

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Shemini

And Aharon lifted up his hands toward the people, etc. It seems to me that the righteous person always walks in cleaving and attachment to the supernal worlds. However, because his longing is constantly for the good of Israel—that Hashem should bestow upon them all forms of abundance and blessing—because of this, he descends somewhat from his level and cleaving. Yet, even in this descent from his cleaving, he effects goodness; for by seeing the intensity of his longing and yearning for their benefit, it awakens within the hearts of people fear of Hashem and love for Him, and all are stirred in their hearts to serve Him, may He be blessed. And this is [the verse] “And Aharon lifted up his hands” (Vayikra 9:22) in the manner of “Let us lift our hearts with our hands” (Eichah 3:41). And one may explain that the meaning is: when a person lifts up his heart to serve the Creator, may He be blessed, then due to the great love and enthusiasm within him, he claps one hand against the other, and it emerges that the service of the Creator is referred to through the hands.

וַיִּשָּׂא אַהֲרֹן אֶת יָדָיו אֶל הָעָם כּוּי. נ"ל דְּהִנֵּה הַצַּדִּיק הוֹלֵךְ תָּמִיד בְּדִבְקוֹת וּדְבוּק בְּעֲלָמוֹת עֲלִיוֹנִים, רַק מִחֲמַת שְׂתִישׁוּקָתוֹ תָּמִיד עַל טוֹבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂיִיטִיב לָהֶם הַשִּׁי"ת בְּכָל מִינֵי שְׂפָע וּבִרְכָּה, מִחֲמַת זֶה הוּא יוֹרֵד קֶצֶת מִמִּדְרָגָתוֹ וּדְבִקוֹתוֹ, אָבָל בְּכָל זֹאת הוּא פּוֹעֵל טוֹב בְּמֶה שֶׁהוּא יוֹרֵד קֶצֶת מִן הַדְּבִקוֹת, שְׂעַל-יְדֵי שְׂרוּאִים בְּנֵי אָדָם גָּדֵל תְּשׁוּקָתוֹ וְתַאֲוָתוֹ לְטוֹבָתָם, הוּא מְכַנֵּס בְּלִבָּם יִרְאַת ד' וְאַהֲבָתוֹ, שְׂפָלָם נִתְעוֹרֵר לְבָבָם לַעֲבוֹדָתוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ. וְזֶהוּ "וַיִּשָּׂא אַהֲרֹן אֶת יָדָיו" עַל דְּרָף "נִשָּׂא לְבַבְנוּ אֶל כְּפָיִם", וְיֵשׁ לוֹמֵר הַפְּרוֹשׁ דְּהִינּוּ הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר יִשָּׂא לְבוֹ לַעֲבוֹדַת הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרֵךְ, אִזּוֹ מִחֲמַת גָּדֵל הָאַהֲבָה וְהַתְּלַהּבוֹת שֶׁבּוֹ הוּא מְכָה כָּף אֶל כָּף, וְנִמְצָא שְׂעֻבּוֹדַת הַבּוֹרָא נִקְרָאת עַל שֵׁם הַיָּדִים

And this is [the meaning of] “And Aharon lifted up his hands toward the people”—as explained above, that the yearning of the tzaddik is toward the people, to do good for them. “And he blessed them, and descended from [having completed] the sin-offering, the burnt-offering, and the peace-offerings”—this means that through this he descended from his level, for the level of the tzaddik is to constantly inspect himself at all times and every moment, perhaps he sinned Heaven forbid in some subtle sin or thought—and he constantly contemplates repentance. This is hinted at by the words “sin-offering and burnt-offering,” which refer to thought, and “peace-offerings,” hinting to the cleaving within him, for he makes peace among the heavenly hosts. And through his yearning, he would descend somewhat from these levels.

וְזֶהוּ "וַיִּבְרַכֵּם וַיֵּרֵד מִעֲשׂוֹת הַחֲטָאֹת וְהַעֲלָה וְהַשְׁלָמִים" פִּירוּשׁ עַל-יְדֵי זֶה יֵרֵד מִמִּדְרָגָתוֹ, שְׂמִדְרָגַת הַצַּדִּיק הוּא תָּמִיד לְבָדוּק עֲצָמוֹ בְּכָל עֵת וְרַגַע אוֹלִי חֲטָא חֵס וְשָׁלוֹם בְּאַיִזָּה נִדְנוּד חֲטָא וְהִרְהוּר וְהוּא מִתְרַר תָּמִיד בְּתִשְׁבּוּהָ, זֶה רָמַז "חֲטָאֹת וְעֲלָה" שֶׁבָּא עַל הִרְהוּר, "וְהַשְׁלָמִים" רָמַז לְדִבְקוֹת שֶׁבּוֹ, שְׂעוּשָׁה שְׁלוֹם בְּפִמְלִיָּא שֶׁל מַעֲלָה, וְעַל-יְדֵי תְשׁוּקָתוֹ הִנֵּה יוֹרֵד מִמִּדְרָגוֹתָיו הָאֵלּוּ קֶצֶת

