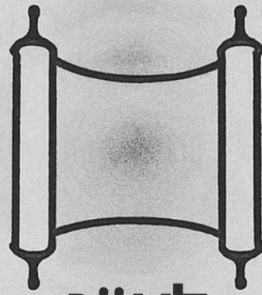


בס"ד

Alter Rebbe
Likkutei Torah
Parshas Massei
אִיתָא בְּמִדְרַשׁ תְּהִלִּים



לע"נ

שמעון בן ישראל

Dedicated By:

ר' נחום אהרון & חיה

ליטשקאווסקי

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Introduction

This profound discourse by the Alter Rebbe explores the inner meaning of King David's declaration: "One thing I asked of Hashem..." Drawing from Midrash Tehillim, the Zohar, and deep Kabbalistic-Hasidic insights, the Alter Rebbe reveals that the heart of divine service is not multiplicity, but essential oneness — a yearning for absolute unity with Hashem. The maamar journeys through layers of fear and love of God, from the external expressions of mitzvos to the concealed core of the soul's love, uncovering how true inner service must pass through the gateway of humility and brokenness. The discourse concludes with a vision of spiritual refinement where vessels (letters) and light (inner delight) merge into divine unity — especially for lofty souls such as Rabbi Yehudah bar El'ai.

It is stated in Midrash Tehillim on the verse "One thing I ask of Hashem..." and it is brought in Yalkut: The Holy One, blessed be He, said to David: At first you said "One thing I ask — that I may dwell in the house of Hashem," and afterward you request many things — "to behold the pleasantness of Hashem and to visit His Sanctuary," etc.

איתא במדרש תהלים על פסוק אחת שאלתי מאת ה' וגו' והובא בגילקוט: אמר הקב"ה לדוד, בתחלה אתה אומר אחת שאלתי שבתי בבית ה', ואח"כ אתה שואל בפמה שאלות — ולחזות בנועם ה' ולבקר בהיכלו וגו'.

And David responded to Him: From You I learned. At first You approached us with one request, as it is said: "And now, Israel, what does Hashem your G-d ask of you, only to fear..." and afterward You opened upon us many commandments, as it is said: "to walk in all His ways, and to cleave to Him," etc.

והשיבו דוד: ממך למדתי. בתחלה לא באת עלינו אלא באחת, שנאמר: ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך כי אם ליראה, ואח"כ פתחת עלינו במצוות הרבה, שנאמר: ללכת בכל דרכיו ולדבקה בו וגו'.

And the holy Rabbi, the Maggid z"l, explained: The reason is that in truth David asked only one thing alone, and the additional matters branch out from this one thing and must necessarily come along with it — because all of it is one. Thus, he only needed to ask for the one thing, and the rest come automatically.

ואמר הרב המגיד ז"ל נ"ע: הטעם שבאמת שאל רק דבר אחד לבד, והדברים הנוספים מסתעפים מזה הדבר שמכרחים להיות ממילא בהיות הדבר הזה, מפני שהכל אחד, ולא הוצרך לבקש רק דבר אחד, וממילא באים עם זה שאר הדברים.

And the words of the Maggid require explanation, for why did David need to learn this from Hashem, if in truth he only asked one thing? But the matter is known: the letter Yud — "fear of Hashem," the letter Vav — "love of Hashem," "Torah of Hashem," "commandments."

וצריך ביאור לדבריו, שלזה לא היה צריך דוד ללמוד מה, שהרי באמת לא שאל רק שאלה אחת. אבל הענין הוא ידוע: יו"ד — יראת ה', וו — אהבת ה', תורת ה', מצות.

And higher still than these is the matter of *unity*. And the Supernal Fear is higher than Torah, as it is written: "And Hashem commanded us to do all these statutes in order to fear Hashem our G-d."

והיותר למעלה — יותר ענין אחדות. והיראה העליונה היא למעלה מן התורה, כמשל: "ויצונו ה' לעשות את כל החקים האלה ליראה את ה' אלקינו".

