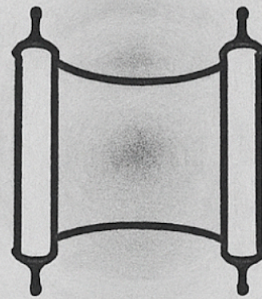


בס"ד

כתר שם טוב

Kesser Shem Tov

י-יט סימנים



Dedicated To:

Anonymous

May Hashem pour Shefa upon you

To find more Maamarim and to dedicate one visit:

ChassidusNow.com

כתר שם טוב
Kesser Shem Tov
י-יט Simanim

Siman #

The Holy One, blessed be He, is called a “man,” meaning a man of war, and Israel are called a “woman.” And this is the meaning of “the woman is acquired by her husband”—that they are called His wife, so to speak, through three means:

הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא נִקְרָא אִישׁ, שֶׁהוּא אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה, וְיִשְׂרָאֵל נִקְרָאִים אִשָּׁה. וְזוֹ שְׂאֵמְרוּ הָאִשָּׁה נִקְנִית לְבַעְלָהּ, שִׁיְהִיוּ נִקְרָאִים אִשְׁתּוֹ 'בְּבִכּוּל, בּג

First, through money (kesef), which refers to chesed—“days of kindness,” when the Holy One, blessed be He, assists him with His great kindness in the beginning, and then he yearns, desires, and is enflamed with passion for His Torah and service. This is called the “first gadlus (expansion).”

דְּרָכִים, א' בְּכֶסֶף, בְּחֵינַת חֶסֶד, יְמֵי הַחֶסֶד שֶׁהַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְסִייעוֹ בְּחֶסְדוֹ הַגָּדוֹל בְּתַחֲלָה וְאַזְ כּוֹסֵף וְחוֹשֵׁק וּמְתַלֵּב בְּתוֹרָתוֹ וְעוֹבְדוֹתוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ, וְזֶה נִקְרָא גְדֻלַּת רֵאשׁוֹן.

After that, this (gadlus) departs, and it is called “days of smallness,” and even though he no longer yearns or desires, nevertheless, out of necessity he must bind himself through the “shtar” (contract), which are the letters written in a book, which is called a shtar.

וְאַחֵר כִּי נִסְתַּלַּק זֶה, וְנִקְרָא יְמֵי הַקְטַנּוּת, וְגַם שְׂאֵינּוּ כּוֹסֵף וְחוֹשֵׁק, מְכַל מְקוֹם עַל צַד הַהִתְכַּרֵּת צָרִיךְ לְדַבֵּק [אֵת] עֲצָמוֹ בְּשִׁטְר שֶׁהֵם אוֹתִיּוֹת הַכְּתוּבִים בְּסֵפֶר, שְׁנִקְרָא שִׁטְר

Whether through the letters of Torah in his study, or in prayer, as I received from my teacher, the Baal Shem Tov, of blessed memory, that this has a segulah (spiritual potency)...

בֵּין בְּאוֹתִיּוֹת הַתּוֹרָה בְּלִמּוּדוֹ, וּבֵין בְּתַפְלָה, כְּאֲשֶׁר קִבַּלְתִּי מִמּוֹרֵי הַבַּעַל שֵׁם טוֹב) זְכָרוֹנוֹ לְבִרְכָה שְׁיִשׁ 'סְגוּלָה כּו

Until he once again returns to delight in it through the reentry of mochin (expanded consciousness) in Torah and prayer, which is called “biah” (union)—that is the second level of zivug (spiritual coupling) mentioned above.

עַד שְׁיִחְזוֹר אַחֵר כִּי לְהִתְעַנֵּג בּו [יְהִי] עַל-יְדֵי שְׂבָאוֹ הַמּוֹחִין בְּתוֹרָה וּתְפִלָּה שְׁנִקְרָא בְּבִיָּאָה, שֶׁהוּא זְוִיג ב' הַבִּי"ל.

[NOTE Summary

This teaching from the Baal Shem Tov explores the metaphor of the relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people as that of a husband and wife. It focuses on the spiritual process of divine union through three stages of acquisition—kesef (money), shtar (contract), and bi'ah (intimacy), mirroring the halachic ways a woman becomes married. The first stage, kesef, represents a time of divine favor when Hashem assists the individual with inspiration and emotional fervor—“days of chesed.” The soul experiences longing and passion for Torah and prayer, which the Baal Shem Tov identifies as the initial state of *gadlus* (spiritual expansion).

כתר שם טוב
Kesser Shem Tov
י-יט סימנים

The second stage is the withdrawal of that inspiration, termed *katnus* (smallness), where yearning fades. Yet, the person clings to Torah and tefillah not out of passion, but through duty and perseverance. This stage is compared to *shtar*—the written commitment to remain bound to Hashem even when no desire is felt.

Eventually, through this perseverance, higher divine consciousness (*mochin*) returns, and a deeper, more mature union occurs—referred to as *bi'ah*, a spiritual zivug that surpasses the first. The Baal Shem Tov stresses that clinging to Torah and tefillah even in times of inner darkness is the secret to reaching deeper unity with Hashem.

Practical Takeaway

When you're spiritually inspired, cherish it—but know that it's a gift. When that feeling leaves, don't despair. Your consistency in Torah and tefillah during times of dryness is more precious than your passion during inspiration. Cling to the words of Torah like a contract; eventually, this steady commitment brings about a more profound return of divine light and joy.

