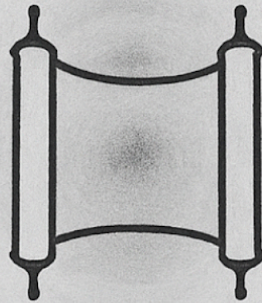


בס"ד

כתר שם טוב

Kesser Shem Tov

Simanim ט-א



Dedicated To:

Anonymous

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כתר שם טוב
Kesser Shem Tov
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Siman #א

Introduction

This deeply mystical letter from Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement, was sent to the Holy Land around Rosh Hashanah of the year 5507 (1746–47). Known as the "Iggeres HaBaal Shem Tov," it captures an extraordinary spiritual experience—an ascent of his soul to the supernal realms—during which he encountered the souls of the righteous and the chamber of Moshiach. The Baal Shem Tov (1698–1760), a towering spiritual figure in Eastern Europe, introduced a path of joyful divine service, inner deveikus (attachment to God), and radical love for every Jew. His teachings seeded the Chassidic revolution, and his disciples included the Maggid of Mezritch, from whom all later Chassidic schools descend. This letter, while deeply esoteric, contains a practical call for inner unification through Torah, prayer, and speech, and it sets the foundation for the Chassidic vision of Moshiach's coming through the revelation of inner Torah.

Copy of the letter that the holy rabbi, Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov, may his memory be a blessing for the World to Come, wrote to the Holy Land.

העתק האגרת שכתב הרב הקדוש ר' ישראל בעל שם טוב זכרוננו לברכה לחיי העולם הבא לארץ הקדש

On Rosh Hashanah of the year 5507, I performed the adjuration of the ascent of the soul, as you know, and I saw wondrous things in the vision that I had not seen until now since I came to awareness.

בראש השנה שנת תק"ז עשיתי השבעת עלית הנשמה כידוע לה, וראיתי דברים נפלאים במראה, מה שלא ראיתי עד הנה מיום עמדי על דעתי

And that which I saw and learned upon ascending there is impossible to tell and speak—even face to face—however, upon my return to the Lower Garden of Eden, I saw many souls of the living and the dead, both those known to me and those unknown to me, without limit or number, running and returning, ascending from world to world through the pillar known to those who know grace, with great and abundant joy that the mouth wearies to describe and the physical ear is heavy to hear.

ואשר ראיתי ולמדתי בהעלותי לשם בלתי אפשרי לספר ולדבר אפלו פה אל פה, אבל בחזרתי לג"ע התחזקתי וראיתי כמה נשמות החיים והמתים, הידועים לי ושאין ידועים לי, בלי שיעור ומספר, ברצוא ושוב, לעלות מעולם לעולם דרך העמוד הידוע ליודעי חן, בשמחה רבה וגדולה אשר ילא הפה לספר וכבד און הגשמי משמוע

And even many wicked ones repented, and their sins were forgiven them, for it was a great time of favor, so much so that even to me it was a wonder how many were accepted in repentance—even ones that you too know of. And there was among them also very great joy, and they too ascended in those aforementioned ascents.

וגם רשעים רבים חזרו בתשובה ונמחל להם עונותיהם, באשר שהיה עת רצון גדול שגם בעיני יפלא מאד שפמה וכמה נתקבלו בתשובה, שגם אתה ידעת אותם, והיתה ביניהם גם כן שמחה רבה עד מאד ועלו גם כן בעליות הנ"ל

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And all of them together requested from me and urged me persistently—saying, “To the exalted stature of the honor of your Torah—Hashem has granted you abundant understanding to comprehend and know of these matters—ascend with us to be our help and support.” And due to the great joy I saw among them, I said I would ascend with them.

(And I saw in the vision that the Sitra Achra rose to accuse with great joy such as never was, and he enacted decrees of destruction on many souls, that they be killed in strange deaths. And trembling seized me, and I literally gave over my soul), and I requested of my master and teacher that he go with me, for it is a great danger to go and ascend to the supernal worlds, for from the day I reached awareness I had not ascended in such great ascents as this.

And I ascended level after level until I entered the chamber of Moshiach, where Moshiach learns Torah with all the Tannaim and the Tzaddikim, and also with the Seven Shepherds. And there I saw exceedingly great joy, and I do not know what this joy was for. I thought perhaps this joy was, Heaven forbid, about my passing from this world, but they later informed me that I am not to pass away yet, for they derive pleasure Above when I perform unifications below through their holy Torahs. Yet the essence of the joy, I still do not know until this day.

And I asked Moshiach, “When will the Master come?” And he answered me: “With this you shall know—at the time your teachings become public and revealed in the world, and your wellsprings spread outward—what I have taught you and what you have comprehended—and they too will be able to perform unifications and ascents like you, then all the kelipos will be consumed and it will be a time of favor and salvation.”

וכולם כאחד בקשו ממני והרצו בי עד בוש באמרו, ליום מעלת כבוד תורתך חננה ד' בבניה תנורה להשיג ולדעת מענגנים האלה, עמנו תעלה להיות לנו לעזרה ולסעד. ומפני השמחה הגדולה שראיתי ביניהם, אמרתי לעלות עמם.

וראיתי במראה פי הסטרא אחרא עלה לקטרג בשמחה גדולה אשר לא היתה כמוה, ופעל פעולותיו גזרות שמד על כמה נפשות שיהרגו במיתות משונות, ואחזתני פלצות ומסרתי ממש (נפשי), ובקשתי ממורי ורבי שלי שילך עמי, כי סכנה גדולה לקחת ולעלות לעולמות העליונים, כי מיום היותי על עמדי לא עליתי בעליות גדולות כמוהו.

ועליתי מדרגה אחר מדרגה, עד שנכנסתי להיכל משיח ששם לומד משיח תורה עם כל התנאים והצדיקים וגם עם שבועה רועים, ושם ראיתי שמחה גדולה עד מאד, ואיני יודע לשמחה זו מה הוא עושה, והייתי סובר שהשמחה הזו חס ושלום על פטירתו מהעולם הזה, והודיעו לי אחר כך שאיני נפטר עדין כי הנאה להם למעלה קשאני מייחד חודים למטה על ידי תורותיהם הקדושה, אכל מהות השמחה איני יודע עד היום הזה.

ושאלתי את פי משיח, אימתי אתי מר, והשיב לי, בזאת תדע, בעת שיתפרסם למועד ויתגלה בעולם ויפצו מעינותיה חוצה מה שלמדתי אותך והשגת, ויוכלו גם המה לעשות חודים ועליות כמוך, ואז יכלו כל הקליפות ויהי עת רצון וישועה.

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And I was astonished by this, and it caused me great anguish over the length of time—how could this possibly be. But from what I learned while I was there—three practices of spiritual segulos and three sacred Names—and they are easy to learn and explain—my mind was calmed, and I thought: perhaps through this, even people of my generation will be able to reach a level and aspect like mine, meaning they too will be able to attain soul ascents and learn and comprehend as I did.

ותמהתי על זאת, והינה לי צער גדול באריכות הזמן כל כד מתי זה אפשר להיות. אכל ממה שלמדתי בהיותי שם שלוש דברים סגולות ושלוש שמות הקדושים, והם בנגל ללמוד ולפרש, ונתקנר דעתי וחסבתי אפשר שעל ידי זה יוכלו גם אנשי גילי לבוא למדרגה ובחינה כמותי, דהינו בהיותם יכולים לעלות נשמות וילמדו וישגו כמוני.