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Behold, the entire keeping of the mitzvos is only in order to reach this level of fear — which is the fear of exaltedness (<i>yiras haromemus</i>), and not every person merits this fear. And the higher love — which is above even this fear — is the <i>great love</i> (<i>ahavah rabbah</i>), which does not come from a person's service and effort, but is a supernal gift.	הרי כל שמירת המצוות אינם רק להגיע למדרגת היראה ההיא, והיא יראת הרוממות, ולא כל אדם זוכה לזאת היראה. והאהבה העליונה שלמעלה מיראה זו, היא אהבה רבה, אשר אינה באה מעבודת האדם ויגיעתו, אלא היא השפעה עליונה.
For when a person reaches the Supernal Fear, then automatically this exalted love comes upon him — which is the longing of the soul for its source, and is the <i>love in delights</i> .	כאשר יגיע האדם אל היראה העליונה — ממילא תבוא עליו האהבה הזאת המפלגת, והיא כלות הנפש לשרשה, והיא אהבה בתענוגים.
And on this higher level, the above-mentioned fear and love are entirely one — “two companions that do not separate.” For the higher one is in oneness, whereas below, in the world of separation, fear and love are almost opposites.	ולמעלה — היראה והאהבה הנ"ל הם כולא חד, תרין רעין דלא מתפרשין. כי היותר למעלה הוא באחדות יותר. מה שאין כן למטה, הוא עולם הפרוד, היראה והאהבה הם כמעט שני הפכים.
Fear requires a person to first humble himself to an extremely low level of self-nullification — and from that, he can reach the lower fear.	היראה צריך שיגיע האדם מתחלה להשפיל עצמו במדרגת השפלות עד מאד, ומזה יבוא ליראה התחתונה.
And love — which is above that fear — is joy: “Israel will rejoice in their Maker,” and this love is below the Supernal Fear. Through this love one can come to a small taste of that fear — in which one is nullified out of existence.	והאהבה שלמעלה ממנה, היא השמחה: ישמח ישראל בעושי, וזו האהבה היא למטה מן היראה העליונה. שעל-ידי האהבה הזאת יוכל להגיע למעט מן היראה העליונה — שהוא בטל במציאות כו'.
And this is what it means: “What does Hashem your G-d ask of you — only to fear” — that Supernal Fear mentioned above. And automatically, one comes to the Supernal Love mentioned above, for “the way of a man is to pursue a woman” — since above, they are truly one, as explained in Likkutei Amarim. (See also what is written on this in the note to <i>Tikkun Chatzos</i> .)	וזהו: מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך — כי אם להיראה העליונה הנ"ל, וממילא בא אל האהבה העליונה הנ"ל. כי דרכו של איש לחזור אחר אשה, כי כולא חד למעלה, כמו שמבואר בלקוטי אמרים. (ועין מה שכתוב מזה בהערה לתיקון חצות.)
But <i>beinonim</i> (intermediate people) must first reach a love that is below the aforementioned Supernal Fear — which is: “My soul thirsts for You,” etc.	אבל הבינונים צריכים להגיע מתחלה לאהבה שלמטה מן היראה העליונה הנ"ל, והיא: צמאה לה נפשי וגו'.
And on this the Zohar hinted: “There is no service like the service of love,” for it is like one who softens the ground — “to heal the land,” meaning the labor of the soil is its plowing, so it can become softened to sprout the seeds planted in it.	ועליה רמז בזוהר: לית פולחנא כפולחנא דרחימותא, כי הוא כמשל לרפוא ארעא, פירוש: עבודת האדמה היא חרישתה — שתתרכך להצמיח הגרעים שבתוכה.
But if it is hard, it will not produce what is planted in it.	מה שאין כן אם היא קשה — אינה מצמיחה מה שזורעין בה.