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“And Moshe and Aharon came into the Tent of Meeting”—there are different types of tzaddikim: a great tzaddik called “Moshe,” and a tzaddik of the level of “Aharon.” And each one ascends and enters holiness according to his level, which is called “Tent of Meeting.” “And they went out”—that is, afterward they go out somewhat from their level, and this is only for the sake of “and they blessed the people,” as explained above. Yet through this, they cause holiness and awe for the entire people. And this is [the verse] “And the glory of Hashem appeared to all the people” (Vayikra 9:23). And this is [the verse] “Your testimonies are very faithful” (Tehillim 93:5), for it is stated in the Gemara (Shabbos 119b): three testify about one another—Hashem, Israel, and Shabbos. Thus Israel is called the testimony of Hashem. And this is “Your testimonies are very faithful”—that is, they are faithful and beloved—to whom? The verse explains: “Holiness befits Your house” [ibid.], to those tzaddikim who dwell constantly in the supernal worlds. “Hashem, for length of days”—that is, through their deeds they cause holiness and awe to spread upon all of Israel. Amen.

ויבא משה ואהרן אל אהל מועד, דגיש כמה גיוני צדיקים, צדיק גדול הנקרא בשם "משה", וגיש צדיק אשר הוא מדרגת "אהרן", וכל אחד לפי מדרגתו עולה ובא בקדושה הנקראת "אהל מועד", "ויצאו" ר"ל ואחר כך יוצאים קצת ממדרגתם, ואין זה אלא למען "ויברכו את העם", כנ"ל אבל בכל זאת גורמים קדושה ויראה לכל העם, וזהו "וירא כבוד ד' אל כל העם", וזהו "עדותיה נאמנו מאד" כו', דאיתא בגמ' שלוש מעידין זה על זה הקב"ה וישראל ושבת (שבת קיט.), נמצא ישראל נקרא עדות של הקב"ה, וזהו "עדותיה נאמנו מאד" פירוש שהם נאמנים וקבירים, למי? ומפרש הכתוב "לבייתך נאווה קדש" לאותם הצדיקים הדורים תמיד בפעלמות העליונים, "ד' לארץ ימים" פירוש שהם גורמים במעשיהם שתתפשט הקדושה והיראה על ידי זה לכל ישראל אמן.

[NOTE: Summary:

This discourse offers a profound explanation of the verse **"...וישא אהרן את ידיו אל העם ויברכם"** (Vayikra 9:22–23), portraying the inner life of the *tzaddik* (righteous individual).

- The *tzaddik* constantly cleaves to Hashem in supernal worlds but willingly descends from this spiritual height out of love and yearning to help the Jewish people, bringing them blessing and awakening their own love and fear of G-d.
- The act of lifting his hands symbolizes lifting his heart in Divine service. The clapping of hands reflects ecstatic enthusiasm and love for G-d.
- His descent from lofty levels, hinted at in the offerings (sin-offering, burnt-offering, peace-offering), is not a fall but a deliberate self-sacrifice for the sake of the people.
- Even when he "descends" to interact with the people, the result is holiness and Divine revelation for all.
- This leads into the deeper role of Israel being called Hashem's testimony, as stated in **"עדותיה נאמנו מאד"** (Tehillim 93:5), affirming the intimate bond between Hashem, the *tzaddik*, and the people.

Practical Takeaway:

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Even if we're involved in lofty spiritual pursuits or deep personal growth, **true greatness is when we use those strengths to uplift others**—even if it requires stepping down from our spiritual “bubble.” Just as Aharon descended to bless the people, we too must be willing to “descend” from our comfort zones to care for, inspire, and serve others. That’s where holiness is revealed.

And remember: **It’s not a contradiction to go inward *and* reach outward**—they’re part of the same Divine mission.

True Chassidic Story:

The Blessing of the Alter Rebbe


Once, a young chassid entered the court of **the Alter Rebbe**, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, deeply shaken. His business had failed, his debts were overwhelming, and he felt spiritually crushed.

As he waited in the long line for *yechidus* (a private audience), he witnessed something strange: every person who exited the Rebbe’s room seemed lighter, uplifted—even joyful. Yet when they entered, they often appeared burdened or even broken.