Chassidic Story

Once, the Baal Shem Tov noticed one of his disciples praying with intense passion and tears. The next day, the same disciple appeared cold and distracted. When asked about the sudden change, the disciple said, "Yesterday I felt Hashem's presence clearly. Today I feel nothing." The Baal Shem Tov replied, "Yesterday, Hashem was holding your hand. Today, He is testing whether you will still reach for His." He then added, "The truest love is not shown when the heart burns with fire, but when the heart is cold and still turns to its Beloved."

Source: *Shivchei HaBesht*, Maamar 71. **END NOTE]**

[FOOT NOTE: A person must persist in their attachment to Torah and prayer until they return to a period of "second greatness," and merit to take delight in it—specifically, in the words of Torah and prayer that they had previously engaged in out of compulsion and without pleasure. This occurs through the illumination of **mohin** (intellectual enlightenment) in Torah and prayer—when within the words of Torah and prayer, the understanding and inner depth within them are drawn forth and shine. This is referred to as "union" (**bi'ah**), because the illumination of the intellect "comes" and flows into the letters.

At that point, the person merits a renewed connection with the Holy One, Blessed Be He, which is the second union (**zivug sheni**) mentioned above—this "second union" comes after the initial connection during the "days of silver" (*kesef*), representing the first stage of longing and love. **END FN]**

Siman #א'

כתר שם טוב
Kesser Shem Tov
י-יט סימנים

The beginning of the Torah was to show the falseness of the sect that believes in the eternity of the world, etc., for it is proven that there is a Creator of the world who created the world *yesh me'ayin* (something from nothing).

בְּשֵׁי הַתְּחִלַּת הַתּוֹרָה הָיָה לְהַרְאוֹת סְתִירַת פֶּת הַמְּאֵינִים בְּקִרְמוֹת הָעוֹלָם וְגו' כִּי מוֹכַח שֵׁשׁ בּוֹרָא עוֹלָם שְׁחָדֵשׁ הָעוֹלָם מֵאִין לֵישׁ

Just as it begins in the book *Etz Chayim*: "When it arose in His simple will to create the world," etc. (see there).

וְכֵמוֹ שֶׁהִתְחִיל בְּסִפֵּר עֵץ חַיִּים, כְּשֶׁעָלָה בְּרִצּוֹנוֹ (הַפְּשוּט לְבְרוֹא הָעוֹלָם וְגו'). (יַעֲוֹ"שׁ)

And a compelling proof of this is from man who innovates in Torah: he innovates *yesh me'ayin*—something from nothing. At first he had not innovated anything, and now, the intellect gives birth and something new has come into being—*yesh me'ayin*.

וְרֵאִיָּה מְקַרְחַת לְזוֹה מְאֹדִם הַמְּחַדֵּשׁ בַּתּוֹרָה, שְׁחָדֵשׁ יֵשׁ מֵאִין, וּבִתְחִלָּה לֹא חָדֵשׁ וְעָכְשָׁיו הַשְּׂכָל מוֹלִיד וְנִתְחַדֵּשׁ דְּבַר יֵשׁ מֵאִין.

(From the Baal Shem Tov, of blessed memory.) And I heard from Zimri that within human intellect there are ten sefiros, for *Abba* and *Ima* (father and mother) are those that give birth to something newly innovated in Torah, and that which is newly innovated is called *Abba* and *Ima*.

מֵהַבֶּעַל שֵׁם טוֹב זְכוֹרֵנוֹ לְבָרְכָהּ (וְשִׁמְעָתִי מִזְמִרִי) שֵׁשׁ בְּשֶׂכָל אֶדָם עֶשֶׂר סְפִירוֹת, כִּי אָבָא וְאִמָּא הֵם הַמּוֹלִידִים דְּבַר שְׁנִתְחַדֵּשׁ בַּתּוֹרָה נִקְרָא אָבָא וְאִמָּא

In the beginning it is called *chesed*, for when the idea is newly born, it spreads infinitely—that is the aspect of *chesed*, as is known.

וּבִתְחִלָּה נִקְרָא חֶסֶד כְּשֶׁנִּתְחַדֵּשׁ הַדְּבַר שְׁמֵתִפְשׁוּט לֵאמֹר תְּכִלִּית שֶׁהוּא בְּחִינַת חֶסֶד כְּנוֹדָע

After that, one needs *gevurah*, the secret of *tzimtzum* (constriction), so that he can grasp it in order to say it before others.

וְאַחַר כֵּן צָרִיף בְּחִינַת גְּבוּרָה, סוּד הַצְּמִצּוּם, שְׂיֻכַּל לְתַפְסוֹ לְאוֹמְרוֹ בְּפָנֵי אֲחֵרִים

And all this is through the *middle line*, etc. Then one needs *emunah* (faith), as it says in *Makkos*: "Chavakuk came and established them on one principle—'The righteous shall live by his faith.'"

וְהַכֹּל עַל יְדֵי קוֹ הָאֲמִצְעִי וְגו', וְאַחַר כֵּן צָרִיף הָאֱמוּנָה כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב בְּש"ס דְּמַכּוֹת בָּא חֲבַקּוּק, וְהִעֲמִידֵן עַל אַחַת וְצַדִּיק בְּאֱמוּנָתוֹ יִחְיֶה

The aspect of *emunah* corresponds to the "two supporters of truth"—*netzach* and *hod*.