But I was not given permission all the days of my life to reveal this. And I asked on your behalf to teach you, but I was not permitted at all. And I am under oath and bound concerning this.

ולא נתנה רשות כל ימי חיי לגלות זאת. ובקשתי עבורך ללמד אותך ולא הורשיתי כלל, ומשבע ועומד אני על זה.

However, this I inform you—and may Hashem be your help—to direct your way before Hashem, and let it not slip away [especially in the Holy Land], that during your prayer and your learning, and every single utterance and word from your lips,

אכל זאת אני מודיעה והשם יהי בעזרה לנכח ה' דרבה ואל יליו, [ובפרט בארץ הקדושה], בעת תפלתה ולימודה וכל דבור ודבור ומוצא שפתיה

have intention to unify the Name, for in every single letter there are worlds, souls, and Divinity, and they ascend and connect and unite with one another.

תכון ליחד שם, כי בכל אות ואות יש עולמות ונשמות ואלהות, ועולים ומתקשרים ומתייחדים זה עם זה.

And afterward, the letters themselves connect and unify, and [form] a word, and they are united in a true unification in Divinity.

ואחר כך מתקשרים ומתייחדים האותיות ונעשה תיבה ומתייחדת יחוד אמיתי באלהות.

And you should include your soul with them in every level and aspect mentioned above, and all the worlds become united as one and ascend,

ותכלול נשמתך עמם בכל בחינה ובחינה מן הנ"ל, ומתייחדים כל העולמות באחד ועולים,

and it becomes an exceedingly great joy and delight beyond measure—when you understand the joy of a groom and bride in a small, physical way, how much more so in such an elevated spiritual level as this.

ונעשה שמחה ותענוג גדול לאין שיעור, בהבינה בשמחת חתן וכלה בקטנות ובגשמיות, וכל שכן במעלה העליונה כזאת.

And surely Hashem will be your help, and in all that you turn to, you will succeed and act wisely—“Give to the wise, and he will increase in wisdom.”

ובנדאי ה' יהי בעזרה ובכל אשר תפנה תצלית ותשכיל, תן לחכם ויחכם עוד.

[NOTE Summary

The Baal Shem Tov recounts a soul-ascent on Rosh Hashanah in which he beheld wondrous sights in the heavenly realms. He saw countless souls, both of the living and dead, ascending with joy through a spiritual

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pillar known to mystics. Even many wicked souls had repented and were accepted. These souls begged the Baal Shem Tov to ascend further and assist them with his unique spiritual power to unify divine forces through Torah.

He ascended into the chamber of Moshiach, where Moshiach was studying Torah with the Tannaim, tzaddikim, and the Seven Shepherds. There was an overwhelming joy there, whose source he could not initially discern. He feared it might signify his own death, but was told that the upper realms delighted in his spiritual unifications below using their Torah teachings. The essence of the joy remained hidden from him.

The Baal Shem Tov asked Moshiach, “When will the Master come?” Moshiach replied: when the Baal Shem Tov’s teachings and spiritual attainments would spread throughout the world—when others could make unifications and soul-ascents like him. Only then would the kelipos (spiritual husks) be nullified, and the time of redemption arrive.

This deeply troubled him—how long would it take? But he was consoled when he was shown three spiritual segulos (remedies) and three holy Names, which are easy to teach and understand. This gave him hope that others in his generation could achieve the same. However, he was sworn not to reveal these secrets during his lifetime and was even denied permission to teach them to the letter’s recipient.

In the final segment, the Baal Shem Tov exhorts the recipient to elevate every word and thought in Torah and prayer, by intending to unify the Divine Name. Each letter contains spiritual worlds, souls, and godliness that can ascend and unify. Including one’s soul in this process causes indescribable joy and delight above. This inner mystical practice transforms even physical speech into a cosmic elevation.

Practical Takeaway

Every word we speak—especially in Torah and prayer—can be a vehicle for cosmic transformation. The Baal Shem Tov teaches that **each letter contains worlds, souls, and Divinity**, and with the proper kavannah (intention), our speech causes them to unify and ascend. You don’t need lofty mystical visions to participate in this. By simply pausing before speaking sacred words and intending to unify Hashem’s Name through them, you draw your own soul into a higher reality and bring joy Above. This transforms your learning, your prayer, and even your quiet whisper into part of the process of redemption.

Chassidic Story

The Baal Shem Tov’s Last Rosh Hashanah in Mezhibuzh

In the final years of his life, the Baal Shem Tov spent Rosh Hashanah in deep deveikus, often beyond the grasp of those around him. One year, he remained secluded in his room for many hours, groaning and crying softly. His disciples stood outside in fear and awe.

When he finally emerged, his face shone with both intensity and sweetness. One of his closest students, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polonne, dared to ask, “Rebbe, what happened this Rosh Hashanah?”

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The Baal Shem Tov paused. “There was great accusation in heaven,” he said. “Judgments were rising. I tried to counter them with words, with prayers, but nothing would open the gates. In the end,” he whispered, “I gave over my soul.”

The students gasped. “But Rebbe, you are alive!”

He smiled gently. “Sometimes to nullify decrees, you must surrender not just your words but your very self. And sometimes, Hashem gives it back.”

It was only years later that they connected this moment to the letter—the *Iggeres HaBaal Shem Tov*—in which he described giving over his soul during an ascent to the chamber of Moshiach.

Source: *Toldos Yaakov Yosef* (oral tradition, attributed to direct disciples of the Baal Shem Tov)

END NOTE]

[FOOT NOTE: When I saw that this matter is possible, I understood the reason for this. I thought that through this—through these special practices (*segulot*) and holy names—others among the people of *Nili*, those whose spiritual standing is close to mine, could also reach a level and status like mine. That is, they would be able, by learning these practices and names, to elevate their souls, ascending to the higher worlds as I have done. There, they would learn and attain the things I have attained, as I did.

However, in practice, I was not given permission throughout my life to reveal this—the three special practices and the three holy names that must be learned and attained. I even requested on your behalf that permission be granted for me to teach you, but I was not permitted at all. I am bound by an oath, standing firm, not to reveal to anyone what I have learned and attained there.

But this I can tell you, and may God help you: “*Before the Lord your path lies*”—the eyes of God observe your deeds. Therefore, be cautious that the following matters do not depart from your memory:

During your prayer, study, and in every word and utterance from your lips, intend with these words to unify a divine name, to bring about a “unification” of a certain divine aspect, one of God’s names, with the physical utterance, so that it illuminates below. For in every letter there are three aspects, one above the other, which are called *worlds*, *souls*, and *godliness*. These are three general levels of divine light:

1. **Worlds** (*olamot*): The creation itself, with the limited divine energy invested in each creation according to its nature, sustaining it.
2. **Souls** (*neshamot*): The elevated divine sparks concealed within creation, which are beyond the capacity of the created beings to comprehend.
3. **Godliness** (*elohut*): The aspect of divine light that is too exalted to manifest within creation at all.

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These three ascend, leaving their boundaries and limitations, and they become connected and unified with one another. In this way, the “complete letter” (*ot shleima*) is formed.