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And likewise is the case with this hidden love in the heart of each and every person — “Yaakov is the rope of His inheritance” — a supernal spark. However, it is deeply clothed in the depths of the klipos, and it must be elevated to its source.	וכן הענין בזאת האהבה המסותרת בלב כל אחד ואחד: "יעקב חבל נחלתו", נצוץ עליון, אבל שהיא מלוכלשת מאד בעמקי הקליפות, וצריך להעלותה לשרשה.
And one must be soft at the outset — meaning, like plowing that softens the earth in order that it sprout the seeds. Meaning: to overpower one's desires and cravings for worldly matters and all his lusts, and to take a stand against his soul — not to turn his heart toward them.	וצריך להיות רך בתחלה, פירוש: כמו חרישה — שמרכיבין ארעא כדי שתצמיח הגרעין. פירוש: להתגבר על חפצו ותשוקתו בעניני עולם הזה וכל תאוותיו, ולעמוד על נפשו שלא לפנות לבו אליהם.
And to break his heart because of his desire to cleave to Hashem Elokim — and the more he plows his body and breaks it in this matter, so too does this hidden love sprout more.	ולשבר לבו בשביל חפצו לדבקה בה' אלקים. ומה שיחרוש גופו יתר וישבר בענין זה — כן מצמיח יותר האהבה המסותרת הנ"ל.
And this labor is called the aspect of the <i>lower fear</i> , which precedes this love. And it is lowliness and the submission of one's heart, as our Sages said: “One does not stand to pray except from a state of seriousness.”	ועבודה זו נקראת בחינת יראה תחתונה — הקודמת לאהבה זו, והיא השפלות והקנעת לבו, כמו שאמרנו "ר"ז": "אין עומדין להתפלל אלא מתוך כבוד ראש".
And from the verse “And now, Yisrael...” King David, peace be upon him, learned in his request that he asked only for one thing: “To dwell in the house of Hashem” — meaning, the letters of Torah are called “houses,” as is known, and they are the vessels.	ומן הפסוק: "ועתה ישראל..." — למד דוד המלך עליו השלום בבקשתו, שבקש רק דבר אחד: "שכתי בבית ה'", פירוש: אותיות התורה נקראים "בתים" כנודע, והם הכלים.
And “to behold the pleasantness of Hashem” — this is sweetness, as explained in the exposition on the verse “I have come into My garden,” and these are the lights within the vessels. And above, they are all one unified essence, whereas below they are separate — for there is one who learns only with the letters, etc.	ולחזות פנועם ה' — היא ההמתקה, על-פי מה שכתוב בביאור על פסוק "באתי לגני", והם האורות שבבתוך הכלים. ולמעלה — הם כלם אחדות אחד. מה שאין כן למטה — הם נפרדים, יש שלומד באותיות כו'.
And similarly, we find by Rabbi Yehudah bar Rabbi El'ai, that his face was radiant from the joy and light of the Oral Torah — for they were exceptionally lofty tzaddikim and for them the inner light and the letters were entirely one, etc. And this is sufficient to the wise.	וכן מצינו ברבי יהודה בן רבי אלעאי, שהיו פניו צהובים משוב לבו מרב השמחה והאורה שבתורה שבכל-פה — מפני שהיו צדיקים מכלגים, והיו להם הפנימית והאותיות כולא חד וכו'. ונ"ל.
The Book of Bamidbar is concluded.	סליק ספר במדבר

[NOTE Summary]

King David's seeming contradiction — asking “one thing” and then listing several requests — is resolved by recognizing that all aspects of service stem from one essential yearning: to dwell in Hashem's presence. The Alter Rebbe explains that in the verse “What does Hashem ask of you — only to fear Him,” even that “one thing” includes many layers: lower fear (rooted in

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humility), upper fear (awe of God's exaltedness), and ultimately *ahavah rabbah* (great love), which emerges as a gift once the proper fear is attained.

This process parallels plowing the earth: one must soften their ego and crush worldly desires through inner work to access the hidden love buried deep within — the “Yaakov, rope of His inheritance,” a spark in every Jew. That hidden love is concealed beneath layers of *klipah* and must be uncovered through sincere struggle.

From here, the discourse turns to the structure of Torah and mitzvos. The “houses” — letters of Torah — are vessels. The “pleasantness of Hashem” is the divine light within them. Above, vessels and light are unified; below, they appear divided unless one is deeply connected. The tzaddikim, like Rabbi Yehudah bar El'ai, achieved a state where inner light and external form were one — manifesting such divine joy that it shone visibly from their faces.

