, revealing it as a metaphor for the pathways of divine service — Torah, elevation of sparks, and deveikus (cleaving to Hashem). The prohibition “of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat” teaches that a person must not engage in worldly or spiritual pursuits with self-centered motives, but only with pure intention to elevate the holy sparks embedded within physical reality. Eating “for oneself” — that is, indulging in Torah or material life for personal pleasure or pride — distances one from divine life.

Yet Hashem, in His kindness, gave man two modes of growth: first, “achol” — study *lishmah* (for its own sake), and second, “tochal” — study *she'lo lishmah* (not for its own sake), for even such learning will ultimately lead to purity. However, when man turns Torah into a pursuit of ego, or takes the physical without connecting to its inner Divine root, he experiences spiritual “death” — separation from eternal life.

Chavah (Eve) misunderstood the balance between these levels. She added “nor shall you touch it,” mistaking the level of **deveikus** for an independent command rather than the natural outgrowth of Torah and avodah. The serpent exploited this error: since touching did not bring death, he argued that eating too would not harm her — persuading her to confuse spiritual connection with self-directed experience.

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The tzaddik, however, integrates all three pillars — Torah, truth, and peace — embodying judgment, compassion, and attachment to Hashem. He refines the world by studying Torah with pure intent, elevating sparks through his deeds, and binding himself completely with the Infinite. Thus, Reb Elimelech concludes: the purpose of creation — “for the sake of Torah, for the sake of Israel, and for the sake of the first fruits” — corresponds to these three levels. “Torah” is the wisdom of Divine judgment, “Israel” is deveikus through song and praise (*Yashar-El* — direct to God), and “first fruits” symbolizes the elevation of fallen sparks. Through these three, the tzaddik transforms the physical world into a sanctuary for Divine presence.

Practical Takeaway

Every act, even mundane, can become an act of holiness when performed with the right kavannah. The challenge is not to reject the physical but to infuse it with spiritual awareness. Learning Torah, praying, eating, or working — all can become vehicles of elevation when the purpose is to bring holiness from “dust to heaven.” This is the task of every Jew: to eat only “from the spiritual within,” to draw life from the Divine spark in all things, and to remain connected through Torah, compassion, and peace — the three sustaining forces of the world.

Chassidic Story

Once, **Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk** was asked why he would pause in the middle of eating and close his eyes in deep focus. He explained: “When I eat bread, I imagine the farmer sowing the seed, the rain sent by Heaven, and the sun ripening it. I see Hashem giving life to every crumb. When I chew, I elevate those sparks back to their Source.” A student asked, “And what if a person cannot reach such thoughts?” Reb Elimelech smiled and answered, “Then let him simply remember Whose world he eats in — and that itself brings life to the sparks.”

END NOTE]

מאמר ג

“In the beginning, God created” — Rashi explains: “For the sake of the Torah, which is called *reishis*, and for the sake of Israel...” It seems that Rashi’s intention in these words was to reveal the Oneness of the Creator, blessed be His Name — that He alone is the singular source of all wonders and the true Creator.

The evidence of His Oneness is found within His people, Israel — the righteous, whose intellect and hearts are exceedingly broad, shining with infinite spiritual qualities and refined virtues.

Our eyes themselves behold their greatness — far above all other nations — and the holy Torah which the good God, in His mercy, gave to them.

בראשית ברא — פרוש רש"י ז"ל: “בשביל התורה שנקראת ראשית, ובשביל ישראל כו'.” נראה לפרש שפונת רש"י ז"ל בדברים האלה היא להראות אחדותו ותבונה שמו — שהוא יחיד. בנפלאותיו ובזאת אמת.

ונה האות והראיה מעמו ישראל — הצדיקים, אשר אור שכלם ולבם רחב מאד, במעלות ומדות טובות עד אין קץ.

אשר עינינו רואות מעלתם הגדולה מכל האמות, והתורה הקדושה אשר נתן להם האל הטוב ברחמי.

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These two — Israel and the Torah — testify and affirm His greatness, justifying His awe-inspiring and wondrous deeds, for He created His world alone, without helper or partner.

שְׁנֵי אֱלֹ — יִשְׂרָאֵל וְתוֹרָה — יִתְּנוּ עֵדוּתָם וְיִצְדְּקוּ
עַל רֵב נִוְרָאוּתוֹ וְנִפְלְאוּתוֹ, אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא עוֹלָמוֹ לְבִדּוֹ
בְּלִי עֶזֶר וְסִיּוּעַ בְּלִעָדָיו

As our Sages taught: “Three bear witness to one another — the Holy One, blessed be He, the Torah, and Israel.”

עַל דְּרָךְ שְׁאֲמָרוֹ: “שְׁלֹשָׁה מְעִידִין זֶה עַל זֶה —
הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, וְתוֹרָה, וְיִשְׂרָאֵל.”

This is the meaning of the verse: “*Shema Yisrael Hashem Eloheinu Hashem Echad*” — “Shema” (hear) alludes to the Torah, for “hearing” refers to the Torah we heard directly from His mouth, blessed be He.

וְזֶהוּ “שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה'” — רָמַז “שְׁמַע” עַל הַתּוֹרָה,
כִּי “שְׁמַע” הִיא הַתּוֹרָה שְׁשָׁמְעֵנוּ מִפִּי הַתִּבְרִיךְ

“Yisrael” refers to the people themselves, who are the testimony to the Divine — bearing witness that He is the Former and the Creator.

וְ“יִשְׂרָאֵל” הֵם הַעֲדוּת עַל הַשֵּׁם, שֶׁהוּא הַיּוֹצֵר, הוּא
הַבּוֹרֵא

Thus, Rashi’s words “for the sake of the Torah and for the sake of Israel” mean that both of these are witnesses to creation itself, confirming the truth of His Oneness.

וְלָזֶה כָּנוּ רַשִׁי גַם כֵּן בְּאֲמָרוֹ “בְּשִׁבִיל הַתּוֹרָה
וּבְשִׁבִיל יִשְׂרָאֵל,” לומר שְׁשָׁנֵי אֱלֹהִים הֵם רְאִיָּה עַל
“בְּרֵאשִׁית”

And with this, the matter is clear.