And afterward, the letters connect and unify with one another, forming and creating a complete word (*teivah shleimah*). All the letters unify in a true "unification" (*yichud amiti*) within divinity—within the divine light that illuminates through this word. To this unification, you must direct your intention in every word of Torah and prayer.

Integrate and include your soul with them, and "include" your soul within this unification, so that it is united and incorporated within each of the aforementioned levels—within all three levels mentioned above.

Through the unification described, all the worlds unify as one and ascend to connect with the divine light. This brings about an immeasurable joy and delight.

An analogy for this: reflect on the joy of the unification of a bride and groom, though it is on a much lower and physical level. The joy comes from the union and connection of different levels, as the inner meaning of the union of the bride and groom is the influence from a higher level (the groom) to a lower level (the bride). How much more so is there joy and delight when a similar type of unification occurs on such a lofty level as discussed here—namely, the spiritual unification of the worlds with divinity.

Certainly, God will help you to fulfill all that is mentioned, and in all that you set out to do, you will succeed and gain understanding. *"Give to a wise man, and he will become wiser still."*

(*Proverbs 9:9*): The meaning of the verse, as explained in Metzudat David, is: "Speak words of wisdom to a wise person, and he will increase his wisdom even further from his own understanding."]

END FT]

Siman #ב

Introduction

This section from *Keser Shem Tov* reveals the Baal Shem Tov's profound mystical teachings on immersion in the mikveh—not merely as a ritual of purity, but as a transformative spiritual ascent. Here, the Baal Shem Tov decodes the inner mechanics of the mikveh using Kabbalistic associations: Divine Names, sefirotic structure, the interplay of thought, speech, and voice, and the cosmic process of judgment and sweetening. Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov (1698–1760), founder of the Chassidic movement, emphasized inner deveikus (attachment to Hashem) through joy, simplicity, and intention. This discourse offers a clear view into his radical sanctification of everyday mitzvos, calling the individual to align each bodily motion and spiritual yearning with Divine unity. The content here, rich with allusions to the Arizal and Kabbalistic symbols, is not detached mysticism—it's a practical spiritual roadmap for teshuvah, elevation, and intimate connection with the Divine through the seemingly simple act of immersion.

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The kavvanah of the mikveh from the Baal Shem Tov, may the memory of the holy tzaddik be a blessing.

פנות המקוה מהפעל שם טוב זלה"ה

First, one should have intention for the secret mentioned in the Gemara—"six levels in mikvaos"—and according to a secret such as this: יה"ו corresponds to Chesed, יו"ה to Netzach, הו"ה to Gevurah, הי"ו to Hod, וי"ה to Tiferes, and וה"י to Yesod. These are the Divine Names written in the kavvanos of the lulav, as the Arizal explained with their reasons and explanations there in the kavvanos of lulav.

מקודם יבון סוד הנזכר בגמרא שש מעלות במקנאות, ועל פי סוד פנה: יה"ו חסד, יו"ה נצח, הו"ה גבורה, הי"ו הוד, וי"ה תפארת, וה"י יסוד, והם השמות הכתובים בכונת הלולב, כמ"ש האריז"ל טעמם ונימוקם שם בכונת הלולב.

And the waters of the mikveh are the nine Yuds of the miluim of ה"מ" (water). And all of them are drawn from the Name ע"ב, which is the first, which is Chesed, numerical value 72, and it is the aspect of water. Therefore, the mikveh contains forty se'ah corresponding to the four Yuds of ע"ב.

והמים שבמקנה הם ט' יודין דע"ב ס"ג מ"ה ב"ן גימטריא מים, וכלולם נמשכים משם ע"ב, שהיא הראשון שהוא חסד גי' ע"ב, והוא בחינת מים, לכן הם מ' סאה נגד ד' יודין דע"ב.

Also, the word "מקנה" has the numerical value of 151, like the Name אה"י in its milui with ה"י"ן, which corresponds to Binah, which is the receptacle for קס"א and קמ"ג.

גם מקנה גי' קנ"א, כמנין אה"י במלוי הי"ן, שהיא בסוד הבינה, שהיא בית קבול לקס"א קמ"ג.

And behold, the structure of the body is through the Name קנ"א, as explained in the writings of the Arizal in the kavvanah of the night of Hoshanah Rabbah.

והנה בנן הגוף הוא על ידי שם קנ"א, כמבואר בכתובי האריז"ל בכונת ליל הוש"ר.

And the body that is afflicted is like an earthenware vessel, which cannot become pure in a mikveh—for an earthenware vessel is only purified through its breaking.

והגוף הנגוף הוא כלי תרס ואין לו טהרה במקנה, כי כלי תרס שבירתו זהו טהרתו.

And the matter is that before entering the mikveh, one must break his heart within him and accept upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven to abandon his transgressions.

והענין הוא שקדם פניסתו למקנה צריך לשבור לבו בקרבו, ומקבל עליו עול מלכות שמים לעזוב פשעיו.

And from then on, he is ready to serve with love—Chesed, and awe—Gevurah, in order that Hashem can take glory—Tiferes—in him, as it is written: “Yisrael, in whom I will glory.”

ומעתה מוכן לעבוד באהבה חסד, ויראה גבורה, בכדי שיוכל השי"ת להתפאר, תפארת, בו, כמ"ש יש"אל אשר בה אתפאר.

And he should give over his self for His holiness, and through this he will defeat—Netzach—the Other Side, with his trust in Hashem Yisborach, that He will return the one who was cast off.

וימסור עצמו על קדושתו, ועל ידי זה ינצח, נצח, הס"א, בבטחונו בה' יתברך שיש"ב את נדחו.

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And he must give thanks—Hod—to Him, that he was rescued from the depths of the sea. And then he is included in the category of “the tzaddik who is the foundation of the world.”

וְצָרִיךְ לְהוֹדוֹת, הוֹד, לוֹ שְׁנֻצוֹל מִמְצוֹלַת יָם, וְאָז הוּא נִבְלָל בְּכָלֵל צְדִיק יְסוּד עוֹלָם.

And through this, the honor of His kingship—Malchus—will be magnified and recognized, may His great Name be blessed forever and ever.

וְאָז עַל יְדֵי זֶה יִתְגַּדֵּל וְיוֹכַר כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ, מַלְכוּת, יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִתְעַלֶּה שְׁמוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

[May His great Name be blessed and exalted.]

[יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִתְעַלֶּה שְׁמוֹ]

And further, one should have intention while in the mikveh, that the Name אדנ"י (Adnai), corresponding to Malchus, is the secret of speech; and the Name הו"י corresponds to Ze'eir Anpin, the secret of voice; and the Name אהי"ה is the secret of thought.

וְעוֹד יִכּוֹן בְּהִיוֹתוֹ בַּמִּקְוֵה, כִּי שֵׁם אַדְנ"י, מַלְכוּת, הוּא סוּד הַדִּיבּוּר, וְשֵׁם הו"י הוּא זְעִיר אַנְפִּין, סוּד הַקּוֹל, וְשֵׁם אֱהִיָּה סוּד הַמַּחְשָׁבָה.

And in the mikveh: the roof of the mikveh corresponds to the Name אהי"ה; the four directions of the mikveh correspond to the four letters of the Name הו"י; and the floor of the mikveh corresponds to the Name אדנ"י.