וּבְחִינַת הָאֱמוּנָה הֵם תְּרֵי סְמִכֵי קְשׁוּט נְצַח וְהוֹד

After that, the delight he has in what he innovated is called *yesod*, which is the limb of pleasure, and it becomes revealed through speech, which is *malchus* (kingship).

וְאַחַר כֵּן הִתְעַנּוּג שֵׁשׁ לֹו בְּמָה שְׁחָדֵשׁ נִקְרָא יְסוּד שֶׁהוּא אֲבָר הִתְעַנּוּג, וְנִתְגַּלָּה עַל יְדֵי הַדְּבוּר שֶׁהוּא ... [מְלָכוּת] וְדַפְח"ח

However, in truth, previously the Holy One, blessed be He, would create upper worlds through His engagement in Torah in its concealed mysteries.

אָבָל] בְּאֵמֶת כִּי קוֹדֵם הָיָה הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בּוֹרָא עוֹלָמוֹת עֲלִיוֹנִים עַל-יְדֵי עֶסְקוֹ בַּתּוֹרָה בְּרִזִּין סְתִימִין

And afterward, through His involvement in Torah in its revealed form, these revealed worlds were created.

וְאַחַר כֵּן בְּעֶסְקוֹ בַּתּוֹרָה בְּנִגְלָה נִבְרְאוּ עוֹלָמוֹת אֱלוֹ הַנִּגְלִין.

כתר שם טוב
Kesser Shem Tov
י-יט Simanim

[NOTE Summary

This teaching from the Baal Shem Tov presents a deep mystical model for how human innovation in Torah reveals the truth of Creation *yesh me'ayin*—something from nothing. The Torah begins by countering the belief that the world always existed, emphasizing instead that Hashem created the world from absolute nothingness. The Baal Shem Tov draws a parallel: just as Hashem created the world *yesh me'ayin*, so too does a person, when innovating a new idea in Torah, bring something into existence from nothing—he had no such thought before, and suddenly a new insight is born.

This process of innovation mirrors the ten sefiros within the human soul. The original inspiration is *chesed*—the boundless flow of new light. But to make the idea communicable, one must contract it (*gevurah*), then integrate it through the middle path. The idea is sustained by *emunah* (faith), especially when clarity fades. The resulting joy in the insight is *yesod*, and when shared through speech, it becomes *malchus*. This mirrors Hashem's own creative process: He first created upper worlds through hidden Torah, and then revealed worlds through revealed Torah.

Practical Takeaway

When you learn Torah and struggle to produce a new idea, realize you are participating in divine creation. Your effort to shape and share insight—even when it seems hard—is a reflection of Hashem's own creative act. Even moments of constriction or doubt are essential stages. Persist with *emunah*, and your words will become vessels for light. **END NOTE]**

יב# Siman

“For with the Name ייה, Hashem formed the worlds...”—This world was created with the letter hei, as it is written: “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created (בהבראם),” and the World to Come was created with the letter yud, because the righteous there are few.

And the matter: I heard from my teacher, the Baal Shem Tov, that they showed him—when they led him beneath the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, there were many people from Israel with him.

Afterwards, when they passed him beneath the Tree of Life, there were fewer. And after that, when they brought him into the inner Garden of Eden, they became even fewer—until only a small remnant remained.

פי בן"ה ה' צור עולמים ... עולם הזה נברא
בה"א שנאמר אלה תולדות השמים והארץ
בהבראם, ועולם הבא נברא ביו"ד מפני שצדיקים
שבו מעטין.

והענין, שמעתי ממורי הבעל שם טוב, ששראו לו,
כשהולכיהו תחת עץ הדעת טוב ורע היו עמו אנשים
הרבה מישראל,

ואחר כך שהעבירו אותו תחת עץ החיים היו מעטים,
ואחר כך שהכניסו אותו בגן עדן הפנימי נתמעט עוד,
[עד שנשארו מעט מזער [נדפח"ה

כתר שם טוב
Kesser Shem Tov
י-יט סימנים

[NOTE Summary

This teaching from the Baal Shem Tov offers a profound vision of spiritual ascent and refinement through the lens of a mystical journey. Drawing on the verse “For with the Name יהי Hashem formed the worlds,” the sages explain that this world was created with the letter **hei**, symbolizing openness and multiplicity, while the World to Come was created with the **yud**, denoting concealment and inner depth—since few attain it.

The Baal Shem Tov shares a visionary experience: as he was spiritually guided beneath the **Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil**, he found himself among many Jews—symbolizing how the majority dwell in realms of moral mixture and duality. As he progressed to the **Tree of Life**, the company diminished—representing those who transcend confusion and seek truth. Finally, upon entering the **inner Garden of Eden**, only a tiny remnant remained. This illustrates that the path to pure divine intimacy becomes narrower the deeper one journeys inward.

Practical Takeaway

Spiritual growth is a journey of increasing refinement and solitude. Don't be disheartened if fewer people accompany you the deeper you go. The masses may gather around the Tree of Knowledge, but those who seek the Tree of Life—and especially the inner Eden—must be prepared to walk with the few. Let this inspire humility, clarity of purpose, and unwavering resolve.

Chassidic Story

The Baal Shem Tov once told his students that in every generation there is a gate to the inner Garden of Eden, but most people turn back because the path narrows. One student asked, “Why does the path shrink?” The Baal Shem Tov replied, “Because as you come closer to the King, distractions fall away. There is less to carry, less to see, and less to say. Only the essential remains. And only those who seek the essence can pass through.”