Practical Takeaway

Start with humility. Real divine service doesn't begin with ecstasy or even knowledge, but with softening the ground — breaking the ego, resisting worldly impulses, and striving to uncover the soul's hidden love for God. Even if love and awe feel distant, the Alter Rebbe teaches that by refining our “earth,” we awaken them. Focus on sincerity in mitzvos, deepen kavannah (intent), and be patient — for the highest states come not from grasping but from being a fitting vessel.

Chassidic Story

The Mitteler Rebbe once noticed a young chossid praying with intense fervor. Afterward, he called him in and asked, “Tell me, what were you thinking about during davening?” The chossid answered, “I was meditating on cleaving to Hashem with all my soul.”

The Mitteler Rebbe nodded, then said gently, “And did you forget that cleaving to Hashem begins by breaking the self? That a crushed heart — not soaring thoughts — is the true beginning?”

This echoes the Alter Rebbe's teaching: *First comes the plowing — the humility, the struggle — only then can the soul's seeds burst forth.*

Source: *Shemuos Vesippurim*, vol. 1, p. 100, related by R. Refael Nachman of Chernobyl.

TPX (Therapeutic-Psychological Integration)

This discourse by the Alter Rebbe explores the soul's internal journey from fragmentation to unity — a movement deeply relevant to personal healing and psychological growth.

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At its heart lies the concept that beneath all multiplicity in our spiritual life (mitzvos, prayers, requests), there is a singular core yearning: *to dwell in the presence of God*. The soul wants oneness, not scattered attempts. David asks "one thing" because he intuitively feels that everything flows from one essential connection.

In therapeutic terms, this speaks to the movement from **dysregulation to integration**. People often pursue healing by trying to fix dozens of symptoms — anxiety, depression, disconnection, avoidance. But the Alter Rebbe is saying: don't chase fragments. Heal the root — the disconnection from your deepest self, from your source. When the root is reconnected, the symptoms begin to fall into alignment.

The discourse presents a spiritual-psychological model of development:

1. **Lower Yirah (Fear)** — This is humility, the first therapeutic step: breaking the hardened ground of the ego, facing one's patterns, acknowledging what's buried. It's painful — but it's where growth begins.
2. **Hidden Love** — Every person has a buried spark, a core of self-love and Divine connection. But like a seed, it only sprouts when the ground is softened. Trauma, self-protection, addiction — these are like the *klippas* that trap the hidden love. The Alter Rebbe calls us to do the work of breaking through.
3. **Upper Yirah and Ahavah Rabbah** — Once humility and brokenness are in place, a higher awareness emerges: awe of the mystery, and then — if the soul is ready — a great love, not born of effort but given as a gift. In trauma language, this is the post-regulation stage: when integration brings spontaneous wholeness, delight, connection, and peace.

Finally, the metaphor of “vessels and lights” (letters and inner meaning) mirrors a core therapeutic truth: **When we live only in the form — behaviors, surface-level religious acts, external identity — we feel fragmented. But when we align our internal essence with those forms, we feel whole.** The tzaddik, like Rabbi Yehudah bar El'ai, is one who has integrated the vessel and the light — their inner truth radiates through their outer life.

Story

In a recovery center in Jerusalem, a young man named Yitzchak sat silently through every group session for weeks. He had grown up in a religious home, but after years of abuse, ran from it all — into addiction, into hiding. When finally asked why he never shared, he muttered: “Because I'm not worth saving.”

An older man, Moshe, across the room, stood up. Quietly, he said, “My brother died thinking that too. I won't let you die with that lie in your mouth.”

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Yitzchak broke down in tears. That was his *plowing*. He began to share. Slowly, his spark returned. Months later, he told the group: “All I ever wanted was to feel like I had a home in God’s world.”

That’s *Shivti b’veis Hashem*. That’s the one thing — from which everything else grows.

Source: Based on personal accounts shared in the *Place of Hope* program, Jerusalem (name changed). **END NOTE]**