וּבַמִּקְוֵה הַגַּג שֶׁל הַמִּקְוֵה נִגְדָה שֵׁם אֱהִיָּה, וְהַד' רֵיחוֹת שֶׁל הַמִּקְוֵה נִגְדָה ד' אוֹתִיּוֹת הו"י, וְקַרְקַעֵי הַמִּקְוֵה נִגְדָה שֵׁם אַדְנ"י.

And these three Names (mentioned above) have the gematria of יב"ק, which is the secret of Yichud, Blessing, and Holiness.

וְהֵג' שְׁמוֹת הַנ"ל הֵם גִּימַטְרִיא יב"ק, הוּא סוּד יְחִיד בְּרִכָּה קְדוּשָׁה.

And he should have intention that he is entering to request from Hashem Yisborach purification and sanctity for his thought, voice, and speech.

וְיִכּוֹן שְׁנֻכְנַס לְבַקֵּשׁ מִהַשְׁי"ת טְהוּרָה וְקְדוּשָׁה, לְמַחְשָׁבָתוֹ וְלִקְוֹלוֹ וְלִדְבָרוֹ.

Then, through the above kavvanah—even if “a righteous man falls seven times,” even if he has descended seven levels backward—Hashem Yisborach will heal him.

וְאָז עַל יְדֵי כְּוָנַת הַנ"ל אֵף שֶׁבַע יְפוֹל צְדִיק וְקָם, אֵף אִם יֵרֵד שֶׁבַע מַעְלוֹת אַחוֹרָנִית יִרְפָּאֵהוּ הַשְׁי"ת.

And He will establish a new covenant with him that will not be broken.

וְיִכְרֹת בְּרִית חֲדָשׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא תוֹפֵר.

And then the spiritual stature—“Komah”—of his soul will shine upon him: the letters of the word “Mikveh.”

וְאָז יֵאִיר עַל נִשְׁמָתוֹ קוֹמַת הַרוּחָנִיּוֹת, אוֹתִיּוֹת מִקְוֵה.

“סאה” (se'ah) has the gematria of אדנ"י, which is 65. The Alef in סאה alludes to Chochmah, which is the first Yud of the Name הו"י.

סָאָה גִּימַטְרִיא אַדְנ"י, ס"ה, וְא' שֶׁבְּסָאָה הוּא סוּד חֻכְמָה שֶׁהוּא יו"ד רֵאשׁוֹנָה דְּשֵׁם הו"י.

The Yud when spelled out יו"ד hints at the Vav—corresponding to the six kavim (lines/measures) in the se'ah, meaning the six levels in the mikveh as mentioned above.

יו"ד בְּמֵלוֹי כְּוָנָה יו"ד מְרִמֵּז הו"ו לְשִׁשָּׁה קַבִּין, שֶׁבְּסָאָה ר"ל לוֹ מַעְלוֹת שֶׁבַּמִּקְוֵה כְּוָנָה.

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For the root of their spellings in מ"ה, ס"ג, ע"ב equals 102; six times 102 equals ברית (covenant), to repair the blemish of the holy covenant.

שְׁשָׁרֶשׁ מְלוֹאֲיָהֶם דְּע"ב ס"ג מ"ה גִּימְטְרִיא ק"ב, ו' פְּעָמִים ק"ב גִּימְטְרִיא בְּרִית, לְתַקֵּן הַפְּגָם שֶׁל הַבְּרִית קֹדֶשׁ,

And the Dalet of the milui יו"ד alludes to the four "lugin," for יה"ו when filled with Alefs has the gematria of לוג (log).

וְד' שֶׁל מְלוֹי יו"ד רוֹמֵז לְד' לֹגִין, כִּי יְה"ו בְּמְלוֹי אֶלְפִין גִּימְטְרִיא לֹג.

And through this he will merit the service of Hashem Yisborach.

וְעַל יְדֵי זֶה יִזְכֶּה לְעֲבוֹדַת הַשְּׁמַיִת

And he should recite this verse with intention: "Mikveh Yisrael Hashem, Savior in a time of trouble."

וַיֹּאמֶר פְּסוּק זֶה עִם הַכְּפֻנָה, מְקוֹה יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' מוֹשִׁיעוֹ בְּעֵת צָרָה

And he should intend that the acronym of "Mikveh Yisrael" is "מי" (Mi), and "Hashem Moshi'o" is the acronym "ים" (Yam), which is the secret of the Shechinah—

וַיַּכְנוּ רְאֵשֵׁי תְבוֹת מְקוֹה יִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא מ"י, הוּי"ה מוֹשִׁיעוֹ הוּא ר"ת י"ם, שֶׁהוּא סוּד הַשְּׁכִינָה

(from which judgments are revealed in this world, and the sweetening of the judgments is through elevating them to their source, which is the Yesod of Binah)—

שְׁמֵמֻנָה מִתְגַּלִּים הַדִּינִים בְּעוֹלָם הַנָּה, וּמִתּוֹק הַדִּינִים הוּא עַל יְדֵי שְׁמַעְלָה אוֹתָם לְשָׂרֵשׁ שֶׁהוּא (סוּד הַבִּינָה),

from which awaken the judgments, within which is the Name Alef-Hei-Yud-Hei, as mentioned above, whose gematria is "Mikveh."

שְׁמֵמֻנָה מִתְעַרְוִין הַדִּינִים שֶׁבָּהֶם שֵׁם א' ה' י' ה' כִּנ"ל שֶׁהוּא גִימְטְרִיא מְקוֹה

And there they are sweetened in the secret of childbirth through the waters of the mikveh,

וְשֵׁם נִמְתְּקִים בְּסוּד הַלֵּידָה עַל יְדֵי הַמַּיִם שֶׁבַּמְקוֹה

meaning, the nine Yuds from the miluim of ע"ב, ס"ג, מ"ה, which equal ninety, the same as "מים"—

דְּהֵינּוּ ט' יוֹדִין דְּע"ב ס"ג מ"ה ב"ן שְׁעוֹלִים גִּימְטְרִיא צ' כְּמִנּוּן מַיִם

and through the four Yuds of ע"ב, which correspond to forty se'ah.

וְעַל יְדֵי ד' יוֹדִין דְּע"ב שֶׁהֵם מ' סָאָה

For the revelation of Gevuros is the secret of the Name אגל"א, meaning the five Gevuros that are the root of all Gevuros become revealed,

כִּי גְלוּי הַגְּבוּרוֹת הוּא סוּד שֵׁם אגל"א, ר"ל שְׁמֵתְגַלּוֹת ה' גְּבוּרוֹת שֶׁהֵם שָׂרֵשׁ כָּל הַגְּבוּרוֹת

and they become revealed in the lower Shechinah—secret of אדנ"י.

וּמִתְגַּלּוֹת בְּשְׁכִינָה תַּתְּמָה, סוּד אֲדנ"י

However, when the Gevuros ascend to their source—which is the secret of "מי" that is called Binah—and are sweetened there in the secret of a new birth,

אֲדָ כְּשֶׁמִּתְעַלּוֹת הַגְּבוּרוֹת לְשָׂרֵשׁוֹ, שֶׁהוּא סוּד מ"י שֶׁנִּקְרָאת בִּינָה, וְנִמְתְּקִים שֵׁם בְּסוּד לֵידָה תְּדֻשָּׁה

it is hinted to by the Name mentioned above whose numerical value is 34 (אל"ד).