Source: *Toldos Yaakov Yosef*, Parshas Vayikra, and *Shivchei HaBesht*, story 72. **END NOTE]**

Siman #ג

“And the spirit of Elokim hovered...”—this refers to the spirit of man (that is, the soul of man within him), that it should hover over the face of the waters—that is, the Torah.

וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֵף, דְּהִינּוּ רִיחוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם (דְּהִינּוּ
 נִשְׁמַת אָדָם שֶׁבְקָרְבוֹ), שִׁירְחַף עַל פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם, הִיא
 הַתּוֹרָה,

That he should engage in solitude and involve himself in Torah with deliberation—and then “God said, ‘Let there be light’”—meaning that God will illuminate his eyes with the light of Torah.

שִׁירְחַבּוּדָד וְנִעְסַק בַּתּוֹרָה לְהִיּוֹת מְתוּן, וְאָז וַיֹּאמֶר ה'
 יְהִי אוֹר, ר"ל שִׁירְחַבּוּדָד ה' עֵינָיו עַל-יְדֵי אוֹר הַתּוֹרָה

[Whether to do something or not—as I have written elsewhere.]

–] אִם לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ אוֹ לֹא, וְכֵמוֹ שֶׁכְּתִבְתִּי בְּמָקוֹם אַחֵר]

כתר שם טוב
Kesser Shem Tov
י-יט סימנים

[NOTE Summary

This teaching offers a Chassidic interpretation of the verse “וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם” – and the spirit of Elokim hovered over the face of the waters.” The Baal Shem Tov understands “the spirit of Elokim” as the human soul—*ruach shel adam*—which must “hover” over the waters, symbolizing Torah. This imagery describes the meditative state a person must cultivate: entering solitude, quieting the mind, and immersing in Torah with patience and calm.

When one reaches that state of focused engagement, the next verse becomes activated: “Let there be light.” Hashem causes the light of Torah to illuminate the person’s eyes, granting clarity in their inner world—whether to act or refrain, to choose truth over illusion. The key lies in mindful learning and spiritual attunement, not just intellectual effort.

Practical Takeaway

Don’t rush your learning. Make space for quiet. Let your soul “hover” in calm focus over the waters of Torah, and the light will come—not just as knowledge, but as divine clarity guiding your life. **END NOTE]**

סימן #7

“And it was at about midnight...”—for doubt (*safek*) is like *chatzos* (midnight), which can lean either way—toward holiness or toward the opposite.

וַיְהִי כַחֲצוֹת הַלַּיְלָה, שֶׁהַסֶּפֶק הוּא כַחֲצוֹת לְכָאן וּלְכָאן

At that moment, “I am Hashem,” I go out within Egypt—within his narrowness (*meitzar*)—to illuminate his eyes...

אָז אָנִי ה' יוֹצֵא בְּתוֹךְ מֵצָרִים, בְּמֵיֶצֶר שְׁלוֹ, לְהַאִיר 'עֵינָיו (וְכוּ).

And similarly, I heard an explanation on the saying: “If this despicable one (the evil inclination) confronts you, drag him to the beis midrash,” etc.

וּכְעֵין זֶה שִׁמְעָתִי בִּיאֹר אִם פָּגַע בְּךָ מִנוּוֹל זֶה מִשְׁכֵּהוּ [לְבֵית הַמִּדְרָשׁ וְגו']

[NOTE Summary

This teaching draws on the verse “וַיְהִי כַחֲצוֹת הַלַּיְלָה” – And it was at about midnight,” which is reinterpreted not merely as a time, but as a spiritual metaphor for **doubt** (*safek*). Midnight, or *chatzos*, marks a boundary—neither fully night nor day—symbolizing inner uncertainty or hesitation, where the soul teeters between clarity and confusion, holiness and impurity.

It is precisely in this moment of indecision, says Hashem, **“I go out within Egypt”**—into the person’s *meitzar* (narrow straits or constriction)—to illuminate their eyes. The Divine presence enters the soul’s inner darkness and brings clarity. This is echoed in the Talmudic teaching: “If this despicable one (the yetzer hara) confronts you, drag him to the Beis Midrash.” The struggle with darkness is not overcome by argument or repression, but by exposure to light—through Torah learning and divine illumination.

כתר שם טוב
Kesser Shem Tov
י-יט סימנים

Practical Takeaway

When you're stuck in confusion or moral struggle, don't battle the darkness directly. Instead, bring yourself into the light—through learning Torah, entering holy spaces, and seeking clarity from above. Midnight moments are invitations for redemption.

Chassidic Story

The Baal Shem Tov once visited a young man who had been plagued by intense doubts in faith. "I don't know what's true anymore," the man cried. The Baal Shem Tov asked, "Do you still want truth?" The man nodded. "Then go to the Beis Midrash," said the Baal Shem Tov, "not to silence your doubts, but to bring them with you. Torah does not fear your shadows—it transforms them." Years later, that man became a great teacher, guiding others through their own midnights. **Source:** Shivchei HaBesht, story 94. **END NOTE]**

[FOOT NOTE: It is written: "Thus says the Lord, 'At about midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt'" (Exodus 11:4), and this can be interpreted in the context of human spiritual work: "**And it was at about midnight**"—this refers to the doubt a person experiences, which is balanced like "midnight," equally uncertain, half leaning this way and half that way. At such a time, in order to resolve the doubt, "**I, the Lord, will go out in the midst of Egypt**"—"Egypt" (Mitzrayim) is derived from the word *meitzar* (narrow straits or constraints), meaning that the light of God shines into their constraint, into the difficulty in which the person finds themselves, to illuminate their eyes and enable them to resolve the doubt. **END FN]**

Siman #טו

(From the Baal Shem Tov:) There are three kinds of *chein* (grace): the grace of a place upon its inhabitants, etc.

