

Alter Rebbe
מאמרי אדמו"ר הזקן
Parshas Va'eira

[The Following discourses of the Alter Rebbe in not found in Torah Ohr: In honor of כ"ד
טבת]

**'וידבר ה' אליהם" אל משה ויאמר אליו אני ה' וארא אל אברהם כו
 "And God spoke to Moses and said to him, 'I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, etc., as El Shaddai, but by My Name YHVH I was not known to them, etc., to give them the Land of Canaan, etc.'"**

It is taught: "If there is no wisdom, there is no awe; if there is no awe, there is no wisdom." This presents a challenge: how should one begin? It is also taught in the name of Rabbi Yannai: "Woe to those who lack a dwelling yet make a gate for the dwelling." (Tractate Shabbat 31) This contradicts the concept that the external keys were not given to them, etc.

To explain: The verse "From my flesh, I perceive God" alludes to the human composition of intellect and emotions. Intellect (seichel) is superior to emotions (middot), such as love and awe. Similarly, regarding the Divine, all the worlds exist through middot—for example, "The world is built upon kindness"—and all the divine attributes: "To You, Lord, is the greatness," etc. However, the Torah exists on a higher plane, akin to the intellect within a human being.

When a person studies Torah—no matter who they are—the Torah makes an impression and has an effect in the higher realms, just like Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (Rashbi) and his companions. Each person, according to their own measure, creates an impact. The difference is that Rashbi and his companions were themselves in a lofty state, able to perceive and comprehend all these effects, as their Torah was their sole occupation, like a craftsman whose skill is their entire being. Yet, in truth, whenever any individual studies and utters the letters of the revealed Torah, it is as if they fulfill the verse "Sustain me with delicacies" (Song of Songs 2:5). and "The words I have placed in your mouth" (Yeshayahu 59:21)—literally. This study can then lead them to awe (yirah), as in "His left hand is under my head." (Song of Songs 2:6). However, without Torah study, this is impossible.

This explains the verses: "I was as a beast before You, yet I am always with You; You grasped my right hand." (Tehillim 73:22) Asaf offers wise advice on how a person should serve God. This is the beginning of all: "If there is no wisdom, there is no awe."

However, afterward, when a person desires to enter the inner dimension of Torah—its knowledge and intellect—it is only possible through awe, humility, and guarding oneself from any hint of sin. Finally, the knowledge of Torah is referred to as Moses, for he embodies the intellectual connection to the Torah and serves as the paradigm for accessing its profound depths.

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Just as was said, "Moshe, you spoke well," we can understand the dynamics of love and awe in this way: Love corresponds to the expansion of vitality, while awe is the opposite—it represents the contraction of vitality, as in "And they trembled and stood at a distance." This is also evident in human experience. This is the meaning of "If there is no awe, there is no wisdom," for awe involves the contraction and nullification of oneself before God, recognizing that everything before Him is as nothing.

The Torah, which emanates from Chochmah Ila'ah (Supernal Wisdom), exists above the dimensions of space and time. This explains why we learn teachings from Rabbi Shimon or Rabbi Meir—even though they lived long ago and in distant places, such as Eretz Yisrael and Babylon, and the Torah was given on Mount Sinai. The Torah transcends space and time, as it is the "Giver of the Torah" who continually gives it anew. But how can we, bound by space and time, connect to such a transcendent reality? This can only occur through contraction (tzimtzum) and human effort (itaruta d'letata, arousal from below), which creates a reciprocal relationship, as in "face to face." Through this, the level of Moshe can be drawn into this world.

This idea is reflected in the three good gifts that God gave to Israel: Torah, Eretz Yisrael, and the World to Come. All of these transcend space and time. For example, Eretz Yisrael is called "Eretz Tzvi" (a Land of beauty or expansion), described as "it contracts and expands." Such a quality cannot exist within the natural limitations of place unless it derives from a dimension beyond space and time. Therefore, these gifts can only be attained through suffering (yissurim) and contraction, as represented by the divine names Adnai and Elokim, which relate to awe and limitation. "If there is no awe, there is no wisdom."

This is the meaning of the verse, "And Elokim spoke to Moshe." The name Elokim represents contraction, and the act of speaking (vayidaber) represents drawing this contracted level into Moshe, corresponding to knowledge (da'at). The verse continues: "And He said to him, 'I am YHVH.'" This name, YHVH, represents a level above space and time, associated with Sovev Kol Almin (encompassing all worlds).

The next phrase, "I appeared to Abraham, etc., as El Shaddai," indicates a revelation within the framework of space and time. El Shaddai refers to God's statement to the world, "Enough (Dai)," representing the boundary and limitation of creation within space and time. "The world is built upon kindness"—creation stems from the divine attribute of chesed (kindness). However, it is impossible to reach the level of "I am YHVH" (God's transcendent essence) without contraction. Only through this contraction can there be a reciprocal relationship, as in "As water reflects a face."

This is the meaning of "But by My Name YHVH, I was not known to them." The

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patriarchs could not attain this level because such transcendence was beyond their grasp. However, when God desired to give the Torah to Israel and bring them into Eretz Yisrael, He introduced suffering and contraction as a preparatory process. This answers Moshe's question: "Why have You done evil to this people?" The hardships were necessary to receive the gifts of Torah and Eretz Yisrael.

Thus, the verse "And Elokim spoke to Moshe" refers to the contraction of divine energy, while "I am YHVH" refers to the transcendent essence. The revelation to the patriarchs as El Shaddai relates to a limited manifestation within space and time, reflecting the framework of "chesed builds the world." But to reach the level of "I am YHVH," one must pass through contraction and refinement, allowing the reciprocity of "As water reflects a face." This process ultimately leads to "to give them the Land of Canaan," which symbolizes transcendent divine revelation within the framework of creation. And understand this well.