נִרְמַז שֵׁם הַנ"ל שְׁמֵסְפָרוֹ אל"ד

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Therefore, he should intend that when he submerges his head into the water to immerse, he should focus on the Name אהי"ה אל"ד in this combination: אאהליד"ה.

לכן יכונן בְּשִׁשּׁוּקָהּ רֵאשׁוֹ לְתוֹךְ הַמַּיִם לְטַבֵּל, יְכוֹנֵן בְּשֵׁם אֱהִיָּה אֵל־דַּ אַאֲהֵלִיד"ה.

And further he should intend and visualize these four Names while inside the mikveh in this order: אל"ד, אהי"ה, הוי"ה, אדנ"י.

וְעוֹד יְכוֹנֵן וַיְצַיֵּר אֱלוֹ הַדַּ שְׁמוֹת בְּהִיּוֹתוֹ בְּתוֹךְ הַמִּקְוֵה כְּזֶה, אֵל־דַּ אֱהִיָּה הוּי"ה אֲדֹנָי.

And he should intend that the Alef of the Name אל"ד hints to the Supreme Crown, which is Alef—letters of פלא (wondrous);

וַיְכוֹנֵן הָאֵל מִשֵּׁם אֵל־דַּ רוֹמֵז לְכֶתֶר עֲלִיּוֹן שֶׁהוּא אֶלֶף, אֲוִתִּיּוֹת פֶּלֶא

the Lamed hints to the three lines: the right line—Chochmah, Chesed, Netzach; the left line—Binah, Gevurah, Hod; the middle line—Daas, Tiferes, Yesod.

וְלָמֶד רוֹמֵז לְגִ' קוּוּיִן, קוּ זְמִין חֲכָמָה חֶסֶד נְצַח, קוּ שְׂמָאל בִּינָה גְבוּרָה הוֹד, קוּ אֲמֻצָּעֵי דַעַת תְּפָאֶרֶת הַיְסוֹד,

And the Dalet hints to Malchus—the secret of אדנ"י.

נְדָלִ"ת רוֹמֵזֶת לְמַלְכוּת, סוֹד אֲדֹנָי.

Therefore I have copied letter by letter from the holy words of the godly Baal Shem Tov, may his memory be a blessing.

עַל כֵּן הֶעֱתַקְתִּי אוֹת בְּאוֹת מִדְּבָרֵי קֹדֶשׁ שֶׁל הַאֲלֹהִים הַבְּעַל שֵׁם טוֹב זֶלָה"ה.

[NOTE Summary

The Baal Shem Tov explains the kavanos (intentions) one should have while entering the mikveh. The six stages of the mikveh correspond to six Divine Names associated with the sefirot: יה"ו (Chesed), יו"ה (Netzach), הוי"ו (Gevurah), הי"ו (Hod), וי"ה (Tiferes), וה"י (Yesod). These Names, also found in the lulav kavanos, draw down energy from the higher worlds. The waters of the mikveh themselves correspond to nine Yuds derived from the miluim (spellings) of the Names מ"ה, ס"ג, ע"ב, and ב"ן—whose gematria equals ninety, the numerical value of מים (water). Additionally, the measure of forty se'ah connects to the four Yuds of ע"ב, tying the physical volume to a supernal source of Chesed.

The word “mikveh” has the gematria of 151, matching the expanded Name אהי"ה in milui hei'yin form—linked to Binah, the womb of the world. The mikveh thus becomes a vessel through which the soul is reborn. However, physical immersion alone is not sufficient. Before entering, one must break their heart in contrition, accept the yoke of Heaven, and commit to teshuvah and renewal.

Each part of the mikveh correlates to an aspect of the soul and Divine service: the roof to אהי"ה (thought), the four sides to הוי"ה (voice), the floor to אדנ"י (speech). These three Names together equal יב"ק, which alludes to the unification of blessing and holiness. The process of immersion—especially the act of submerging the head—is a symbolic return to a state of gestation and rebirth.

The Baal Shem Tov instructs the immersion to be done with the kavannah of the composite Name אאהליד"ה, merging אהי"ה and אל"ד, symbolizing the sweetening of judgments in their source in Binah. The structure of the Divine Names visualized in the waters—אל"ד, אהי"ה, הוי"ה, אדנ"י—reveal a map of the cosmos embedded in the self: Alef points to Kesser; Lamed to the three sefirotic columns; Dalet to Malchus.

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The ultimate goal of this spiritual mikveh is to transform the person into a vessel of Divine unity. The immersion becomes a cosmic repair of speech, thought, and voice—restoring the soul to its root and bringing about the birth of holiness in the world.

Practical Takeaway

Even everyday mitzvos can become gateways to sublime Divine connection when approached with inner kavannah. The Baal Shem Tov teaches that **immersion in the mikveh is not just purification—it is rebirth**. Every aspect of the body and soul—speech, thought, voice—can be uplifted when one immerses with awareness of the Divine Names and sefirotic structure.

Before entering the mikveh, take a moment to **break your heart**, reflect, and accept the yoke of Heaven anew. As you descend into the water, know that you are entering the spiritual womb of Binah, preparing to reemerge with new purpose. Visualize your mind, voice, and words aligning with holiness. Even if you have fallen “seven times,” this process allows you to rise again, wrapped in a new covenant of Divine closeness.

Chassidic Story

The Mikveh Before Dawn

Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov was known for immersing in the mikveh before sunrise each day, even in the coldest Carpathian winters. One morning, his students noticed he returned from the mikveh visibly trembling—not from cold, but from spiritual trembling. He closed his eyes, and with deep awe, whispered the verse: *“Mikveh Yisrael Hashem, Moshi'o b'eis tzara.”*

A student later asked what he had seen. The Baal Shem Tov replied, “When one enters the mikveh with the right kavannah, not just to cleanse the body but to reunite the soul with its source, even judgments waiting in heaven can be sweetened before they descend. This morning,” he said, “I felt not water on my skin, but the compassion of the Shechinah surrounding me. A decree was hovering... and the mikveh reversed it.”

The student asked, “How can one attain such kavannah?”

The Baal Shem smiled gently. “Begin by knowing that you are not just stepping into water. You are returning to your beginning—to be born again, to rise again. Hashem is waiting in the depths.”

Source: *Shem U'Sheiris* (oral tradition from the students of the Baal Shem Tov) **END NOTE]**

Siman #ג

From the Baal Shem Tov: I heard in the name of my teacher an explanation of the Midrash: “If only they would abandon Me but keep My Torah.”

מהבעל שם טוב. שמעתי בשם מורי פירוש
המדרש: הלאי אותי עזבו ותורתתי שמרו

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(Interpretation): This is explained by way of a witty remark: for a thief in the tunnel is called by the Merciful One—this is what they said: “If only they abandoned Me” (i.e., that they would not call upon Me while stealing and not use Me to justify theft), then “they would keep My Torah.” This is easily understood.

(פירושו), ביאור על פי הלצה, כי גנבא אמחמתרמא רחמנא קרי, וזה שאמרו הלואי אותי עזבו, שלא לקרא אותי ולא יגנוב, ואז תורתתי שמרו, וקל להבין.

