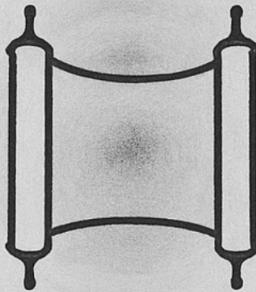


בס"ד

Rebbe Elimelech of Lzhensk Parshas Va'eschanan



לע"נ

אלטר חיים בער בן זיסקינד אלכסנדר
Dedicated By:

ר' נחום אהרון & חייה
לייטש קאואסקי

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The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lzhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Va'eschanan

Introduction

This discourse by **Rebbe Elimelech of Lzhensk** (1717–1787), one of the foundational tzaddikim of early Polish Chassidus and a disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch, explores the role of the tzaddik as an intercessor and channel of Divine mercy. Rebbe Elimelech was the author of *Noam Elimelech* and is credited with institutionalizing the concept of the tzaddik who suffers on behalf of the people and uplifts them spiritually. In this teaching, centered on the opening verse of *Devarim*—“These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Israel across the Jordan, in the wilderness”—he interprets the verse as a parable for the inner experience and function of a tzaddik. The discourse reveals the tzaddik’s self-nullification, his yearning to benefit others, and his transformation into a conduit of Divine blessing for all of Israel.

And I pleaded with Hashem at that time, saying, etc., “You have begun to show...”

Since it is stated elsewhere, “Your right hand, Hashem, is majestic in power,” Rashi, of blessed memory, wrote that with that very right hand that is mighty in power, with that very right hand He shatters the enemy.

And also here, the interpretation is likewise: “Your greatness” is the attribute of kindness, “and Your strong hand” means that in the very place where greatness—i.e., kindness—is awakened, there the strong hand rests as well.

And the reason for this, for at first glance it is difficult to understand: since the right side is always called kindness, and the left side is severity—

However, the truth is this: when the Holy One, blessed is He, performs judgment upon the wicked—the nations—then that judgment is called above in the heavens “kindness,” because it is a kindness to Israel to exact vengeance on their enemies.

Even though to them it is severity.

And this is what is said here, “Your greatness... and Your strong hand” — meaning they are both included as one in the right side,

Because what is kindness in the heavens above becomes severity on the earth below to those upon whom judgment is executed.

ונתנו אל ה' בעת היה לאמר כו' אמת החולות להראות כו'

הוּא תְּהִלָּת שְׁנָאָמֵר בָּمָקוֹם אֶחָר "יִמְנַה ה' נָאָדָר"
כְּתָב ר' ש"ז ז"ל שְׁבָאֹתוֹ תִּמְיָן עָצָמוֹ שְׁנָאָדָר בְּכָל
בָּאוֹתוֹ יָמִן מַרְעֵץ אָיוֹב

וְגַם כִּאֵן הַפְּרוֹשׁ כֵּה, "אֶת גָּדוֹלָה" הַוָּא הַחֲסָד,
וְאֶת יְדָה הַקְּדָשָׁה" לֹוֶר שְׁבָאָמֵר שְׁנָתְעָר
נַגְדוֹלָה הַוָּא הַחֲסָד, שֶׁם בָּאוֹתוֹ הַמָּקוֹם שׁוֹרֵה הַזִּד
הַקְּדָשָׁה.

וְהַטְעָם לְזָה כִּי לְבָאוֹרָה אִינּוֹ מַוְּכוֹן, לְפִי שְׁהַמִּינִין
הַוָּא נַגְעָרָה חָסָד בְּכָל מֶקוּם וּשְׁמָלָל הַוָּא הַגְּבוּרָה

אָכָל שְׁהָאָמֵת הַוָּא כֵּה, כַּשְׁהַשְּׁמָן יַתְבִּרְךּ עֹזֶה דֵין
בְּרַשְׁעִים הַמְּאָמוֹת, אָז הַדָּין נַגְעָרָה לְמַעַלָּה
בְּשָׁמִים "חָסָד", כִּי הַזָּהָר לִשְׂרָאֵל לְגַם
נַקְמָתָם בָּאוֹיְבִּים

אֲפִלוֹ שְׁאָלִים הַוָּא גָּבּוּרָה
וְזָה שְׁאָמֵר כֵּאֵן "אֶת גָּדוֹלָה כֵּה וְאֶת כֵּה" פִּירּוֹש
הַמְּנַכְּלִים בָּאֶחָת בִּימֵין

שְׁלַפִּי שְׁהָוָה חָסָד בְּשָׁמִים אָכָל לְמַטָּה בָּאָרֶץ הַוָּא
גָּבּוּרָה לְמַיְּשָׁעָשִׁים בּוֹ דֵין

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lzhensk

Noam Elimelech
Parshas Va'eschanan

And this is the explanation of "Who is a god in the heavens and on the earth who can do like Your deeds,"—

וזהו התרוץ "אשר מי אל בשמי ובאארץ אשר יעשה כמעשיך",

Meaning: ["like Your deeds"] which are mercy in the heavens, "and like Your might" on the earth, as above—

הם קרחמים למלחה בשמי, "וכבורה מיה" למטה, בארץ פ"ל,

That You perform them all with one power—through Your right hand. And this is clear.