**מהבעל שם טוב) ג' חינוכות הן, הן מקום על
'יושביו וגו'.**

(Explanation:) I heard in the name of my teacher an explanation on the Gemara in Chullin: "[Yaakov] folded all of Eretz Yisrael beneath him"—"The land upon which you are lying, to you I shall give it."

(ביאור) ד'שמעתי בשם מורי ביאר [ש"ס דחולין],
קיפל כל א"י תחתיו, הארץ אשר אתה שכב עליה
לך אתנה

(Meaning:) That he would not need to travel from place to place to refine his sparks—for he would refine them in his own place.

פירוש) שלא יצטרך לנסע ממקום למקום לברר
ניצוצות שלו, כי יבררם במקומו

[And see Pardes Rimonim, and with this is explained:] "And Noach found *chein* in the eyes of Hashem..."—that he would refine in his place from the *kelipos nogah* (neutral spiritual husks), which has the same numerical value (gematria) as *chein*.

וראה פרד"ס רמונים ובהנה יוכן] ונתן מצא ... הן
(וכו') [בעיני ה', שיברר במקומו מקליפות נוגה,
ג'ימטריא הן, והוא מצד שמצא הן בעיני ה'.

כתר שם טוב
Kesser Shem Tov
י-יט סימנים

[NOTE Summary

This teaching from the Baal Shem Tov explores the mystical concept of "**chein**"—divine grace—as it relates to one's spiritual mission in this world. Drawing from the verse "The land upon which you are lying, to you I shall give it," the Baal Shem Tov explains that some individuals possess the merit to refine the sparks (*nitzotzos*) of holiness specifically within their own location. Unlike others who must travel far and wide to fulfill their soul's purpose, such a person has *chein makom al yoshvav*—the grace of the place works in their favor—allowing them to elevate their surroundings from within.

This idea is connected to the Zoharic concept of *kelipas nogah*—the neutral spiritual shell that can be uplifted to holiness. The word "**chein**" has the same numerical value as *nogah*, implying that one who has found grace in Hashem's eyes has also been empowered to refine these sparks directly from where they are, without the need to wander.

Practical Takeaway

Sometimes your greatest spiritual work isn't somewhere else—it's exactly where you are. If you feel stuck or limited by your location, remember: if you're aligned with your mission, Hashem can fold the entire world beneath you. Your surroundings may contain exactly the sparks you're meant to uplift. **END NOTE]**

[FOOT NOTE From the Baal Shem Tov:

Our sages taught: "There are three kinds of charm (קֶחַן): the charm of a place upon its inhabitants, etc." The inner explanation of this is as follows: In every place in the world, there are sparks of holiness hidden within material, earthly things. The work of a person is to "refine" and extract the good from the bad—that is, to reveal the sparks of holiness within the physical things and return them to their source. This is accomplished by using those material things for the sake of Heaven and in service of God.

This task is assigned to every individual, as each person has specific sparks that are connected to the root of their soul. For this reason, God leads each person to the place where the sparks belonging to them are located.

Now, it is explained in the teachings of Kabbalah that this mixture of good and evil (material things containing sparks of holiness) is called *Kelipat Noga* (the "shell of Noga"). The word *Noga* (נוגה) has the same numerical value (gematria) as *Chen* (קֶחַן, "charm"). This explains the words of the sages: "The charm of a place upon its inhabitants"—the *chen* present in a specific place belongs to the people of that place ("upon its inhabitants"), and it is their responsibility to refine it.

כתר שם טוב
Kesser Shem Tov
י-יט סימנים

Based on this, we can explain the Talmudic teaching in *Chullin* regarding our forefather Jacob: "God folded the entire Land of Israel beneath him so that it would be easy to conquer, etc." This is related to the verse: "The land upon which you are lying, to you I will give it" (Genesis 28:13).

The meaning of this "folding" and bringing the entire land under Jacob's place is that he would not need to travel from place to place to refine the sparks. Instead, he would be able to accomplish this task within his immediate location.

In order to refine his sparks of holiness, just as Heaven guides each person from one place to another to find their specific sparks (as mentioned earlier), so too, he can refine them in his own place. He will achieve the refinement of these sparks through his service of God in his location, making it "easy to conquer."

This is also the inner meaning of the verse, "**And Noah found favor (*chen*) in the eyes of the Lord**" (Genesis 6:8). Because Noah was pleasing to God ("found favor" in its simple sense), God granted him a kindness: that his service would be "easy." He would find the "chen"—the sparks of holiness he was meant to refine—through his divine service in his own place. **END FN]**

סימן #7

(From the Baal Shem Tov, of blessed memory) (in the name of my teacher): “From my flesh I shall perceive G-d”—just as in physical union one can only produce offspring when engaging with a living organ, with desire and joy,

מהבעל שם טוב זכרונו לברכה) (בשם מורי], כי
 מבשרי אהיה [אלוה], כמו בננוג הגשמי אינו
 מוליד אלא המשמש באבר חי ותשוק ושמחה

so too in the spiritual union—which is speech in Torah and prayer—when it comes from a living limb, with joy and delight, then it produces spiritual offspring.