He also explained: the ultimate knowledge is that we do not know. However, there are two types of “not knowing.” One is immediate—not even entering to investigate or seek to know, since it is impossible to know. The other is one who investigates and searches until he knows that it is impossible to know.

עוד ביאר, כי תכלית הידיעה שלא גדע. אף יש בו סוגים של שלא גדע: א' מיד, שאינו נכנס לחקר ולדעת מאחר דאי אפשר לדעת, ב' שחוקר ודורש עד שיגדע שאי אפשר לדעת.

And the difference between these two is like what may be compared to two people who wish to know the king: one enters all the rooms of the king and delights in the treasures and palaces of the king, and afterward realizes he cannot know the king.

וההפך שבו זה לזה כמה דאמרי, שנים שרוצים לדעת את המלך, ואחד נכנס בכל חדרי המלך ונהנה מאוצרותיו והיכלי המלך, ואחר כך לא יוכל לדעת המלך,

And the second said: “Since it is impossible to know the king,” he never entered the king’s chambers at all, and did not know—from the outset.

והשני אמר, מאחר שאי אפשר לדעת המלך, לא נכנס קלל לחדרי המלך ולא גדע מיד.

And with this is understood clearly the two aforementioned types of “Me they abandoned”—to know Me, which is impossible—nonetheless, “If only they abandoned Me” through investigation and knowledge, [rather than not entering at all,] after “they keep My Torah.” [And this is well understood to those who understand the hint.]

ובנה יובן ודאי בשני הסוגים הנ"ל, אותי עזבו מלדע, שאי אפשר, מ"מ הלואי אותי עזבו מתוך [התקירה והידיעה אחר שתורתתי שמרו] ודפח"ח.

[NOTE Summary

The Baal Shem Tov shares two deep teachings. First, he interprets the Midrashic phrase “If only they abandoned Me but kept My Torah” with a parable: a thief calls upon G-d while breaking into a house—misusing G-d's name. Better, says the Midrash, that one disconnects from G-d rather than corrupt G-d's name, if doing so leads to still keeping the Torah. The second teaching explores the concept that “the ultimate knowledge is to know that we do not know.” There are two paths to this truth: one avoids the search altogether, accepting ignorance from the outset; the other journeys deeply into the chambers of wisdom, explores the treasures of Divine knowledge, and only then realizes the impossibility of truly knowing the Essence. The Baal Shem Tov affirms that the second path—of seeking and discovering the unknowability through effort—is superior. This is what it means when Hashem says, “If only they abandoned Me” *through* seeking, *after* “they kept My Torah.”

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Practical Takeaway

Struggle in pursuit of truth is not failure—it is devotion. The Baal Shem Tov teaches that attempting to know Hashem and arriving at the humility of “I cannot know” is greater than never trying at all. In your spiritual life, **do not fear questions or the depth of searching**. The act of engaging with Torah, of exploring Hashem’s “palaces,” is itself a mitzvah. Even when clarity eludes you, your effort brings you closer than complacency ever could. Keep the Torah—and seek, even when you know you cannot grasp it all. That seeking is the point.

END NOTE]

Siman #ד

From the Baal Shem Tov: Every person must conduct themselves according to their own level.

מהבעל שם טוב: כל אחד צריך להתנהג על פי מדרגתו,

But one who grasps a level [that is not his own]—this and that will not endure in his hand.

משאין בן התופס מדרגה שאינה שלו, זה וזה לא נהתיים בידו.

And this is what is meant by “Many acted like Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, but it did not succeed for them”—

וזה שאמרו: הרבה עשו כרשב"י ולא עלתה בידם,

that is, they were not on this level, but merely acted like Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai because they had seen him on such a level—

ר"ל שלא היו בבחינה זו, רק שעשו כרשב"י שראו אותו בבחינה זו

and therefore it did not succeed for them.

ולכך לא עלתה בידם

[And so I heard this reasoning from my teacher as well, and it is well understood to one who grasps the hint.]

[וכן שמעתי ממורי סגרא זו, ודפח"ח]

[NOTE Summary

The Baal Shem Tov teaches that each person must serve Hashem according to their own unique spiritual level. Trying to imitate the level of another—especially a tzaddik like Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai—when it is not one’s own true standing, leads to failure in both paths. The statement, “Many acted like Rashbi but it did not succeed for them,” refers not to a lack of sincerity, but to the mistake of copying a spiritual mode one has not earned. These individuals saw Rashbi’s elevated state and attempted to replicate it without being rooted in that same inner reality. As a result, their service faltered. True growth must be authentic to one’s soul and station.

Practical Takeaway

Don’t measure your spiritual path by someone else’s light. The Baal Shem Tov urges you to serve Hashem from your **own level**, not by mimicking another’s. If you try to adopt practices or intensity beyond your current capacity, it can destabilize both your inner and outer world. Instead, honor where you truly are, and grow from there. Your soul’s path is sacred—and only you can walk it. **END NOTE]**

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Siman #7

As it is stated in the Talmud—From the Baal Shem Tov: He explained the Talmudic saying,

“A heavenly voice went forth and said: The entire world is sustained *bishvil* (because of) my son Chanina...”

[And I heard from my teacher that “shvil” (because of) also means “path” or “channel”—that a conduit was opened...

and this is the path of sustenance and flow. That is what is meant by “*bishvil* Chanina b’ni.”]

דאיתא בש"ס. מהבעל שם טוב פירש הש"ס

יצא בת קול ואמרה: כל העולם נזון בשביל חנינא ב'ני כו'

וממורי שמעתינן כי שביל הוא צנור, שפתח צנור] ...

ושביל השפע. וזהו שאמר בשביל חנינא ב'ני. [ו]דפח"ה

[NOTE Summary

The Baal Shem Tov interprets the Talmudic statement, “The whole world is sustained *bishvil* (because of) my son Chanina,” in a deeper, mystical way. While the simple meaning is that the merit of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa sustains the world, the Baal Shem Tov, based on his teacher’s teaching, notes that the Hebrew word *bishvil* can also mean “path” or “channel.” Thus, the phrase implies that Rabbi Chanina himself **becomes a conduit** through which Divine sustenance flows to the entire world. His purity and spiritual alignment open up a pipeline of blessing that nourishes others.

Practical Takeaway

You don’t have to carry the world on your shoulders—but you **can be a channel** through which goodness flows. Like Rabbi Chanina, you can become a *shvil*, a spiritual pipeline, when you refine your inner life and align it with Hashem’s will. This means that through sincere mitzvos, prayer, and humility, your life doesn’t just uplift you—it nourishes others too. Even quiet righteousness creates ripple effects far beyond what you see. **END NOTE]**

Siman #1

“And the matter that is too difficult for you, you shall bring it to me.” (Interpretation of the Baal Shem Tov)

[I heard from my teacher...]

in the name of the Ramban, who instructed his son: If you are in doubt about any matter [of mitzvah]—how to perform it when there are arguments for and against—or if you are unsure whether it is a mitzvah at all, whether to do it or refrain—

והדבר אשר יקשה מכם תקריבון אלי. (פירוש הבעל שם טוב)

...שמעתי ממורי]

בשם הרמב"ן, שצוה לבנו, אם יסתפק לך באיזה דבר [מצוה] איה לעשותו כשיש בו דרכים לצדד לקאן ולקאן, או שיש לך ספק אם הוא מצוה או לאו, ואם יש לעשותו או למנע ממנו

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the matter that brings a person pleasure—he will tend to seek proof to permit what is forbidden. Therefore, before anything, you must remove from the matter your own pleasure or honor.