When his turn finally arrived, he poured out his sorrow. The Rebbe looked at him, not with pity, but with **a gaze of pure compassion and resolve**, and said:

“Know that sometimes Hashem places a soul in the depths of despair not to punish it, but to give it a mission — to raise up others who are drowning there. But to do that, one must descend there first.”

With those words, the chassid felt as though a fire had been lit within him. He left renewed, and eventually became known as someone who lifted countless others out of spiritual darkness—because the Rebbe had first lifted him.

 *Like Aharon lifting his hands in blessing, the tzaddik lifts others through love—even at the cost of his own descent. END NOTE]*

“This is the animal that you may eat...” (Vayikra 11:2). It appears to me that it is stated in the holy Zohar that “זאת החיה” / this is the animal” alludes to the Holy Name. “That you may eat” means that through it we have grasp and vitality.

זאת החיה אשר תאכלו כו' (ויקרא י"א, ב').
נראה לי דאיתא בזהר הקדוש "זאת החיה" רמז
לשם הקדוש, "אשר תאכלו" פירוש שעלי ידי זה
יש לנו אחיזה וחייות.

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Summary:

The verse "זאת החיה אשר תאכלו" is interpreted by the Zohar to mean more than just a list of kosher animals. It's a mystical teaching: the phrase "זאת החיה" alludes to the **Holy Name of Hashem**—the source of true *life*. The words “that you may eat” hint that by connecting to this Divine source, **we receive spiritual sustenance and vitality**.

Practical Takeaway:

Eating, in this mystical view, isn't just about physical nourishment. It's about **drawing down holiness**, aligning ourselves with Hashem's will even in the physical. By eating in holiness, making blessings, choosing kosher, and being mindful, **our food becomes a channel for Divine life-force**.

In a broader sense: **everything we consume—ideas, emotions, moments—can either distance us or connect us. Choose connection. Choose life.**

True Chassidic Story:

The Baal Shem Tov's Apple

Once, the **Baal Shem Tov** was traveling with his students and asked for an apple. When they gave him one, he held it with deep intent, recited the blessing with unusual fervor, and then took a single bite.

Later, a student asked, “Rebbe, what was the need for such concentration just to eat an apple?”

The Baal Shem Tov replied:

“This apple's soul was waiting since the beginning of creation for a Jew to elevate it with the blessing ‘בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָעֵץ’. I wasn't eating—I was redeeming.”

In that moment, they understood: even the smallest act—done with awareness of Hashem's presence—can be a conduit of infinite light.

Or one may say: “This is the animal” is an allusion to what Daniel saw—that this beast is Edom. “That you may eat” is in the language of “And you shall eat your enemies” (Vayikra 26:8), and the verse says that through this there will be strength in your hands to consume them, meaning from among all beasts.

או יומר "זאת החיה" רמז למה שראה דניאל חיה זו אדום, "אשר תאכלו" לשון "ואכלתם את איביכם" (ויקרא כו, ח), ואמר הכתוב עלי ידי זה יהיה כח בידיכם לכלות אותם דהינו מכל בהמה.