וְחַל הָעֵינָן

[NOTE Summary:

In this segment, Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk teaches that Rashi’s commentary on “Bereishis bara Elokim” — “for the sake of the Torah and for the sake of Israel” — is not only an explanation of purpose but a revelation of the absolute Oneness of Hashem. The Torah and the Jewish people are not external to creation; they are the *living testimony* of the Divine unity that animates all existence.

The Torah, called *reishis*, embodies Divine wisdom — the blueprint of creation through which Hashem’s will becomes manifest. Israel, the people who live by that Torah, reveal this unity in action: their spiritual sensitivity, refinement of character, and endless capacity for holiness are living evidence that Hashem alone governs all worlds. The tzaddikim, whose minds and hearts are expansive and radiant, bear witness to the infinite greatness of their Creator, demonstrating how His light flows through them in wisdom, kindness, and awe.

This is the meaning of the verse “**Shema Yisrael Hashem Eloheinu Hashem Echad.**” The word *Shema* alludes to Torah — “the hearing” of Divine truth at Sinai; *Yisrael* refers to the people who bear witness; and *Hashem Echad* proclaims the Creator who unites them both. Thus, the Torah, Israel, and Hashem form a triad of mutual testimony — three who “bear witness to one another.” In every generation, their unity affirms that the world was created by the One G-d alone, without partner or assistant.

Practical Takeaway

To study Torah or to live as a Jew is not simply to obey — it is to **testify** to Divine unity. Every act of learning,

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kindness, or prayer declares: “There is nothing besides Him.” The Torah refines our minds, while living its truths refines our hearts. When we live with integrity, holiness, and compassion, we become living evidence that the Creator dwells within His creation. The more one unites Torah and life — intellect and action — the more one reveals that the world’s true foundation is not chaos, but **oneness**.

Chassidic Story

Once, a non-Jewish scholar came to **Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk** and said, “You Jews speak of one G-d, yet your customs and laws are countless! How can there be unity in such multiplicity?” Reb Elimelech smiled and pointed to a candle on the table. “See its flame — it has many colors: white, yellow, and blue. Yet it is one light. So too the Torah — many paths, one fire.” The scholar nodded slowly and said, “Then your mitzvos are not divisions, but rays.” Reb Elimelech replied, “Exactly. Every Jew who lives with Torah becomes another flame revealing the One who burns in all.” **END NOTE]**

מאמר ד

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth...”

— this can be explained through the verse (Tehillim 11:7):

“For Hashem is righteous; He loves acts of righteousness.”

The meaning is as follows:

We see among people that what they already possess no longer remains dear to them; they constantly yearn for something beyond themselves.

But the Creator, blessed be He, is not so. Even though “Hashem is righteous in all His ways,” giving life and kindness to all flesh, He still desires and delights in the righteousness of man.

And even though our righteousness adds nothing to Him — “if we are righteous, what do we give Him?” — still He desires it, only to bestow good upon us in the end.

Therefore the verse says: “For Hashem is righteous, He loves righteousness” — though He is complete in His own righteousness, lacking nothing in His attributes, yet He loves and takes pleasure in man’s righteous acts.

And this is a great praise of the Creator — that He receives pleasure from our deeds, though He needs nothing from us.

The Creator, blessed be He, is unique in His attributes — for all His attributes are completely one with Him.

But we, His people Israel, are each different in our traits, serving Him according to our individual qualities.

בְּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ כו' —
יִבְאָר עַל דָּרָךְ זֶה, וְנִקְדָּיִם לְפָרִשׁ הַפְּסוּקָה (תְּהִלִּים
י"א, ז'): “כִּי צַדִּיק ה' צִדְקוֹת אֱהָב. הַפְּרוּשׁ כִּךְ
— הוּא

דִּהְיָה עֵינֵינוּ רוֹאוֹת, דָּרָךְ בְּנֵי אָדָם — הַדָּבָר שֶׁיֵּשׁ
לָהֶם כָּבֹד, אֵינוּ חֲבִיב בְּעֵינֵיהֶם, אֲלָא מִשְׁתוֹקְקִים
תְּמִיד לְדָבָר שְׁחוּץ לָהֶם.

אֲבָל הַבּוֹרֵא בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֵינוּ כֵן. אֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁצַּדִּיק ה'
בְּכָל דְּרָכָיו, וְנוֹתֵן צִדְקָה לְכָל בָּשָׂר — אֵף עַל כֵּן
מִתְאַוָּה וּמִשְׁתוֹקֵק בְּצִדְקוֹת אָדָם.

וְאֵף אִם צִדְקָנוּ, מָה נִתֵּן לוֹ? — רַק לְהִיטִיב לָנוּ.
בְּאַחֲרִיתָנוּ.

לָזֶה אָמַר הַפְּתוּב: “כִּי צַדִּיק ה' צִדְקוֹת אֱהָב” — אֵף
עַל פִּי שֶׁצַּדִּיק ה' בְּעַצְמוֹ, וְאֵינוּ חֹסֵר בְּמַדּוּתָיו כְּלוּם,
אֵף עַל פִּי כֵן צִדְקוֹת אֱהָב.

וְזֶה שֶׁבָּח גָּדוֹל לַבּוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ שֶׁמוֹ וַיִּתְעַלֶּה, שֶׁמִּקְבֵּל
תַּעֲנוּג וְאֵינוּ צָרִיךְ לָנוּ.

וְהִנֵּה, הַבּוֹרֵא בְּרוּךְ הוּא — יָחִיד בְּמַדּוּתָיו, שֶׁכָּל
מַדּוּתָיו הֵן אֶצְלוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ אֲחֵדוּת גְּמוּרָה.

וְאַנְחֵנוּ עִמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל, כָּל אֶחָד חֲלוּק בְּמַדּוּתָיו, וְעוֹבֵד
שֶׁמוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ לְפִי בְּחִינָתוֹ.

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This explains the verse: “For Hashem is righteous.” Although His righteousness is perfect and unified, still “He loves acts of righteousness” — He accepts all forms of righteousness from us.

וְזֶה פְּרוּשׁ הַפְּסוּק: “כִּי צַדִּיק הוּא” — לוֹמַר, אֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁהַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ יַחֲדֵד בְּצַדִּיקוֹתוֹ וְהַכֹּל אֶחָדוּת גָּמוּר — אֵף עַל פִּי כּוֹ, “צַדִּיקוֹת אֶהֱב,” רוֹצֵה לוֹמַר כָּל מִינֵי צַדִּיקוֹת אוֹהֵב וּמִקְבֵּל מֵאֲתָנוּ.