אשר אתה עוזה אותם בכח אחד בימינך הפל. זק"ל.

[NOTE Summary

Rebbe Elimelech opens with the verse "These are the words which Moshe spoke to all of Israel in the wilderness..." and offers a profound allegorical reading. The "words" refer to the deep, silent yearnings of the tzaddik, whose heart constantly burns with longing to help his fellow Jews. The "wilderness" symbolizes the spiritual nullification and openness required of the tzaddik to receive and transmit Divine abundance.

The tzaddik is described as one who burns with passion to bestow blessing—both spiritual and material—upon every Jew: children, life, and sustenance. Yet he does not act for his own glory, but to bring pleasure to Hashem and reveal His goodness in the world. This yearning transforms him into a vessel through which God pours compassion and abundance to the people.

To fulfill this role, the tzaddik must completely annul his ego, becoming "hefker"—ownerless and available to all. Just as the Talmud says of Yoav that his house was "like a wilderness," open to every passerby, so too the tzaddik's physical and emotional resources are wholly given over to others. He becomes like the desert itself—parched and empty—so that he can receive and hold Divine rain for others.

Practical Takeaway

True leadership and spiritual influence come not from self-assertion but from self-nullification. The more a person can remove their own interests from the equation, the more they become a pure channel for Hashem's light. To help others—whether with money, guidance, or prayer—we must become like a desert: available, humble, and surrendered.

Chassidic Story

Rebbe Elimelech of Lzhensk was once visited by a poor villager who had no food for his family. Rebbe Elimelech immediately opened his drawer, found it empty, and asked one of his assistants to search the town for some coins. When the man hesitated, noting that the townspeople were also poor, Rebbe Elimelech grew pained. He turned his eyes heavenward and said, "Ribono Shel Olam, did I ask to be born into this world to watch Your children suffer and go hungry?"

Within minutes, a wealthy stranger arrived in Lzhensk, having gotten lost on his way to another city. He was looking for a place to rest and was directed to Rebbe Elimelech. After hearing about the villager's plight, the

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lzhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Va'eschanan

stranger gladly donated a large sum of money—not only helping that man, but sustaining many others in the days that followed.

Rebbe Elimelech turned to his assistant and smiled gently: “When a tzaddik opens his heart like a desert, Hashem sends the rain.”

(Source: Shivhei HaRan; Noam Elimelech tradition) END NOTE]

Guard yourself and greatly guard your soul, lest you forget the things that your eyes saw.

For a person must always walk in attachment, to think about the exaltedness of the Almighty, to examine his soul and its wonders, for he constantly sees miracles and wonders and awe-inspiring acts in His creations.

And the beginning of reaching this level is: one must first think about the portion given to him from above, which is his soul—

what it is and how it performs miracles and wonders.

As it is said in the Gemara that in five things the soul resembles the Creator, blessed is He and blessed is His Name.

But when one does not know himself, he is also lacking in knowledge of the Creator, since even of his own self he does not contemplate.

And this is [the meaning of] “Guard yourself and guard your soul”—

for if you do not do this, “lest you forget the things that your eyes saw”—

these are the exaltedness of the Creator, blessed is He, which a person constantly sees with his own eyes: the wonder of miracles and wonders.

Therefore, a person must always pay attention to himself. And this is understood.

השмар לך ושמור נפשך מaad פן תשכח את דברים אשר ראו עינייך.

כי האדם צריך לילך פסיד בדבקות לחשב ברווחות אל יתברך,

לבחן בנפשו ובנפשו ואלה רואה תמיד נסים ונפלאות ונראים בברואו,

והתתתלה לבוא להטירנה הזאת, צריך מתחלה לחשב בחקל הנתקן לו מפעל והוא הנפש שלו,

מה היא ואיך היא פועלת נסים ונפלאות,

כמ"ש בגמרא בחמשה דברים הבנשמה שווה לבזירה, ברוך הוא וברוך שמו

אבל פשאין יודע את עצמו הוא מחותר ידיעת גם כו בברוא ברוך הוא,

כון שאכלו עצמו הוא אינו בזון,

וזהו “השмар לך ושמור נפשך

כי אם לא פששה כה פון תשכח את הדברים אשר —ראוי עינייך

הם רוחות הבורא ברוך הוא שהאדם רואה תמיד בעיניו הפלאות הגסים והפלאות,

על כו צריך האדם להשיג בעצמו תמיד. וק"ל.

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lzhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Va'eschanan

[NOTE Summary

Rebbe Elimelech of Lzhensk teaches that the foundation of spiritual growth is deep self-awareness. The verse "השמר לך ושמור נפשך מאוור פן תשכח את הדברים אשר ראו עיניך" ("Guard yourself and greatly guard your soul, lest you forget the things your eyes saw") is not only a warning against forgetfulness, but an instruction in how to live with constant Divine awareness. A person must always strive to live in *deveikus*—cleaving to God—by contemplating His greatness, His wonders, and especially the marvels embedded in one's own soul.