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<p>For it is taught in the Gemara (Bava Metzia 61b): “Rav Chanina from Sura of the Euphrates said to Ravina: Why did the Merciful One write the Exodus from Egypt in relation to the laws of swarming creatures? He replied: The Holy One, blessed be He, said: I am the One who distinguished, etc. He said: That which I find difficult is the term ‘Who brings up’—why did the Merciful One write ‘Who brings up’? He answered him: As was taught in the academy of Rabbi Yishmael: If I had brought up Israel only so that they would not defile themselves with swarming creatures, that would have been sufficient—and it is a greatness for them.”</p>	<p>דאיתא בגמ' בבא מציעא (סא:) "אמר רב חנינא מסורא דפרת לרביןא: יציאת מצרים דכתב רחמנא גבי שרצים למה לי? אמר ליה אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: אני שהבחנתי כו'. אמר ליה: אנא המעלה קא קשיא לי, מאי שנא המעלה דכתב רחמנא? אמר ליה: לכדתנא דבי ר' ישמעאל: אילמלא לא העליתי את ישראל אלא בשביל שאינם מטמאין בשרצים, וימעליותא היא גביהו."</p>
<p>One can explain the aforementioned Gemara based on what is taught in the Midrash: the angels asked the Holy One, blessed be He: Why did You create creeping creatures? He answered them: Because of accusation. If one comes to accuse Israel, Heaven forbid, saying that they have sinned before Him and are not needed, Hashem answers: Are not the creeping creatures completely unnecessary? And yet I created them.</p>	<p>יש לומר הפרוש הגמ' הנ"ל על-פי דאיתא במדרש: שאלו המלאכים את הקדוש ברוך הוא: למה בראת שרצים? והשיב להם השי"ת: מפני הקטרגות. אם יבוא לקטרג על ישראל חס ושלום שחוטאים לפניו ואין צורך בהם, אז משיב לו השי"ת: הלא השרצים אין צורך בהם כלל, ואף-על-פי-כן בראתים.</p>
<p>And this is [the meaning of] “What is difficult for me is the term ‘Who brings up’”—for hamma'aleh means elevation, that Hashem elevates Israel from among the klipos (husks) and sins, and they fall downward. And this is [the meaning of] “Who brings up,” that is, for what reason and merit does He elevate all of Israel from their sins?</p>	<p>וזהו "אנא המעלה קשיא לי" דהמעלה הוא לשון הגבהה, שהקב"ה מגביה את ישראל מבין הקליפות והחטאים והם נופלים למטה, וזהו "המעלה כו'", כלומר לאיזו סיבה וזכות מעלה את כללות ישראל מחטאותיהם.</p>
<p>He answered: “If I had brought them up only because they do not defile themselves with swarming creatures...”—meaning: behold, Israel does not eat creeping things, and therefore there is no need at all for their creation, since Israel does not eat from them. And yet You created them, like the Midrash above, and thus the accuser has no power to accuse them. Therefore, I raise and elevate them from their sins, as explained above.</p>	<p>אמר ליה: אילמלא כו' אלא שאינם מטמאין בשרצים" פירוש: הלא ישראל אינם אוכלים שרצים, ונמצא אין צורך כלל בבריאתם פיון ש'ישראל אינם אוכלין מהם, ואף-על-פי-כן בראתים כדברי המדרש הנ"ל, ממיילא אין פח למקטרג לקטרג עליהם, ולזה אני מעלה ומגביה אותם מעונותיהם כנ"ל.</p>

[NOTE: Summary:

This mystical interpretation of “זאת החיה אשר תאכלו” expands far beyond kosher laws. It teaches that these animals symbolize spiritual forces, particularly the struggle between Israel and the nations (Edom), and hints at G-d’s unique relationship with His people. Through refusing to eat impure creatures, Israel demonstrates spiritual distinction, which itself becomes the basis for G-d

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defending and elevating them from sin. The Midrash and Gemara emphasize that even seemingly unnecessary creations serve a Divine purpose—as tools to silence heavenly prosecution.

Practical Takeaway:

Your spiritual boundaries matter more than you think. Even things you *don't* do—like not eating impure animals—are spiritually powerful acts that protect and elevate you. Every mitzvah, even those that seem symbolic or minor, has cosmic weight. So never underestimate a single moment of self-discipline.

True Chassidic Story:

The Tzaddik and the Pig

Once, a poor Jew passed through a non-Jewish village and was forced into a trap—told to eat pork or be beaten. He refused.

Years later, he visited **Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk**, who looked at him with fiery eyes and whispered, “Do you know that the moment you refused the pork, all of Heaven stood in silence? You think it was a small act, but it caused a great judgment against Israel to be dismissed.”

The man began to cry. He had thought his resistance was forgotten. But in truth, **it was recorded in Heaven as a banner of merit for the entire people.**

🕊️ *One Jew saying “no” to a creeping creature uplifts all of Klal Yisrael. END NOTE]*

And this is [the meaning of the verse] “All Israel have a portion in the World to Come” (Sanhedrin 90a), meaning the collective soul of Israel, as explained above. And also, the tzaddik is called “all,” for he is the essential collective force to bring them goodness, blessing, and awe. For through the tzaddik, the whole of Israel is aroused in repentance.	וְזֶהוּ "כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא" (סנהדרין צ:), פִּירוּשׁ כָּלְלוּת יִשְׂרָאֵל כֻּנָּה ל', וְגַם הַצַּדִּיק נִקְרָא "כָּל", שֶׁהוּא עֵיקָר הַכָּלְלוּת לְהַשְׁפִּיעַ לָהֶם טוֹבָה וּבְרָכָה וְיִרְאָה, שְׁעַל־יְדֵי הַצַּדִּיק נִתְעוֹרְרִים כָּלְלוּת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתַשׁוּבָה.
And this is [the meaning of] “And Moshe said to Aharon: Draw near to the altar” (Vayikra 9:7), and Rashi explains that Aharon was ashamed and afraid to approach. And Moshe said to him: Why are you ashamed? For this you were chosen.	וְזֶהוּ "וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל אַהֲרֹן קְרַב אֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ" (ויקרא ט', ז'), וּפִרְשׁ רַשִׁי שֶׁהָיָה אַהֲרֹן בּוֹשׁ וְיִרְאָה לְגִשָּׁת, וְאָמַר לוֹ מֹשֶׁה: לָמָּה אַתָּה בּוֹשׁ, לִכְךָ נִבְחַרְתָּ.
For behold, the essence of a person is shame. It is a good sign for a person that he is modest, and anyone who is modest will not quickly sin. And Aharon was very modest, from the depth of humility that was within him.	דִּהְיָה הָעֵיקָר הוּא לְאָדָם הַבִּיָּשׁוּת, סִמָּן טוֹב לְאָדָם שֶׁהוּא בִּיָּשׁוּ, וְכָל הַמִּתְבַּיֵּשׁ לֹא כְּמַהֲרָה הוּא חוֹטֵא, וְאַהֲרֹן הָיָה מִתְבַּיֵּשׁ מְאֹד מִגְדֹּל הַהִכָּנְעָה שֶׁהָיְתָה בּוֹ.