Even though each person gives tzedakah or performs a mitzvah in his own way — some with pure intent “for the sake of Heaven,” others for personal benefit — Hashem accepts them all.

אֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁכָּל אֶחָד נוֹתֵן צַדָּקָה בְּבַחֲיָנָתוֹ — יֵשׁ שְׂכָוִנָתוֹ לְשָׁמַיִם לְבַד, וְיֵשׁ מְכוּנִים לְטוֹבָתָם — אֵף עַל פִּי כּוֹ מִקְבֵּל מֵהֶם, כִּי מִתּוֹךְ שֶׁלֹּא לְשָׁמָּה בָּא לְשָׁמָּה.

Therefore it says “righteousnesses” (צַדִּיקוֹת) in plural — for He loves and receives from us all kinds of righteousness.

וְהוּא “צַדִּיקוֹת אֶהֱב” — לְשׁוֹן רַבִּים, שְׂאוֹהֵב מֵאֲתָנוּ הַכֹּל, כָּל מִינֵי צַדִּיקוֹת.

This explains “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” — those who serve for the sake of Heaven are called “heavens,” while those who serve not for its own sake are “earth.”

וְהוּא “בְּרָאשִׁית... אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ” — שְׁנֵי הָעוֹבָד לְשָׁמַיִם הוּא בְּבַחֲיָנַת “שָׁמַיִם,” וְהָעוֹבָד “שֶׁלֹּא לְשָׁמָּה הוּא בְּבַחֲיָנַת “הָאָרֶץ.”

Both — heaven and earth — “God created,” for He desires and includes them all in His will.

אֶת הַכֹּל בְּרָא “יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ, וּבְכָל רְצוֹנוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ.”

This also explains the verse, “And the earth was chaos and void...” — meaning that even those whose service is imperfect, not *lishmah*, He still desires.

וְזֶה מִפְּרֹשׁ הַפְּתוּב: “וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תוֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ” — פְּרוּשׁ, אֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁהָעוֹבָד שֶׁלֹּא לְשָׁמָּה הִיא מְדֻרְגָּה שְׂפִילָה, אֵף עַל פִּי כּוֹ חֶפֶץ בּוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ גַּם כֵּן.

The reason is explained by the verse: “And the Spirit of God hovered upon the face of the waters” — as the Midrash teaches, “this is the spirit of Mashiach.” When Mashiach comes, all will be rectified and unified.

וְהַטַּעַם אָמַר הַפְּתוּב: “וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל פְּנֵי הַמָּיִם” — עַל דֶּרֶךְ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בְּמִדְרָשׁ: “רוּחוֹ שֶׁל מָשִׁיחַ,” וְרוֹצֵה לוֹמַר: כְּשִׁיבּוֹא מָשִׁיחַ — יִהְיֶה הַכֹּל מְתֻקָּן.

[NOTE Summary

In this Maamer, Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk opens with the verse, “*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*” He connects it with “*For Hashem is righteous, He loves acts of righteousness.*” The Rebbe explains that while human beings lose appreciation for what they already possess, always desiring what they do not have, the Creator is utterly different. Although Hashem is perfect and lacks nothing, He still desires the *tzedakos*—the righteous deeds—of His creations. This desire does not stem from any deficiency, but rather from His will to bestow goodness upon His people.

The Rebbe reveals a deeper praise of the Divine: Hashem takes delight in our actions even though He gains nothing from them. His attributes are all unified within Him, yet He cherishes the diversity of human service—each Jew serving according to his own nature and understanding. Thus, the verse “*For Hashem is*

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righteous, He loves righteousness” uses the plural form, signifying that He loves every type of righteousness, whether pure and *lishmah* (for its own sake) or imperfect and *shelo lishmah* (for personal motives).

This is the secret of “*God created the heavens and the earth.*” “Heavens” represent those who serve for the sake of Heaven, while “earth” represents those whose motives are mixed or self-serving. Yet Hashem created and values both—He accepts every form of service, for even imperfect deeds are steps on the path to sincerity. The phrase “*And the earth was chaos and void*” refers to such lower forms of service, and still “*the Spirit of God hovered over the waters*”—the spirit of Mashiach, who will ultimately perfect and unite all levels of Divine service.

Practical Takeaway

Serve Hashem with sincerity to the best of your ability, but never despair if your motives are not fully pure. Even service *shelo lishmah* is beloved by Hashem, for He treasures every movement of the soul toward Him. Over time, these acts refine the heart and bring one to serve *lishmah*. Every honest effort, even when imperfect, draws Divine pleasure and is counted in the great tapestry of righteousness that will one day be perfected with the coming of Mashiach.

Chassidic Story

Once, a poor villager came to **Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk** with tears, confessing that he often gave charity not out of compassion, but because he feared being judged by others. “Rebbe,” he wept, “is such charity worth anything?” Rabbi Elimelech smiled and replied, “My dear Yid, when a child first learns to walk, he stumbles often—but the father’s joy is beyond measure at each step. So too does Hashem rejoice when His children take even small steps toward righteousness, even if they are not yet perfect.”

END NOTE]

מאמר ה

“And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.” On the surface, what is the novelty here? Why does it emphasize that God said “Let there be light,” and then “there was light”? What is added by the phrase “and there was”?

Furthermore, what do our Sages mean when they said that *at first it arose in thought to create the world with the attribute of justice*, but He saw that the world could not endure, so He combined it with mercy? How can we possibly attribute any change of will or thought to the simple, absolute Creator?

ויאמר אלקים יהי אור ויהי אור. “לכאורה, מה רבותא שאמר השם יתברך שיהיה אור ויהי אור? “מה חדוש הוא שאמר “ויהי

וגם יש לדקדק, מה שאמרו חז"ל: מתחלה עלה במחשבה לברוא העולם במדת הדיו וראא שאין העולם מתקיים ושתף עמה מדת הרחמים. וכי חלילה לחשב ולומר על הבורא הפשוט האמת שהתחלה עלתה במחשבתו כן ואחר כך שנה דעתו חלילה.