והדבר שיש לאדם הנאה ממנו, וכוונתו למצוא ראייה להתיר האסור. על כן תראה קודם כל לסלק מעצמך, דבר זה הנאות עצמך או כבודך

Only afterward should you examine and weigh both sides—then Hashem will show you the truth, and you will proceed securely. [And this is well understood by those who grasp the hint.]

ואחר כך תראה לצדד לכאן ולכאן, אז השי"ת [יודיעך האמת ותלך לבטח]. [ודפח"ח

(And this is the meaning of...) “And the matter that is too difficult for you”—that is, the matter that is too difficult: you do not know whether to do it or avoid it—

ובנה יובן) והדבר אשר יקשה מכם, ר"ל הדבר) אשר יקשה, שאינכם יודעים איך לעשותו או למנוע

whether it is a mitzvah or not—the doubt originates from you, because it contains your own pleasure, as in “for yourselves” (which means: for your pleasure).

אם הוא מצוה או לאו—הספק גולד מכם, שיש בו הנאותכם, כמו “לכם” להנאותכם

[However, if you remove from the matter] your own pleasure or honor and draw near to Me—

מה שאין כן אם תסלקו מהדבר] הנאותכם וכבודכם, ותקרבון אלי

meaning, more inward than “to Me”—your intention should be [only] for the sake of Heaven, with no ulterior motive or self-interest. Then “I will hear it”—I will give him understanding in how to act. And this is well understood.

שהוא יותר פנימי מן אלי, והפונה שתהיה [רק] לשם שמים בלי שום פניה והנאה, אז “ושמעתי” —אתן לו הבנה איך יתנהג, וקל להבין

[NOTE Summary

The Baal Shem Tov, drawing from a teaching of the Ramban, addresses how to handle spiritual doubt and moral ambiguity. When someone is uncertain whether a particular action is a mitzvah or not—or how to perform it correctly—they are often subconsciously influenced by their own self-interest. If the situation offers personal benefit, the yetzer hara will push them to find leniencies or rationalizations to permit what may not be proper. The Baal Shem Tov teaches that the first step is radical honesty: **remove your own benefit, honor, or desire from the equation.** Only once the matter is free of ego and self-gain can one objectively weigh both sides. Then, Divine clarity will come: "Hashem will show you the truth, and you will go securely."

He applies this to the verse, “The matter that is too difficult for you, bring it to Me.” The difficulty, he says, often arises *from you*—from your attachments and investments in the outcome. If you bring the matter inward, with pure intention for the sake of Heaven, then “I will hear it”—you will receive the understanding of how to act. This isn’t just about legal decisions; it’s about **moral clarity** emerging from self-nullification and sincere Divine connection.

Practical Takeaway

When faced with uncertainty—especially in halachah or moral decision-making—**don’t rush to justify the**

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outcome you want. First, pause and ask yourself: *Do I have something to gain here? Am I trying to make something feel right because it benefits me?* Strip away your ego, your honor, your desire. Then reapproach the question. The Baal Shem Tov promises that if you sincerely aim for the sake of Heaven, Hashem will grant you clarity. This is the path to inner peace and honest living: a heart aligned with truth, not self-interest.

Chassidic Story

The Chassid and the Ethical Dilemma

A chassid once approached the Baal Shem Tov with a halachic dilemma involving a large business deal. The chassid stood to gain a fortune, but there was a murky halachic question about whether the arrangement involved interest (*ribis*). “I’ve asked three rabbanim,” he said, “and they all say it’s fine. But I still feel uneasy.”

The Baal Shem Tov looked at him carefully. “Before I answer,” he said, “go to the mikveh, daven with tears, and ask Hashem to remove your desire for profit. Then come back.”

The chassid obeyed. He immersed, fasted, prayed, and returned days later.

“What do you feel now?” asked the Baal Shem Tov.

“I feel it’s not right,” the chassid whispered.

The Baal Shem smiled. “Now your soul has spoken.”

Source: *Sippurei Chassidim*, oral tradition **END NOTE]**

Siman #ז

As I wrote elsewhere that I heard from my teacher—From the Baal Shem Tov: An interpretation on the verse “his wives turned away his heart,”

that there is no word in the Torah that does not bear two meanings—masculine and feminine aspects, etc. (see there).

If so, there is no created thing in the world that is not inclusive of all aspects.

And free will is given to the person to incline it toward whichever aspect he desires. That is the meaning of “his wives turned away his heart.”

דְּבַתְּבָתִּי בְּמָקוֹם אַחֵר וְשִׁמְעֵתִי מִמּוֹרֵי (מִהַבְּעַל
 “שֵׁם טוֹב) פִּירוּשׁ עַל פֶּסוּק “נָשָׂיו הִטּוּ אֶת לְבָבוֹ

שֶׁאֵין לָהּ שׁוֹם תִּיבָה בַּתּוֹרָה שֶׁאֵינָה סוֹבֶלֶת בִּי
 מִשְׁמָעוּיּוֹת שֶׁהוּא בְּחִינַת דְּכָר וּנְקִיבָה כּו' (רֵאָה
 שֵׁם),

אִם כֵּן אֵין לָהּ שׁוֹם דְּכָר נִבְרָא בְּעוֹלָם שְׁלֵא יִהְיֶה
 כְּלוּל מִהַכֵּל,

וְהַבְּחִירָה נְתוּנָה לוֹ לְהִטּוֹת לְאִיזוֹ בְּחִינָה שֶׁיִּרְצֶה,
 “לְכֹד” נָשָׂיו הִטּוּ לְבָבוֹ הִטּוּ לְבָבוֹ

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[NOTE Summary

The Baal Shem Tov teaches that every word in the Torah contains at least two levels of meaning—one masculine and one feminine. This duality reflects the deeper truth that **everything in creation contains multiple dimensions** or directions of expression. Nothing is inherently one-sided. Similarly, every created thing in the world contains within it the potential for various interpretations, energies, or outcomes. The decisive factor, says the Baal Shem Tov, is human choice. We are granted free will to **lean a matter toward the aspect we choose**. This is the inner meaning of the verse, “His wives turned away his heart”—not merely that they influenced him, but that he was faced with a multidimensional reality and his heart inclined toward one side.

Practical Takeaway

Everything in your life holds multiple layers—no word, no event, no relationship is fixed in one direction. The Baal Shem Tov reminds you that **you are the one who chooses how to interpret and act**. Every moment, even confusing or difficult ones, can tilt toward holiness or toward ego. Stop and ask: *Which aspect of this am I choosing to empower?* Use your free will to align your heart with what is true, pure, and God-centered. **END NOTE]**

Siman #7

(From the Baal Shem Tov, of blessed memory) in the name of my teacher, of blessed memory: “May Hashem appoint a man over the congregation, who will go out before them and come in before them.”