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For such is the way of the tzaddik, that he always sees in his eyes sins in every slight misdeed, and even a light matter is considered to him a grave sin. And he always subdues and lowers himself.	שָׁכַן דְּרוֹךְ הַצַּדִּיק שֶׁתָּמִיד רוֹאֶה בְּעֵינָיו חַטָּאִים עַל כָּל נִדְנוּד עֲבֵרָה, וְאִפִּילוּ דָּבָר קָל לְעֲבֵרָה חֲמוּרָה תִּתְקַשֵּׁב לוֹ, וּמִכֵּנִיעַ עֲצָמוֹ וּמִשְׁפִּיל עֲצָמוֹ תָּמִיד.
And in the presence of many, he rebukes himself, and through this he implants thoughts of repentance in the listeners. They say: "If in the cedars the fire has fallen, what shall the moss of the wall do?" (Moed Katan 25b), and they return in complete repentance.	וּבִכְפִּי רַבִּים מוֹכִיחַ עֲצָמוֹ, וְעַל־יָדֵי זֶה מְכַנִּים הִרְהוּרֵי תְּשׁוּבָה בְּשׁוֹמְעִים, בְּאַמְרָם: "אִם בְּאַרְזִים נָפְלָה שְׁלֵהֶבֶת מֵהַ יַעֲשׂוּ אֲזוּבֵי הַקִּיר" (מוֹעֵד קָטָן כ"ה:), וְהֵם חוֹזְרִים בְּתְשׁוּבָה שְׁלֵמָה.
And this is what Moshe Rabbeinu, peace be upon him, said to him: "Why are you ashamed?"—meaning, it is because you are ashamed and fearful, therefore you are the complete tzaddik, fitting to draw near to the altar.	וְזֶהוּ שֶׁאָמַר לוֹ מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּינוּ עָלָיו הַשְּׁלוֹם: "לָמָּה אַתָּה בּוֹשׁ", פִּירוּשׁ: בְּשִׁבִּיל שֶׁאַתָּה בּוֹשׁ וְיָרָא, וְאֵ"כ אַתָּה הוּא הַצַּדִּיק הַשָּׁלֵם הֵרָאוּי לְהִקְרֹב אֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ.
"For this you were chosen"—for so is it fitting for a tzaddik to behave in his service of the Blessed Creator. And this is [the meaning of] "And Aharon drew near to the altar" (Vayikra 9:8), meaning: once he heard from Moshe that this is the exalted level—modesty and great humility of heart—he did so.	לְכֹךְ נִבְחַרְתָּ, שֶׁכֹּךְ רָאוּי לְצַדִּיק לְהִתְנַהֵג בְּעִבּוּדְתוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ. וְזֶהוּ "וַיִּקְרַב אַהֲרֹן אֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ" (וַיִּקְרָא ט'), ח'), ר"ל כִּיּוֹן שֶׁשָּׁמַע מִמֹּשֶׁה שֶׁכֹּךְ הִיא הַמַּדְרָגָה הַמְּעֻלָּה—הַבְּשֻׁת וְגָדֹל הַהִכָּנְעָה בְּלֵב—וְעָשָׂה כֵּן.
"And Aharon drew near to the altar"—meaning: he would always draw himself near to the altar, for he would constantly find deficiencies within himself and always think that he needed the altar for atonement.	וַיִּקְרַב אַהֲרֹן אֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ" פִּירוּשׁ: שֶׁהָיָה מְקַרֵּב עֲצָמוֹ תָּמִיד אֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ, שֶׁהָיָה מוֹצֵא בְּעֲצָמוֹ חֲסֵרוֹנוֹת וְהָיָה מִתְקַשֵּׁב תָּמִיד שֶׁצָּרִיךְ לְמִזְבֵּחַ כְּפָרָה.