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Rather, the matter may be understood as follows. It is written that *“the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters.”* The letters of *merachefes* (מִרְחֶפֶת) allude to *Rafach Meis* (רפ"ח מ"ת), referring to the 288 sparks that fell during the breaking of the vessels (*sheviras hakeilim*). Our task is to elevate and rectify those fallen sparks.

Therefore, the verse “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” alludes to this rectification. When it says, “And God saw the light, that it was good,” we must ask — does it mean that only after He saw the light He knew it was good? God forbid! The Creator does not discover or realize things as man does.

The true meaning is that the speech of the Creator, blessed be He, which goes forth from His mouth, is itself perfect and complete. In His utterance everything is rectified instantly, needing no further repair or completion.

Thus, had He said “Let there be light” in the context of the 288 sparks that fell, the light would have immediately returned to its original radiance, just as it was before the shattering.

But the Holy One, blessed be He, desired that the righteous themselves should perform this labor — that they should elevate and refine the sparks through their own service.

For if He had completed the repair through His word, there would have been no need or possibility for human elevation and merit.

On the other hand, were He not to create any action or opening at all, the righteous would have no ability to accomplish anything. As our Sages said: *“Were it not that the Holy One helps him, he could not overcome the evil inclination.”*

Therefore, in His great mercy and exalted wisdom, Hashem looked upon that light — meaning, upon those sparks of holiness — and through His seeing and shining upon them, He granted power and assistance to the righteous, enabling them to elevate those sparks.

וְנִרְאָה לְפָרֶשׁ, דְּאִיתָא בְּפִתְּבִים: “וְרוּחַ אֱלֹקִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם.” אוֹתִיּוֹת “מְרַחֶפֶת” הֵן רפ"ח מ"ת, רִמְזוּ עַל הָרפ"ח נִיצוּצֵינִי שֶׁנִּפְלוּ בְּשִׁבְרֵת הַכֵּלִים, וְהִיא עֲבוּדָתָנוּ לְתַקֵּן וּלְהַעֲלוֹת אוֹתָן הַנִּיצוּצוֹת.

וְזֶהוּ “וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים... וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאוֹר כִּי טוֹב.” וְלִכְאוּרָה גַם כֵּן אֵינוּ מוֹבֵן — וְכִי שִׁינָה אֶעְלֹל יִתְבָּרַךְ שֶׁאֲחֲרֵי שֶׁנִּרְאָה הַבֵּינִי שֶׁהוּא טוֹב, וְלֹא קִדְּםָּ? חֲלִילָה לּוֹמֵר וּלְחֹשֵׁב כֵּךְ עַל הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ.

אִךְ הָעֵנָּן, וְהַשֶּׁרֶשׁ הוּא כֵךְ — שֶׁהַדְּבוּר שֶׁל הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ, הַיּוֹצֵא מִפִּי יִתְבָּרַךְ, נִשְׁלֵם הַכֹּל בּוֹ, וְאֵין צָרִיךְ עוֹד לְשׁוּם תִּקּוּן כָּלֵל, כִּי נִתְקַן הַכֹּל בְּמֵאֲמַר פִּי יִתְבָּרַךְ.

נִמְצָא, בְּעֵת נְפִילַת הָרפ"ח נִיצוּצֵינִי, אִם הָיָה אוֹמֵר בְּכִיכּוֹל בְּרוּחַ פִּי דְבָרִים אֵלּוּ “הִי אֹר”, “הִי מִיָּד חוֹזֵר הָאוֹר לְקִדְמוּתוֹ, כְּמוֹ שֶׁהָיָה בְּעֵת שֶׁהָאֲצִיל קִדְּםָּ הַשִּׁבְרָה.

וְהַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, תִּפְּץ דוֹקָא בְּעֲבוּדַת הַצַּדִּיקִים, שֶׁהֵם יַעֲלוּ אוֹתָם הַנִּיצוּצוֹת.

וְאִם הָיָה אוֹמֵר בְּדְבוּרוֹ כִּי “לֹא הָיָה צָרִיךְ לַעֲלִית הַצַּדִּיקִים.

וְאִם לֹא הָיָה עוֹשֶׂה הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ שׁוּם פְּעֻלָּה בְּכִיכּוֹל, לֹא הָיָה בִּיכְלֵת הַצַּדִּיקִים לַפְּעֹל כָּל זֹאת, כְּמוֹ שֶׁאֲמָרוּ ז"ל: “לֹאִילָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עוֹזְרוֹ — אֵין יָכוֹל לֹא.”

וְלִכֵּן עָשָׂה הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ בְּרַב רַחֲמָיו הַגְּדוֹלִים וּבְחֻקְמָתוֹ הַרְּמָה, וְנִרְאָה וְהִבִּיט בְּאוֹר הַהוּא, פְּרוּשׁ בְּאוֹתָן הַנִּיצוּצוֹת, בְּרִאשִׁיתוֹ וְהַשְׁנָחָתוֹ פְּעַל עוֹזֵר לַצַּדִּיק שֶׁיִּהְיֶה יָכוֹל לְהַעֲלוֹתָם.

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This is the meaning of the verse “And God said.” That is to say, if Hashem had actually uttered the words “Let there be light,” the light would have immediately returned to its original pristine state, leaving no work for the righteous to accomplish.

But Hashem, blessed be He, desired specifically the labor of the righteous — that through their effort and avodah they should accomplish the rectification and elevation of the sparks.

Therefore, “And God saw the light” — meaning, He looked into and gazed upon that light so that His seeing would serve as an aid and empowerment for the righteous to elevate the sparks.

This is the meaning of “that it was good” — as our Sages said, “This refers to the righteous, who are called ‘good.’” The verse *‘He stored it away for the righteous for the time to come’* means that those lights were hidden for the righteous of future generations who will elevate them.

“And God called the light Day” — this refers simply to those who are already perfected, and “the darkness” refers to that which still requires refinement. As long as the sparks are not fully elevated, that state is called “darkness,” and He called it “Night.”

And may it be the will of Hashem that with the coming of our righteous Mashiach, the entire world will be rectified and reach perfect unity. This is the meaning of “*And it was evening*” — when Mashiach will flourish, the night will become sweetened, as “evening” (עֶרֶב) implies sweetness and harmony.