כה בננוג הרוחני, הוא הדבור בתורה ובתפלה,
 כשהוא באבר חי, בשמחה ותענוג, אז הוא מוליד
 יכו'.

[NOTE Summary

This teaching from the Baal Shem Tov, based on the verse “מבשרי אהיה – From my flesh I behold G-d,” draws a parallel between physical and spiritual union. Just as physical conception only occurs when the act involves a *living, joyful, and desiring* organ, so too, spiritual birth—producing new light, insight, or elevation—comes only when one's speech in Torah and tefillah flows from a *living, passionate* place.

The Baal Shem Tov defines this spiritual union as *dibbur* (speech) in Torah and prayer. If these are expressed mechanically, without vitality or delight, they cannot give birth to anything spiritually meaningful. But when a person engages with Torah and tefillah from a place of joy, desire, and inner aliveness, that speech becomes a vehicle for divine union—creating real spiritual effects, both above and within.

כתר שם טוב
Kesser Shem Tov
י-יט סימנים

Practical Takeaway

Don't just speak Torah or recite prayers—bring them to life. Let your learning and davening be filled with emotion, desire, and inner connection. Only when your words are “alive” can they truly create and uplift.

Chassidic Story

Reb Dov Ber of Mezeritch, the Maggid and chief disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, once paused in the middle of davening and stood still for a long time. When asked why, he explained: “My words were dry. They had no life. I waited until they warmed in my heart.” He learned this from his Rebbe, the Baal Shem Tov, who taught that Torah and tefillah must be alive—just as a lifeless limb cannot create life, lifeless words cannot create light.

Source: *Maggid Devorav L'Yaakov*, Maamar 22; *Shivchei HaBesht*, story 51. **END NOTE]**

[FOOT NOTE: From the Baal Shem Tov, of blessed memory:

Our master explained the verse "**From my flesh I shall perceive God**" (Job 19:26) as follows: From what occurs within a person on the physical plane, one can learn about the order of matters in divinity.

Just as in a **physical union**, procreation occurs only when there is vitality, desire, and joy, so too in a **spiritual union**—a complete connection and unification between two levels, in which the higher level illuminates and becomes revealed within the lower level.

This spiritual union refers to **speech in Torah study and prayer**, where there is a unification between the content of the words, understood by the person's intellect (the higher level), and the letters of speech that emerge from their mouth (the lower level).

However, this connection is effective only when the "organ" is alive—meaning, when the speech is expressed with **joy and delight**. Then the union accomplishes its purpose, bringing forth "offspring," which refers to growth and an increase in spiritual vitality. **END FN]**

יזי סימן

Mishnah (Kiddushin): “Whoever performs one mitzvah—they do good for him...”

[Etc., and it explains in the Mishnah, chapter 7 of Shabbos: “The primary labors are forty minus one,” etc.—why does it not simply say thirty-nine?]

It is written in *Chesed L'Avraham*, Nahar Mar”v: Prayer, which is the service of the heart, occurs in two modes: one is the secret of drawing down shefa (divine flow) to *Malchus* and its adornments.

משנה (דקדושיני) כל העושה מצוה אחת מטיבין לו.

וכו', וביאר משנה פרק ז' דשבת אבות מלאכות ארבעים חסר אחת וגו' דהנה ליה למימר ל"ט

דכתב בהסוד לאברהם נהר מר ו"ו"ל התפלה שהיא עבודה שבלב היא בב' מיני אר"ם, א' הוא סוד המשכת השפע למלכות וקשואטיה

כתר שם טוב
Kesser Shem Tov
י-יט Simanim

According to the level of one's soul-root, from there the flow is aroused to animate the *sefiros* by means of the pipeline of his soul, etc., and the *Shechinah* cleaves to him—because he is a conduit in the place of the *tzaddik*, the foundation of the world, etc.

ולפי מעלת שרש נשמתו משם מתעורר השפע להקיות בספירות על ידו על ידי צנור נשמתו וגו', ותדבק השכינה בו, כי הוא צנור במקום צדיק יסוד 'עולם וגו'.

And the essential intention is that the one who has kavvanah must draw down spirituality from the supernal levels into the letters (that he is reciting), so that the letters can ascend to the highest level to fulfill his request.

ועיקר הכוונה שצריך המכונן להמשיך הרוחניות ממדרגות עליונות אל האותיות (שהוא מזכיר) כדי שיוכלו האותיות לעלות עד המדרגה עליונה לעשות ('שאלתו וגו').

Further, it is fitting to have intention in his words, names, and appellations toward the very essence of the *sefiros*, and to the inner spirituality which becomes a garment for the Essence that spreads from the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof), uniquely united.

עוד ראוי לכוון בדבוריו ובשמות וכנויים לעצם הספירות ואל הרוחניות הפנימי הנעשה לבוש אל עצמות המתפשט מאור אין סוף המיוחד בתכלת (היחוד וגו' יעו"ש).

If so, a person must reflect when engaging in Torah and tefillah, that the letters of Torah and prayer are vessels like a body, and one must draw into them the spirituality—within that, the light of the Infinite, which is the true unity, like the soul that enlivens the body.