[NOTE: Summary:

This passage illuminates the deeper meaning behind the verse "וַיֵּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל אַהֲרֹן קְרַב אֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ" (Vayikra 9:7), showing how **true spiritual leadership and Divine service begin with deep humility**.

- The phrase "כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעוה"ב" is not just about merit, but about the interconnectedness of the *tzaddik* and the nation. The *tzaddik*, referred to as "כל," brings spiritual life, awakening, and blessing to the collective of Israel.
- Aharon was deeply modest and felt unworthy to approach the altar. Moshe told him: **"For this you were chosen"**—precisely because of his holy shame and humility.
- The mark of a true *tzaddik* is that he constantly examines himself, sees even his smallest failings as serious, and publicly humbles himself—thereby inspiring the people to return to Hashem.
- Aharon's approach to the altar was not just a physical act, but a **continual inward journey of repentance and lowliness**, seeing himself as always needing atonement.

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Practical Takeaway:

Bittul (self-nullification) is not weakness—it's greatness. The more one ascends spiritually, the more one becomes aware of how much refinement is still needed. If even Aharon HaKohen felt unworthy, how much more should we approach our own spiritual service with reverence and humility?

And remember: **your humility may be the very reason Hashem chose *you* to uplift others.** A single act of sincere shame before G-d can awaken a generation.

True Chassidic Story:

Reb Zushia's Tears at the Bima

Once, during Yom Kippur, **Reb Zushia of Anipoli** stood before the bima, weeping bitterly. His students asked him afterward, "Rebbe, why were you crying so much during the vidui (confession)? Surely you have no sins!"

Reb Zushia responded:

"I know I didn't sin the way others might—but I know what *I* am capable of. And when I see how far I am from my own potential, how can I not cry?"

He then added:

"And if I, who see only the tiniest failings, cry like this—maybe someone in the back will hear my cry and feel, 'If he cries, how much more should I!' And maybe he too will return to G-d."

This story reflects the teaching: **"If the flame strikes the cedars, what shall the moss do?"** It is the trembling of the tzaddik that causes the rest of the world to awaken. **END NOTE]**

<p>"And he slaughtered the calf of the sin-offering that was his" (Vayikra 9:8). Behold, in truth, from where could it come that a tzaddik would stumble, G-d forbid, in even a very slight sin? All of this comes due to the sin of the Golden Calf, and this spiritual contamination brings even upon the tzaddik, G-d forbid, some small transgression.</p>	<p>וַיִּשְׁחַט אֶת עֹגֶל הַחֹטֵאת אֲשֶׁר לוֹ" (ויקרא ט', ח'), דְּהֵינָה בְּאַמֶּת מְאִין יָבוֹא לְצַדִּיק שִׁיכְפֹּשֶׁל חֵס וְשְׁלוֹם בְּאִיזָה חֹטֵא נִדְּנִיד קָל? זֶה בָּא הַכֹּל מִחֻמַּת חֹטֵא הָעֹגֶל, וְהַזֹּהֶמָּה הַזֹּאת גֹּרֵם אֵף לְצַדִּיק חֵס וְשְׁלוֹם אִיזָה עֲבֵרָה קְלָה.</p>
<p>And through his immediately regretting, and being greatly pained, and contemplating repentance, he causes [the fulfillment of] "And he slaughtered the calf of the sin-offering."</p>	<p>וְעַל-יָדֵי שֶׁהוּא מִתְחַרֵּט מִזֶּד וּמִצְטַעֵר מְאֹד וּמִהֲרָהר "בְּתִשְׁבָּה, אָזִי הוּא גֹרֵם "וַיִּשְׁחַט אֶת עֹגֶל הַחֹטֵאת</p>