It also alludes to the Divine Presence (*Shechinah*), which dwells in the West (*Ma'arav*), as in the verse “And it shall come to pass that at evening time there shall be light” (Zechariah 14:7). Then everything will be rectified and restored to perfect unity, as it was before the breaking of the vessels.

“And it was morning — one day” means that all will become unified; even the night will transform into day, and everything will become one.

This is the meaning of the statement “At first it arose in thought to create the world with the attribute of judgment.” Before the fall of the sparks, in the “world of thought,” everything existed in pure justice and perfection, without any need for mercy.

והוא פרוש הכתוב “ויאמר אלקים” — רוצה לומר, אם הנה אומר השם יתברך “יהי אור,” מיד ויהי אור, פרוש הנה חוזר האור לקדמותו כנ”ל, ולא הנה לצדיק שום עבודה.

והשם יתברך ברוך הוא רצה דוקא בעבודת הצדיקים שהם יפעלו כל זאת.

לכך “וירא אלקים את האור” — פרוש, שהביט וראה באור ההוא, למען יהיה עזרה וסיוע לצדיק להעלות הנצוצות כנ”ל.

ונהו “כי טוב” — כמו שאמרו חז”ל: “זה צדיק, הנקרא טוב.” והוא שאמרו: “נגזזו לצדיקים לעתיד לבוא,” פרוש, נגזזו אותם אורות לצדיקים העתידים לבוא, שיעלו אותם.

וירא אלקים לאור יום... ולחשך קרא לילה” — רוצה לומר, כפשוטו, שהצדיק המתקן נקרא “יום,” והצדיק שעדין צריך לחשוך, כל זמן שאינו בתקונו, “נקרא” חשך, וקרא אותו “לילה.”

ואם ירצה ה' בביאת משיחנו, שאז יתקן הכל, יהיה אחדות גמור, וזהו שרמז הכתוב “ויהי ערב” — רוצה לומר, כשיצמח משיח צדקנו במהרה, ויהיה הלילה לערב, פרוש “ערב” לשון מתיקות.

גם לרמז על השכינה הקדושה, שהיא במערב, ונאמר: “והנה לעת ערב יהיה אור” (זכריה י”ד, ז) — ויתקן הכל, ויבוא לאחדות גמור, כמו שהיה קדם שבירת הכלים.

ויהי בקר — יום אחד, “שיבוא הכל אל האחדות,” שגם הלילה יהיה ליום, ויהיה הכל אחד.

ונהו “מתחלה עלה במחשבה לברוא במדת הדין” — פרוש, קדם הנפילה, הנקרא עולם המחשבה, הנה במדת הדין, כי שם אין צריך לרחמים.

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But afterward, following the fall, it was necessary for Him to “see” — meaning to shine and gaze in mercy — for the world cannot endure without the righteous who raise up the sparks, and they themselves require the inclusion of mercy to succeed.

וְרָאָה — פְּרוּשׁ, אַחֲרֵי הַנִּפְּלָה, שֶׁהָיָה צָרִיךְ לְרֹאֶיָּה כַּנִּלְכָּד, לְפִי שֶׁאֵין הָעוֹלָם מְתֻקָּם בְּלֹא צַדִּיקִים כַּנִּלְכָּד, שֶׁהֵם צָרִיכִים לְהַעֲלוֹת אוֹתָם הַנִּיצוֹצוֹת, וְשֶׁתּוֹךְ מִדַּת הַרַחֲמִים, שֶׁהַצַּדִּיקִים צָרִיכִים לְרַחֲמִים, וְהֵבִין הַיֵּטֵב

[NOTE Summary

In this Maamer, Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk reveals the deep mystery behind the verse *“Let there be light.”* At first glance, it seems simple — God commanded light to exist, and it did. But the Tzaddik explains that this “light” refers to the *holy sparks (nitzotzos)* that fell during the *Sheviras HaKeilim* — the breaking of the primordial vessels. When God “saw the light that it was good,” this did not mean He discovered something new, for He is unchanging. Rather, His “seeing” represents His radiating assistance to the Tzaddikim, empowering them to elevate these fallen sparks through their own Avodah.

If God Himself had fully restored the light to its original perfection, there would have been no need for the righteous to serve, no purpose for human elevation or free choice. Instead, He willed that through toil, prayer, and Torah, the Tzaddikim should gather these sparks from darkness and return them to their Source. That is the meaning of “He saw the light that it was good” — “good” being a name for the righteous, as our Sages said: *“This refers to the Tzaddik who is called good.”*

When the verse says *“He stored it for the righteous for the future,”* it refers to these hidden lights — spiritual radiances reserved for the Tzaddikim who will ultimately complete the world’s rectification. The “day” symbolizes those who are already refined, while the “night” represents the aspects of reality and the soul still undergoing correction. Yet even night, says the Rebbe, will ultimately be transformed into sweetness (*erev*, meaning mixture or pleasant blending).

When Mashiach comes, the world will reach *achdus gamur* — complete unity — where light and darkness, mercy and judgment, perfection and striving will all harmonize as one. This, says Rabbi Elimelech, is the ultimate purpose of creation: that man becomes a partner in rectification, transforming separation into unity, darkness into dawn, until *“it will be evening and it will be morning — one day.”*

Practical Takeaway

Every moment of life contains divine sparks waiting to be lifted. When we act with holiness — learning Torah, performing mitzvos, or even refining a mundane act with sacred intent — we participate in God’s own creation, helping to transform darkness into light. Do not despair of your small deeds; each act of sincerity draws another spark back to its Source and hastens the world’s redemption. **END NOTE]**

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מאמר ו

“And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain.” At first glance, the term “knew” is puzzling — the verse could have simply said “And Adam came to Eve.”

The explanation is found in the verse regarding Avraham Avinu: *“Now I know that you are a woman of beautiful appearance”* (Bereishis 12:11). I have heard it explained that when Avraham came to Egypt — a land steeped in lust and immorality — the environment caused even him to experience a fleeting physical awareness of his wife. Hence he said, *“Now I know.”*

From this we learn the path of the true Tzaddik: he has no thought or desire even toward his own wife. Even at the moment of intimacy, his consciousness is completely bound to the upper worlds, unaware that he is with her physically.