אם כן צריך האדם להתבונן בעסקו בתורה ותפלה שאותיות התורה והתפלה הם פלים כמו הגוף, וצריך להמשיך בתוכה הרוחניות,

And within it, the light of the Ein Sof, which is the true unity—like the soul that enlivens the body.

ובתוכו אור האין סוף שהוא האחדות האמיתי כמו הנשמה המחייה] לגוף.

And certainly in the performance of mitzvos, which are physical and a vessel—that one must draw into them the spirituality and the unity of the Ein Sof.

ופשיטא במעשה המצות שהוא גשמי וכלי שצריך להמשיך בו הרוחניות ואחדות א"ס.

And this is what it means: “Whoever performs one mitzvah”—precisely one—“they do good for him.” Not so with the thirty-nine labors, which correspond to the *kelipos* (spiritual shells), to extract from them the sparks of holiness.

וזהו שאמר כל העושה מצוה אחת, דיקא, מטיבין לו, משא"כ ל"ט מלאכות, שהם כנגד הקליפות לברר משם נצוץ הקדשה

And the *kelipos* are “forty minus one,” because they come from the world of separation—and understand this.

והקליפות הם חסר אחת, כי מעולם הפירוד המה, וקבו.

However, there is yet one great principle: a person must cleave inwardly to the Torah and the mitzvah—to bind his thoughts and soul to the root of the Torah and mitzvah that he is performing.

אף יש עוד פלל אחד גדול, שצריך לדבק עצמו, דהינו פנימיות התורה והמצוה, למשר מחשבתו, ונשמתו אל שרש התורה והמצוה אשר הוא עושה

כתר שם טוב
Kesser Shem Tov
י-יט סימנים

For if not, he is, Heaven forbid, making a separation and severing the branches. And as I have [heard] from my teacher (the RaV Yisrael Baal Shem Tov).

דאם לאו, עושה חס ושלום קצוץ ופירוד בנטיעות,
 (וכאשר שמעתי) [קבלתי] ממורי (הריב"ש).

And similarly I found in *Chesed L'Avraham* (Nahar 14), and this is his language: “The soul is from the essence of *Binah*, and the Torah is what flows from *Binah* downward into *Tiferes*, etc.

וכן (מצאתי) בקסד לאברהם (נהר י"ד וזה לשונו),
 פי הנשמה היא מעצם הבינה והתורה הוא מה
 'שנשפע מן הבינה ולמטה בת"ת כו

And when one binds and unifies his soul to its source in the place of Torah, he will attain from there hidden and concealed matters, [etc.—see there].

וכאשר מקשר ומייחד נשמתו במקורה במקום
 התורה, ישיג משם דברים סתומים ונעלמים [וגו'
 יעו"ש].

[NOTE Summary

This powerful teaching, rooted in the Baal Shem Tov's tradition, emphasizes the **inner vitality of mitzvos, Torah, and prayer**. Drawing from the Mishnah in Kiddushin—“Whoever performs one mitzvah, they do good for him”—it explains that mitzvos are not merely physical acts, but vessels that must be filled with spiritual consciousness. Torah and tefillah are like bodies made of letters; without spiritual intention, they are lifeless. True divine service involves infusing these vessels with *ruchniyus* (spirituality) and the *Or Ein Sof* (Infinite Light), much like a soul enlivens the body.

The discourse explores the concept that mitzvah performance should connect the doer's soul with the *shoresh haTorah v'hamitzvah*—the supernal root of the command. Without this connection, the act causes separation in the spiritual worlds (*kitzutz b'neti'os*). Prayer especially must draw down divine flow (*shefa*) through the channel of one's soul-root, thereby uniting the *Shechinah* with the individual. Even the “39 melachos” (creative labors of Shabbos) are seen as refining sparks from the *kelipos*, which are “forty minus one” to hint that they come from a world of fragmentation.

Ultimately, the Baal Shem Tov teaches that when a person cleaves to the inner essence of Torah and mitzvos—beyond the surface—he unlocks divine unity, gains access to hidden wisdom, and becomes a living channel for holiness.

Practical Takeaway

When performing a mitzvah or learning Torah, don't do it mechanically. Pause and connect your soul to the source of what you're doing. See each word and act as a vessel that needs the light of your intention and the warmth of your heart. Through that, you not only fulfill the mitzvah—you elevate the worlds.

Chassidic Story

Once, a simple Jew came to the Baal Shem Tov and asked, “Why don't I feel anything in my davening?” The Baal Shem Tov told him: “When you speak words of Torah or prayer, picture them as empty vessels. If you don't pour your soul into them, they remain hollow. But if you place your heart in each word—even one

כתר שם טוב
Kesser Shem Tov
י-יט סימנים

word—it will rise and shine before the King.” Years later, the man was known to pause before every word of prayer, as if lighting a candle.

Source: *Tzavaas HaRivash* §10; *Kesser Shem Tov* §218 END NOTE]

סימן #ח

(From the Baal Shem Tov) [I heard in the name of my teacher that] one must pray for his enemies, for they are the spirit of the tzaddik in *gilgul* (reincarnated form), etc.

מהבעל שם טוב) [שמעתי בשם מורי ש] צריך להתפלל על שונאיו שהם רוחו של צדיק בגלגול, וכי,

And through prayer, it becomes sweetened at its root, and his spirit is withdrawn from them—and what remains within them perishes on its own.