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<p>“That was his”—means that this sin is not considered a transgression except for him alone; it is considered a transgression only because of his great righteousness.</p>	<p>אָפּער לו", פֿירוש שֶׁהֵחָטָא הָיָה אֵינוֹ נִחָשֵׁב לַעֲבֵרָה, כִּי אִם לוֹ לְבִדּוֹ הוּא נִחָשֵׁב לוֹ לַעֲבֵרָה, לְגִדּוֹל צְדָקָתוֹ.</p>
<p>And when other people see this act of the tzaddik, how he contemplates repentance even over extremely minor things, their hearts break within them, and they give over their very souls and blood to His service, may He be blessed.</p>	<p>וּבִרְאוֹת שְׂאָר בְּנֵי אָדָם אֶת מַעֲשֵׂה הַצַּדִּיק הַזֶּה, אֵיךְ שֶׁמֵּהֲרָהָר בְּתַשׁוּבָה אָפְלוּ עַל דְּבָרִים קְלִים מְאֹד, נִשְׁפָּר לָבָם בְּקִרְבָּם וּמוֹסְרִים נַפְשָׁם וְדָמָם לַעֲבוֹדָתוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ.</p>
<p>And this is [the meaning of] “And the sons of Aharon brought the blood to him” (Vayikra 9:9), meaning, as explained above, that through the tzaddik, they offer their blood to Hashem, may He be blessed.</p>	<p>וְזֶהוּ "וַיִּקְרִיבוּ בְנֵי אַהֲרֹן אֶת הַדָּם אֵלָיו" (ויקרא ט'), פֿירוש כֵּן "לְשַׁעֲלֵי־יָדַי הַצַּדִּיק מִקְרִיבִים דָּמָם לוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ.</p>
<p>“And he dipped his finger in the blood”—this alludes to the fact that the tzaddik elevates the blood of their self-sacrifice “upon the horns of the altar.” Horns are a metaphor for greatness and dominion, meaning he accomplishes something very great thereby.</p>	<p>וַיִּטְבֹּל אֶצְבָּעוֹ בַּדָּם "רָמַז שֶׁהַצַּדִּיק מַעֲלֶה אֶת הַדָּם שָׁל מִסִּירַת נַפְשָׁם "עַל קַרְנוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ", קַרְנוֹת לְשׁוֹן גְּדוּלָּה וְשִׁרְרָה, שֶׁפּוֹעֵל בְּזֶה דְּבַר גְּדוֹל מְאֹד.</p>
<p>“And the blood he poured”—meaning, the traits (middos) they held onto with their self-sacrifice, he poured “upon the base of the altar,” meaning, from them is made the very foundation of the altar, as explained above.</p>	<p>וְאֵת הַדָּם יָצַק "פֿירוש הַמִּדּוֹת שֶׁהֵם מַחֲזִיקִים בָּהֶם" עִם מִסִּירַת נַפְשָׁם יָצַק "עַל יְסוֹד הַמִּזְבֵּחַ", פֿירוש נַעֲשֶׂה מֵהֶם יְסוֹד לְעוֹלָם הַמִּזְבֵּחַ כֵּן "ל</p>
<p>And let us return to explain the verse, that through this there is power to destroy the enemies “from among all the animals.” That is: the collective of Israel, through the <i>tzaddik</i>—who is called “all the animal,” in the manner of what our Sages said: “Man and animal—these are the people who make themselves like animals” (Chullin 5b).</p>	<p>וְנִשְׁוֵב לְבֵאֵר הַפְּתוּב שֶׁעַל־יָדַי זֶה יֵשׁ כֹּחַ לְכַלּוֹת הָאוֹיְבִים "מִכָּל הַבְּהֵמָה", דֵּהֲנִי כָּלִלוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל־יָדַי הַצַּדִּיק הַנִּקְרָא "כָּל בְּהֵמָה" עַל דֶּרֶךְ שְׂאֻמְרוֹ חֲזו"ל (חולין ה'). "אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה" אֵלוּ בְּנֵי אָדָם שֶׁמִּשְׁמִים עֲצָמָם בְּבְהֵמָה.</p>
<p>For the <i>tzaddik</i> subdues and lowers himself like an animal, and through this the collective of Israel is elevated and uplifted, as explained above.</p>	<p>דֵּהַצַּדִּיק מַכְנִיעַ וּמַשְׁפִּיל עֲצָמוֹ בְּבְהֵמָה, וְעַל־יָדַי זֶה כָּלִלוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל נִגְבְּהִים וּמִתְעַלִּים וְכֵן "ל</p>
<p>“Split hoofed” (<i>mafréses parsa</i>)—from the root of “ufarsú ha-simlah” (Devarim 22:17), meaning <i>they spread the garment</i>. For behold, the heavens were created through a <i>spread</i>, that is, a separation, as the verse says: “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate between water and water” (Bereishis 1:6).</p>	<p>מִפְרָסֶת פָּרְסָה" מִלְשׁוֹן "וּפָרְשׁוּ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה" (דברים כב'), (ז'), דֵּהֲנִה הַשָּׁמַיִם נִבְרָאוּ עַל־יָדַי פָּרִיסָה, דֵּהֲנִי הַבְּדִל, כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר הַפְּתוּב: "וְהָיָה רָקִיעַ בֵּתוֹךְ הַמַּיִם וְהָיָה מַבְדִּיל (בֵּין מַיִם לְמַיִם" (בראשית א, ו</p>