מהבעל שם טוב זכרונו לברכה (בשם מורי)
 זכרונו לברכה: “יפקד ה' איש על העדה אשר
 יצא לפניהם ואשר יבא לפניהם”

For the leader of the generation has the power to elevate all the words and conversations of the people of his generation—

פי ראש הדור יוכל להעלות כל הדבורים והספורים
 —של אנשי דורו

to bind the physical with the spiritual, like those two jesters (Berachos 30b) (see there).

לקשר הגשמי ברוחני, כמו הגהו תרי בדחי כו'
 [ברכות ל:']. [נדפח"ח]

[NOTE Summary

The Baal Shem Tov, quoting his teacher, reflects on the verse, “May Hashem appoint a man... who will go out before them and come in before them.” He teaches that the leader of a generation is not only a guide in action but a spiritual conductor—someone who can **elevate even the mundane words and stories of the people** in his time. Just as in the Talmud (Berachos 30b) where two jesters brought joy and were praised for their role in lifting spirits, a true leader has the capacity to **bind the physical with the spiritual**, finding divine sparks even in everyday conversation. The generation’s leader lifts the collective speech of the people and reconnects it to holiness.

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Practical Takeaway

Don't underestimate the power of speech—or the people who help you find joy and meaning in simple words. The Baal Shem Tov reminds you that when connected to a tzaddik, even your casual speech can be elevated. **Strive to surround yourself with people and teachings that uplift**, and remember that joy, stories, and words—when offered with sincerity—can become part of your spiritual journey. Choose leaders and influences who help you connect your physical life to higher purpose. **END NOTE]**

Siman #טא

One who is wise of heart will seize mitzvos—(interpretation): he will perceive in each of the 613 mitzvos

מי שְׁהוּא חָכֵם לֵב יִקַּח מִצְוֹת (פִּירוּשׁ): וַיִּרְאֶה
בְּכָל אֶחָד מִתְּרֵי"ג מִצְוֹת

how to connect the physical act of the mitzvah that he performs—called the “lower mitzvah”— with the “higher mitzvah,” which is the thought and intention of the mitzvah.

לְקַשֵּׁר מַעֲשֵׂה הַמִּצְוָה שְׁעוֹשֶׂה, שְׁנִקְרָאת מִצְוָה
תַּתְּמוֹת,
לְיַחֲדָה אֶל מִצְוָה עֲלִיוֹנָה, שֶׁהִיא הַמַּחְשְׁבָה וְהַכּוֹנֵה
שֶׁל הַמִּצְוָה.

And this is why we say about a mitzvah: “Who sanctified us with His commandments...”

וְזֶהוּ שְׂאוֹמְרִים עַל מִצְוָה: “אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו...”

[NOTE Summary

The Baal Shem Tov teaches that every mitzvah has two dimensions: the *maaseh hamitzvah* (the physical act) and the *machshavah v'kavanah* (thought and intention). The act alone is called the "lower mitzvah," while the inner intent is the "upper mitzvah." A wise person doesn't just perform the external action—he consciously binds the outer deed to its inner root. This union between body and soul, action and awareness, is the true fulfillment of a mitzvah. This is why we say “Who sanctified us with His mitzvos”—because the sanctification occurs when the mitzvah becomes a bridge between the earthly and the divine.

Practical Takeaway

Don't settle for just doing a mitzvah—**bind your heart and mind to it**. The Baal Shem Tov reminds you that lighting candles, giving tzedakah, or putting on tefillin becomes far more powerful when your soul is engaged. Pause before the act. Ask yourself: *What am I connecting to?* Intend to unite the physical with the spiritual. That inner kavannah brings sanctity and elevates not just the act, but you. **END NOTE]**

Siman #טב

(From the Baal Shem Tov) based on a secret and according to what I heard from my teacher, on the verse: “And there was evening and there was morning, one day...”

וּמִהַבֵּעַל שֵׁם טוֹב) עַל פִּי סוּד וְעַל פִּי שִׁשְׁמַעְתִּי
”...מִמּוֹרֵי פְּסוּק: “וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד

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And the idea that emerges from what I have written—(as the Yaavetz wrote)—that Aharon, through a false statement, saying: “Your friend is regretful and has sent me to you,” etc.,

וְהַעֲנִינוּ וְהַעוֹלָה מִמָּה שֶׁפָּתַבְתִּי, שֶׁפָּתַב הַיַּעֲבֵץ"ן: כִּי אֶהְרֵן עַל יְדֵי שֶׁקֶר שֶׁאָמַר "לְכֻמָּה חֲבִירְךָ מִתְחַרֵּט וְשִׁלְחָנִי אֶצְלְךָ" כו'

as it is stated in the Midrash—through this he made peace. For a skilled doctor, even by using deadly drugs, is permitted to use them in order to save lives.

כְּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בְּמִדְרָשׁ, עַל יְדֵי זֶה עָשָׂה שְׁלוֹם, כִּי רוֹפֵא מוּמְקָה עַל יְדֵי סַמִּים הַמְּמִיתִים רִשְׁאֵי לְהַשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בָּהֶם כְּדֵי לְהַחִיֹּת הַנְּפֹשׁוֹת.

And this is what is said in the Talmud (Chullin): “Indeed, are you mute—do you speak righteousness?” One might think he raises his mind arrogantly—rather, it means he speaks calmly. (See there.)

וְזֶהוּ בִּשְׁ"ס דְּחֵלִין: "הָאֱמָנָם אֵלֶם צָדֵק תְּדַבְּרוּן," יְכוּל יִגִּיס דְּעָתוֹ שְׁהוּא בְּנִחְתָּא, ע"שׁ

[NOTE Summary

This teaching from the Baal Shem Tov explores the paradox of truth and falsehood in the service of peace. Drawing from the Midrash and the writings of the Yaavetz, it recounts how Aharon HaKohen would at times tell “white lies,” claiming one person regretted a dispute in order to bring reconciliation. The Baal Shem Tov, through his teacher, explains this is not deception for self-interest but a sacred strategy—comparable to a doctor using dangerous substances to save lives. The idea is rooted in the deeper spiritual logic of “And there was evening and there was morning,” showing that darkness (even apparent falsehood) can be a precursor to divine light and harmony. The Talmud’s comment on speaking “righteousness with calm” supports this, showing that gentleness—even when veiled in strategic wording—can be the vessel for truth and healing.

Practical Takeaway

True righteousness doesn’t always mean bluntness. Sometimes, peace requires softness, tact, or even reframing reality for the sake of a higher truth—restoring relationships and unity. But this only applies when done purely for the sake of Heaven, with zero personal gain or manipulation. One must be like Aharon, whose every word and intention flowed from love and responsibility, not ego or control.

Chassidic Story

Once, a bitter rift erupted in the town of Mezhibuzh between two longtime friends. The Baal Shem Tov heard of it and immediately sent one of his closest disciples—not to deliver rebuke or demands, but to whisper to one man that the other had already softened and wanted to apologize. This was not technically true, but when the first man heard it, he melted. “If he’s ready to reconcile,” he said, “then so am I.” Minutes later, they embraced. When someone questioned the Rebbe about allowing this untruth, the Baal Shem Tov smiled and said, “To save a Jewish heart from bitterness is truth in its purest form—even if it wears a disguise.”

(Told by Reb Yaakov Yosef of Polonne in *Toldos Yaakov Yosef*, Parshas Emor) END NOTE]