ועל-ידי התפלה נמתק בשרשו ומוציא מהם רוחו [והנשאר בהם פלה מאליו [וכי' ודפח"ח

[NOTE Summary

This short yet profound teaching from the Baal Shem Tov reveals a hidden spiritual dynamic behind interpersonal conflict. He explains that sometimes a person’s **enemies** are not merely external adversaries, but are carrying a **fragment of the person's own soul**—perhaps a spark of the tzaddik’s spirit reincarnated within them. The opposition they express may be rooted in this entanglement.

Instead of responding with anger or revenge, one should **pray for their enemies**. Through sincere tefillah, the divine source of the conflict is sweetened (*nimtak b' sharsho*)—the soul fragment is released and elevated from the adversary. Once the soul-spark is withdrawn, the negative force that animates the opposition dissolves on its own.

Practical Takeaway

When someone stands against you, don't only fight back—pray for them. Their resistance may be rooted in your own spiritual journey. With compassion and inner work, you may be releasing a part of yourself that's trapped within them. END NOTE]

סימן #ט

What we say, “for the sake of the unification of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Shechinah”—the intention is to bring *Tiferes* to *Malchus*, so that the Holy One, blessed be He, may glorify Himself with *Malchus*.

מה שאומרים לשם יחוד קודשא בריך הוא ושכינתיה, הכונה להביא את התפארת למלכות, שיתפאר הקב"ה עם המלכות,

That is, with the lowest level—the world of speech. This level gives life to all the worlds, as it is written: “By the word of Hashem the heavens were made,” and “You give life to them all.”

דהינו המדרגה התחתונה עולם הדבור, שזאת המדרגה מחיה את כל העולמות כמו שכתוב בדבר ה' שמים נעשו, ונאמר ואתה מחיה את כלם

כתר שם טוב
Kesser Shem Tov
י-יט Simanim

And the speech of the Holy One, blessed be He, constantly gives life to all the worlds.

והדבור של הקב"ה הוא תמיד מחיה את כל העולמות

When a person performs a mitzvah, the Holy One, blessed be He, is glorified in *Malchus*—that is, in His speech, which is within the worlds.

וכשאדם עושה מצוה, הקב"ה מתפאר במלכות, דהינו בדבורו שהוא בתוך העולמות

Then the person brings *Malchus* to the Holy One, blessed be He—meaning, Hashem glorifies Himself with the world of speech.

ואז מביא האדם את המלכות אל הקב"ה, דהינו. שהקב"ה מתפאר עם עולם הדבור

And this is the unification of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Shechinah: that Hashem glorifies Himself with *Malchus*, which is within the worlds, and His Kingship is revealed.

ונהו יחוד קודשא בריהו הוא ושכינתיה, שיתפאר הקב"ה במלכות שהיא בתוך העולמות, ונתגלה מלכותו

That is, that all will recognize that He is King in the worlds—and this is a great delight to the Holy One, blessed be He.

דהינו שיפירו הכל שהוא מלך בעולמות, ונהו תענוג גדול לה

And the attribute of *Malchus* depends on us and is in our hands—meaning that when we recognize His greatness and Kingship, then His attribute of Kingship is complete.

ומדת המלכות היא מצדינו ובנינו, דהינו שאנחנו מפירים גדלותו ומלכותו, ואז הוא נשלם במדת מלכותו

For there is no king without a people—it is through the people that kingship is revealed, and this brings the Holy One, blessed be He, great delight.

פי אין מלך בלא עם, שמתמת העם נתגלה המלכות, ויש לה תענוג גדול מזה

[NOTE Summary

This teaching from the Baal Shem Tov unpacks the inner meaning of the declaration “לשם ייחוד קוב"ה”—“for the sake of uniting the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Shechinah.” It explains that the true intent of this phrase is to draw the divine beauty (Tiferes) into sovereignty (Malchus), so that Hashem becomes glorified specifically through the lowest realm—the world of speech, the dimension where human beings live and act.

Speech is not merely a tool; it is the sustaining force of creation, as it is written, “By the word of Hashem the heavens were made.” When a Jew performs a mitzvah or speaks divrei Torah, they elevate the Shechinah, which is embedded in the world of speech, and bring it into union with the divine source. This causes Hashem to be glorified within creation—His kingship becomes manifest, and the unity of the upper and lower realms is realized.

כתר שם טוב
Kesser Shem Tov
י-יט סימנים

But this unity depends on us. Malchus only exists when the people acknowledge the King—“Ein melech b’lo am – there is no king without a nation.” The more we recognize Hashem’s presence in our world and act accordingly, the more fully His Kingship is revealed—and this brings Hashem immeasurable delight.

Practical Takeaway

Every mitzvah, every word of Torah or tefillah, is a moment of coronation. Don’t rush through them. Realize that you are revealing Hashem’s Kingship in the world. Your voice, your action, gives the King His crown.

Chassidic Story

Once, the Baal Shem Tov entered a shul and stood silently as a simple Jew prayed with deep emotion. Afterward, he said to his students, “That man lifted the Shechinah from exile.” They were puzzled, and he explained: “With every sincere word he uttered, he brought speech itself back to its Source. That is the unification of Hashem and His Shechinah—when a Jew’s words restore the King’s presence to His Kingdom.”

Source: *Tzavaas HaRivash* §17; *Shivchei HaBesht*, story 63. **END NOTE]**