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And one can explain the meaning: behold, “heavens,” Rashi explains, are a combination of fire (<i>aish</i>) and water (<i>mayim</i>). For the Torah is called water, and Hashem created levels and divisions between water and water.	ויש לומר הפרוש: דהנה "שמים" פרש רש"י אש ומים, דהתורה נקראת מים, והשמים פרא מעלות והבדל בין מים למים.
Meaning: a person must learn with fire—enthusiasm and desire for His Name, may He be blessed. And “rakia” (firmament) is from the word “rikuei pachim”—beaten plates, and in Targum: “v’radido”—a language of fineness and thinness.	שפירוש צריך האדם ללמוד באש התלהבות וחשק לשמו יתברך. ו"רקיע" הוא לשון "רקועי פחים", ותרגומו "ורדידו" לשון דקות.
That is, there must be a refinement between the waters: that the secrets of the Torah rise upward, and to influence downward. And this is [the meaning of] “split hoofed” (<i>mafréses parsa</i>) as above: that there be a separation between water and water.	דהנהו שצריך להיות דקות בין מים למים, שסודות התורה יעלה למעלה ולהשפיע למטה, וזהו "מפרסת הפרסה" כנ"ל, שיהא מבדיל בין מים למים.
“And completely split” (<i>u’shosa’as shesa</i>)—that there be a complete distinction.	ושסועת שסע" שיהא הבדל גמור.

[NOTE: Summary:

This passage unpacks the deeper meaning behind the Torah’s description of a kosher animal:

"מפרסת פרסה ושסעת שסע"—having a split hoof and being fully split.

- The *tzaddik*, who is called "**all the animal**", uplifts **all of Israel** through humility. Like the verse “Man and beast” (Tehillim 36:7) interpreted by Chazal (Chullin 5b), the *tzaddik* **lowers himself like a beast**, bringing elevation to the people.
- The “split hoof” is connected to **פריסה (spreading/separation)**—as in “ופרשו השמלה” (Devarim 22:17), and symbolically to the act of creation, where Hashem separated **water from water** (Bereishis 1:6).
- Rashi explains “אש + מים = שמים” (fire and water). The Torah is called “water,” and **true learning requires fire**—a burning desire for Hashem. But also **fineness**: discernment and balance.
- The split hoof teaches us: **There must be separation**, between physical and spiritual, between holy and mundane. And that the **secrets of Torah should ascend**, but also be brought down to influence this world.

Practical Takeaway:

Don't be afraid to "**split**"—to separate truth from distraction, to divide between what elevates you and what weighs you down.

- Like the split hoof, real holiness requires **clarity and boundaries**.

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- And like the heavens created through separation, your spiritual growth depends on being **on fire for Hashem**, but also delicate enough to elevate even the smallest details.
- Finally, humility like the *tzaddik's*—who sees himself as “a beast”—is not self-deprecation, but the most powerful path to lift others.

- ✓ Be passionate like fire.
- ✓ Be clear like the heavens.
- ✓ Be humble like a beast.
- ✓ Be the vessel that brings heaven down to earth.

True Chassidic Story:

The Mitteler Rebbe's Learning Fire

It is told that the **Mitteler Rebbe** (the second Chabad Rebbe) would become so inflamed with emotion while learning Chassidus that the **floorboards beneath him became soaked with sweat**, even on freezing winter days.

Once, a visitor asked him why he studied with such passion.

The Rebbe answered:

“When I learn Torah, it’s not just to know—it’s to burn away the klipos (spiritual obstructions) in the world. If I don’t learn with fire, how will anything be elevated?”

And yet, despite his spiritual intensity, the Mitteler Rebbe was known for his deep humility. He would often say, “My words are only vessels—if Hashem chooses to fill them, they are something.”

🔥 Fire and refinement. Passion and separation. Heaven and humility—all in one hoof.
END NOTE]

Or one may say, “Split hoofed...”—in the manner of [the verse] “And it shall be, if you will hearken” (Devarim 7:12), referring to those transgressions that a person tramples under his heels [i.e., considers insignificant].	או יומר "מפרסת" כו', על דרך "והנה עקב תשמעון" (דברים ז', י"ב), אלו עברות שאדם דש בעקביו.
[He should treat them] as if they were as severe to him as the major transgressions. And that is [the meaning of] “these mishpatim (judgments)” —that even the rational commandments should be held with utmost seriousness.	שיהיו דומים עליו פהמורות, והגנו "את המשפטים האלה".

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And this is [the deeper meaning of] “Split hoofed” (mafréses parsa)—a language of treading with the foot, with the hooves of his feet. And this is sufficient for the understanding.

וְזֶהוּ "מַפְרֶסֶת פַּרְסָה" לְשׁוֹן דְּרִיסַת הָרֶגֶל בְּפִרְסוֹת רֵגְלָיו. וְק"ל.