This, then, is the meaning of *“And Adam knew Eve his wife”* — he was aware of her as his wife even during their union, meaning he placed his mind and knowledge upon her in that moment, unlike the way of the Tzaddikim who transcend awareness.

Therefore it says, *“And she conceived and bore Cain”* — as the Zohar calls him *“the impurity of jealousy”* (קנאה דמסאבותא).

This parallels the Gemara’s statement, *“Two ascended and seven descended.”* The “bed” (*mitah*) alludes to the upper levels, as in *‘Behold the bed of Shlomo’*.

For by rising to a spiritual state through two thoughts — one directed above and one below — Adam caused a descent of seven higher levels.

But the person who conducts himself in purity elevates these seven upper levels instead of causing their fall.

Understand this well.

והאדם ידע את תוה אשתו, ומהר ותלד את קין. לקאורה, מלת “ידע” אינה מובנת; הנה יכול “לומר” והאדם בא אל תוה.

אף הענין, בדרך יב באברהם אבינו עליו השלום: “הנה נא ידעתי כי אשה יפת מראה את” (בראשית י”ב, י”א). ושמעתי שנאמר בספר, שמפני שבא אברהם למצרים, ששם היו שטופים בזמה, ומחמת מחשבתם המלוכלכת, נתעורר גם בו הרהור קל “בלבו על אשתו. לכן אמר: “הנה נא ידעתי

ומנה נלמד דרך הצדיק האמתי, שאין לו שום מחשבה או תאוה, אפילו לאשתו. ואפילו בעת התקשרות עם אשתו, נעתו מדובקת בעולמות העליונים, ואינו יודע כלל שהוא עמה

וזוהי “והאדם ידע את תוה אשתו”, רוצה לומר שהיה נותן דעתו ויודע שהיא אשתו בעת התשמיש, להפך מדרך הצדיקים

ולכן נאמר: “ומהר ותלד את קין, בראיתא בזהר: “קנאה דמסאבותא

והוא כמו שנאמר בגמרא: “עלו למעלה שנים וירדו שבעה.” המטה היא רמז למדרגה עליונה, על דרך “הנה מטתו של שלמה

ומחמת שעלה למדרגה עליונה בשנים, דהינו בשתי מחשבות — אחת למעלה ואחת למטה — על ידי זה גרם ירידה לשבע מדרגות עליונות

והאדם אשר מתנהג עצמו בקדושה — הוא מעלה את שבע המדרגות העליונות

והבן היטב

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Bereshis

[NOTE Summary

In this Maamer, Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk explores the verse “*And Adam knew Eve his wife.*” Why does the Torah use the word “*knew*” instead of simply “*came to*”? He explains that “*knowing*” here refers not to physical knowledge but to *conscious awareness*. A true Tzaddik, says the Rebbe, can perform even the most physical acts while his mind and heart remain attached to the upper worlds. His soul is so bound to holiness that even during marital intimacy, his consciousness never departs from cleaving to the Divine.

Adam, however, at this early stage of human history, had not yet reached this level. When the verse says “*Adam knew Eve his wife,*” it means he was aware that she was his wife — his thought turned toward the physical relationship itself. This moment of awareness introduced an element of self-consciousness, separating him slightly from pure Divine attachment. Consequently, the result of this union was Cain, whom the Zohar calls “*the impurity of jealousy*” — a soul born from a mixture of spiritual and physical intent.

The Maamer further explains the saying of the Sages that “*Two ascended and seven descended.*” The two represent dual focus — thinking of both heaven and earth — which causes the seven higher levels of holiness to descend. In contrast, one who serves in absolute purity, detached from physical awareness, elevates those same seven levels rather than causing their fall.

Practical Takeaway

Holiness is not about escaping the world but about refining awareness within it. Every action, even mundane or bodily, can either lift or lower the soul depending on one’s consciousness. When a person fills the mind with Divine thought, the act itself becomes a vessel for elevation. The key to holiness, teaches Rabbi Elimelech, lies not in abstaining from the physical but in sanctifying it — transforming awareness into connection, and passion into purity. **END NOTE]**

מאמר ז

“**And a river went out from Eden to water the garden.**” The higher spiritual realms are called *Eden*.

The true and complete Tzaddik, who separates himself entirely from worldly matters and purifies every part of his being, is himself called *Eden* — from the term “*עֲרֵנָה*” (delicacy), as in the verse “*After I have withered, shall I again have delight?*” (Bereishis 18:12), which Rashi explains as “*the freshness of the flesh.*”

Such a Tzaddik is constantly bound to the higher worlds, as though he were not at all within this material realm.

This explains the verse “*How great is Your goodness which You have hidden for those who fear You*” (Tehillim 31:20). The

וְנָהָר יֵצֵא מֵעֵדֶן לְהַשְׁקוֹת אֶת הַגֶּן. דְּהַנָּה הָעוֹלָמוֹת
הָעֲלִיּוֹנִים וְהַקְּרִיִּים עֵדֶן.

וְהַצַּדִּיק הָאֱמִתִּי הַגָּמוּר, הַמְּפָרִישׁ עַצְמוֹ מִכָּל עֲנִיָּה
הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה וּמַצְחִיצֵהוּ בְּכָל גּוֹפּוֹ וְאֶבְרָיו — נִקְרָא עֵדֶן,
מִלְּשׁוֹן “עֲרֵנָה”, כִּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמָר (בְּרֵאשִׁית י"ח, י"ב)
“אַחֲרֵי בְלִתִּי הִתְהַלֵּי עֲרֵנָה”, וּפִירֵשׁ רַשִׁי: “לְשׁוֹן
צִחְצִיחַ בְּשָׂרָה.”

וְהוּא מְקוּשֶׁר תָּמִיד עַצְמוֹ בְּעוֹלָמוֹת עֲלִיּוֹנִים, כְּאִלוּ
אֵינוֹ כָּלל בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה.

וְזֶהוּ “מָה רַב טוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר צִפְנָתָה לִירְאִיֶּךָ” (תְּהִלִּים
ל"א, כ'). דְּאֵיתָא בְּסִפְרֵי שְׁלֵרוֹת צִפּוֹן אֵין מְחִיצָה,
רַק אֲוִיר.

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writings teach that the north wind (*ruach tzafon*) has no wall, only open air.

The reason is that if a person should dare to consider himself Divine — Heaven forbid — the angels command him to make a fourth wall to the north, to limit his arrogance.

All of this applies only in this world, where the evil inclination has sway. For that reason, God created the world without a northern wall — to leave room for human striving and humility.

But the perfect Tzaddik, constantly bound to higher worlds where no trace of evil exists, has no need for this separation. In his realm, even the “north wind” is pure and unified with holiness.

Thus, “How great is Your goodness which You have hidden for those who fear You” means that the true G-d-fearing have access to the hidden north — to that sublime realm of Eden itself.

The word “נהר” (river) connotes *light*, as in “*amiy sharei nehora*” (“streams of light”). Thus, “*A river goes out from Eden*” means that from the Tzaddik — who is called Eden — there flows a great light to water the *garden*, i.e., to bestow Divine influence upon the lower world, called “the son.”

“And from there it was divided and became four heads” — alluding to the manifold outpouring of blessing that flows from the Tzaddik into all corners of creation.

Not all Tzaddikim share the same level, for there are four distinct grades among them. Each serves to repair and elevate one of the four worlds — Asiyah, Yetzirah, Beriah, and Atzilus — raising them toward the fifth, hidden world of Divine unity.

The first is called *Pishon*, which can be read as an acronym for “*Pi Shoneh Halachos*” — “a mouth that studies laws.” This means the Tzaddik who learns and teaches halachah, fulfilling the statement that God has nothing in His world but the four cubits of halachah.

“*It encompasses the land of Chavilah*” — meaning that this Tzaddik refines the world in which there remain *bundles* (חבילות) of confusion and mixture, for the letters of “Chavilah” interchange with those of “Bav” (confusion).

ואמרו הטעם: שאם יבוא אחד ויחזיק עצמו לאלקות חס ושלום, אמרים לו שיעשה מחיצה רביעית לצפון.

וכל זה בעולם הזה, שיש בו שיכות ליצר הרע; לכן ברא הקדוש ברוך הוא העולם בלי מחיצה לרוח צפון.

אכל הצדיק הגמור, שתמיד מקשר עצמו בעולמות עליונים, שאין בהם שיכות לסטרא אחרא — שם רוח צפון כשאר הרוחות, כי שם אין שיכות לטעם הנ"ל.

וזהו “מה רב טובך אשר צפנת ליראיך” — רוצה לומר, שליראים האמתיים יש הצפון באמת, כי הם בעולמות העליונים.

והוא “נהר” לשון אור, כמו “עמי שרי נהורא.” “יוצא מעדן” — רוצה לומר, מהצדיק האמתי יוצא אור גדול להשקות את הגן, פירוש להשפיע לעולם הזה, הנקרא “בן.”

ומשם יפרד והיה לארבעה ראשים.

פירוש ולא כל הצדיקים שווים, אלא יש בהם חלוק לארבע מדרגות. שבהם עובדים כלם לתקן הארבעה עולמות ולהעלותם לעולם התמישי.

שם האחד פישון, פירוש פישון לשון גוטרקון “פי שונה הלכות”, רוצה לומר לשונה הלכות, דאין לו להקדוש ברוך הוא בעולמו אלא ד' אמות של הלכה.

הוא הסובב את ארץ החוילה, פירוש הצדיק הזה מתקן את העולם שיש בו קצת חבילות — דבי"ת ונ"ו מתחלפות באותיות בומ"ף.

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The verse adds “*where there is gold*” — for due to the attraction of gold, the world is drawn toward greed and harm; people fail to conduct business with full honesty.

דְּהִינוּ “אֲשֶׁר שָׁם הַזָּהָב,” כִּי מַחֲמַת הַזָּהָב שֶׁהָעוֹלָם צָרִיךְ לוֹ, יֵשׁ בּוֹ קֶצֶת חֲפָלָה וְנֹזֶק, שְׂאִין הָעוֹלָם מִתְנַהֲגִים בְּמַשָּׂא וּמִתֵּן בְּאַמוּנָה חֹס וְשָׁלוֹם.

Therefore, this Tzaddik must repair and transform that world, influencing its people with *pure gold* — the radiance of uprightness and faith in their dealings.

וְצָרִיךְ הַצַּדִּיק הַזֶּה לְתַקֵּן וּלְסַבֵּב לְהַשְׁפִּיעַ לָהֶם זָהָב טָהוֹר.

“And the gold of that land is good.” This means that the *gold* — the illumination that the Tzaddik bestows — is good and holy.

וְהַזָּהָב הַהוּא טוֹב – פִּירוּשׁ, הַזָּהָב הַזֶּה שֶׁהַצַּדִּיק מַשְׁפִּיעַ לָהֶם הוּא טוֹב.

“There is the bdellium and the shoham stone.” This indicates a lofty state of holiness, as the *manna* is described (Bamidbar 11:7): “its appearance was like bdellium.” The shoham stone likewise alludes to sanctity.

שָׁם הַבְּדֵלָח וְאֶבֶן הַשְּׁהָם – רוֹצֵה לומר שֶׁהוּא בְּקִדְשָׁה גְדוֹלָה, כְּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בָּמֶן (בְּמִדְבָּר י"א, ז') “וַיַּעֲזִין הוֹכִיּוֹ כַּעֲזִין הַבְּדֵלָח,” וְאֶבֶן הַשְּׁהָם גַּם כֵּן רִמַּז לְקִדְשָׁה.

“And the name of the second river is Gichon.” This alludes to the second type of Tzaddik, whose essence is humility — constantly entering and exiting himself (*shif ayl v'shif nafik*), in a state of continual self-nullification.

וְשֵׁם הַנָּהָר הַשֵּׁנִי גִיחוֹן – רִמַּז לְצַדִּיק הַשֵּׁנִי, שֶׁהוּא בְּהִכְנָעָה גְדוֹלָה, “שִׁיף עַל וְשִׁיף נָפִיק,” עַל דֶּרֶךְ “שְׂאֵמֶר הַכְּתוּב “כָּל הוֹלֵךְ עַל נַחוֹן

“It encompasses the land of Cush.” The Sages explained the phrase “*Divrei Cush*” regarding King Saul (Tehillim 7:1): just as Cush differs in color, Saul differed in his deeds — some for good, others otherwise.

הוּא הַסּוֹבֵב אֶת אֶרֶץ כּוּשׁ. “וְאֵיתָא” שֶׁגִּיּוֹן לְדוֹד עַל דְּבָרֵי כּוּשׁ. “וְדָרְשׁוּ חֲזוֹ” ל: “מָה כּוּשׁ מְשַׁנָּה בְּעוֹרוֹ, אֶף שְׂאוֹל מְשַׁנָּה בְּמַעֲשָׁיו

It is written (I Shmuel 13:1), “Saul was one year old when he reigned.” The Sages interpreted this to mean he was as innocent as a one-year-old without sin — yet others read it as “like a soiled child,” implying spiritual impurity.

וְאֵיתָא “כֵּן שָׁנָה שְׂאוֹל בְּמַלְכוֹ,” וְדָרְשׁוּ חֲזוֹ” ל: “כֵּן שָׁנָה בְּלֹא חַטָּא.” וּמִקְשָׁה הַגִּמְרָא: “וְאֵיתָא כְּתִינוּךְ כֵּן שָׁנָה שֶׁהוּא מְלַכְלָךְ

From here we learn that *Cush* can be interpreted in both ways — for good or for ill: the one who changes his deeds for righteousness, or the one who changes them toward corruption.

נִמְצָא שֶׁיֵּשׁ לְפָרֶשׁ “כּוּשׁ” לְטוֹבָה – שֶׁהוּא מְשַׁנָּה מַעֲשָׁיו לְטוֹב, וְכֵן לְרָעָה – כְּמוֹ שֶׁהַגִּמְרָא הִקְשָׁתָהּ.

Thus, “He encompasses all the land of Cush” means that this Tzaddik surrounds and subdues the power of the evil one who perverts his ways — his righteousness shields the world from the accuser’s power.

וְהוּא הַסּוֹבֵב אֶת כָּל אֶרֶץ כּוּשׁ – רוֹצֵה לומר, הַצַּדִּיק הַזֶּה מְסַבֵּב וּמַשְׁבֵּר כַּח הָאִישׁ הָרָע, שֶׁמְשַׁנָּה מַעֲשָׁיו לְרָעָה, וְצֹדֶקֶת הַצַּדִּיק מְגַן מִפְּנֵי הַמְּקַטְרֵג.

“And the name of the third river is Chidekel,” which Rashi explains as “*chad kal*” — sharp and swift. This refers to the Tzaddik who serves the Creator with sharpness, zeal, and fiery passion; through this, his service becomes easy and joyous.

וְשֵׁם הַנָּהָר הַשְּׁלִישִׁי חִידְקֵל, כְּפִירוּשׁ רַשִׁי “חַד קָל” – רוֹצֵה לומר, מִי שֶׁתּוֹפֵס וּמַחֲזִיק בְּעֲבוּדַת הַבּוֹרָא בְּחִדּוּד גְּדוֹל וּבְזִרְיוֹת וּבְחֻמֵּימוֹת, אֵזִי בָּאָה לוֹ עֲבוּדַת הַבּוֹרָא בְּקִלּוֹת.

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“It goes east of Ashur” — meaning that this Tzaddik opposes the one who walks in self-righteousness, who feels “straight” (*ashur*) in his own eyes. Like the verse “For women have called me fortunate” (Bereishis 30:13) — self-praise and pride. The Tzaddik breaks that arrogance.

הוא ההולך קדמת אשור — פירוש, הצדיק הזה
הולך כנגד זה שהוא ישר בעיני עצמו, על דרך “כי
אשרוני בנות,” שהוא מתפאר על שלמותו, והצדיק
הנ”ל משיבר כחו.

“And the fourth river is Peras.”

והנהר הרביעי הוא פרס.

[NOTE Summary

In this Maamer, Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk interprets the verse “*And a river went out from Eden to water the garden*” as a deep allegory of the Tzaddik and his spiritual influence upon the world. *Eden* represents the upper, hidden worlds of pure holiness, while the *garden* represents the physical realm. The true and complete Tzaddik, who has purified himself entirely from worldly attachment and constantly cleaves to the Divine, becomes himself a channel — a living *Eden* — from which a river of light and blessing flows into the garden of creation.

The Maamer continues to expound that not all Tzaddikim are equal. They correspond to the four rivers that branch out from Eden, each representing a different type of Divine service and rectification. The *Pishon* symbolizes the Tzaddik who studies and teaches halachah — illuminating the world through Torah law and truth, repairing a realm clouded by material desire (“the land of Chavilah, where there is gold”). The *Gichon* represents the Tzaddik of humility, who embodies self-effacement and purity, transforming those who twist their deeds into righteousness. The *Chidekel* signifies the Tzaddik who serves God with sharpness, zeal, and warmth, turning even challenging service into lightness and joy. And the *Peras* alludes to the Tzaddik whose flow of influence multiplies (*parah*) endlessly, extending to all corners of creation.

Together, these four rivers symbolize the various ways the Tzaddikim draw the light of *Eden* — Divine delight — into the world, each repairing a particular spiritual dimension. Through their service, the Tzaddikim sustain creation and direct its flow back toward its Divine Source.

Practical Takeaway

Every Jew has within themselves a spark of the Tzaddik — a potential to draw holiness into the world. When one refines their thoughts, words, and actions, they too become a “river from Eden,” channeling divine vitality into their surroundings. Study Torah with sincerity (*Pishon*), serve with humility (*Gichon*), act with passion (*Chidekel*), and bring goodness into the world (*Peras*). In doing so, you transform your life into a stream of living water nourishing the Divine garden around you.

Chassidic Story

Once, a young man came to Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, troubled that despite his learning and devotion, he felt no inner light. The Rebbe looked at him kindly and said, “When you learn Torah, do you hear the river flowing?” The man was puzzled. Rabbi Elimelech explained, “When a Jew studies with humility, joy, and love, his soul becomes a river — carrying the light of Eden into this world. But when one learns for honor or fear, the stream dries up. Fill your heart with kindness, and you’ll hear it again.”

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The man followed the Rebbe's words and returned months later radiant, saying, "Rebbe, now I hear the water." Rabbi Elimelech smiled, "That is the sound of Torah flowing through a purified heart."

(Source: *Noam Elimelech*, Parshas Bereishis; traditional oral accounts from Lizhensk Chassidim.)

END NOTE]