The tzaddik emphasizes that the human soul is a direct gift from above, and it mirrors the Divine in wondrous ways—as the Sages say, in five respects the soul is like the Creator. By reflecting on one's own inner workings, one begins to understand the Creator. But if a person fails to examine their own soul and essence, they will also fail to grasp the Divine. That is why the Torah urges: *guard yourself*, because without inward reflection, even the obvious miracles and Divine grandeur visible in the world will be forgotten or ignored.

Practical Takeaway

To connect with God, begin by understanding your own soul. Make time each day for quiet reflection on who you are, what animates you, and how your inner life reflects God's presence. This self-knowledge is not ego-centric—it is a path to recognizing the miraculous within, and from there, seeing the Creator more clearly in all things.

Chassidic Story

Rebbe Elimelech of Lzhensk once asked a young chassid what he did during *hisbodedus* (personal meditation). The chassid replied that he spoke to Hashem, pleaded for mercy, and reviewed his shortcomings. Rebbe Elimelech nodded, then asked: “And when did you think about the miracle of your soul?”

The young man was silent.

Rebbe Elimelech continued: “You ask to be close to the King, yet you ignore the crown He placed within you. Think deeply about your soul, how it speaks without lips, how it sees without eyes, how it loves without shape. When you understand that mystery inside you, then you’ll begin to understand Who placed it there.”

(Source: Noam Elimelech, oral traditions from Lzhensk) END NOTE]

“In your distress, and all these things will find you... in the end of days... and you will return... He will not let go of you nor abandon you...” — this appears to be explained based on what our Sages said: “Evil and faithful illnesses — are faithful to their mission,”

בצ"ר לך ומצנ'ך כו' באחרית הימים כי' ושבת
כו' עד לא ירפק ולא יענ'ך כו'. נרא' על פי
שאמ' ר' חי'יל “חילאים רעים ונאמנים —
בשליחותנו”,

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lzhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Va'eschanan

that even though permission is given to the accuser, God forbid, to bring some form of suffering, he is nevertheless not permitted to do anything until he is specifically dispatched to perform that task.

And this is among the kindnesses of the Creator, blessed is He: that when some pain or suffering is decreed upon a person for a certain number of days, the adversary cannot find that appointed time until the very end of the allotted days — in order that the person may be able to endure it, since the pain will not be prolonged.

However, even after all this, a righteous person who knows this must correct the situation so that no pain or suffering should be born for Israel at all.

And the way to fix this is to return the judgments to their supernal root and sweeten them there, as we have discussed elsewhere. Then, no Satan and no evil affliction can have dominion at all.

Now let us come to explain the verses: “In your distress” — meaning when distress comes to you, that is the adversary coming to accuse you, Heaven forbid, and to bring upon you some trouble, God forbid.

“[And they will find you]” — I tell you that Hashem does a kindness with you: that this adversary will only “find you at the end of days,”

but if you do your part — “and you return” the judgments to their root and sweeten them — then you will accomplish that no trouble will come upon you at all.

And the proof of this is: “He will not let go of you” — this is related to the word for healing (*refuah*), because there are some words lacking the letter *aleph* [yet share the same root].

“And He will not destroy you” — meaning no destruction will affect you at all, for all will be sweetened and you will not even need healing. Then all will be good for you. Understand this well.

שאף על פי שנעננו רשות למקטרג חס ושלום לאיזו אירה חס ושלום, אף על פי כן אין רשות לעשות שום דבר עד שפיטולין אותו במקומו לעשות הדבר, והוא,

ונזה מתחסדי הבורא יתברך שנתקצב לאיזה אדם איזה צער חס ושלום לכמה ימים, איז אינו יכול הבועל דין למצוא עת ההוא כי אם בסוף הימים שנתקצב לו, למען יוכל האדם לסייע פיוון צערו לאיריך זמן הצעיר,

אבל אחר כל זה איריך האדם הצדיק היודע מזה, למתוך שלא יונלד שום צער ואירה לישראל כלל

והפנקה הוא להביא הרים אל שרשם הعلיוון ולהמתיקם שם כמו שדברנו מזה במקומות אחרים, ואין שטן ואין פגע רע שולט כלל

ונבוא בזה אל פיאור הפטובים. “בצער לך”, פירויש בשייה לה הבאר, הוא הבועל דין, יבוא למקטרג, עליך חס ושלום להמציא לך איזו אירה חס ושלום

וממצואך” [אני אומר לך ששם יתברך עוזה] עמך סד זה, שלא יממצאך הבועל דין ההוא כי אם “בצערת הימים

אבל בנטענה איתה לך “ושבקת” את הרים אל שרשם ותמתק אותם, אז תפעל שלא יהיה לך, שום אירה כלל

והראיה לך ולא ירפק” הוא מלשון רפואה, כי יש תבות חסירות א’

ולא ישחטך” פירוש שלא ישולט לך שום “ששחה, כי יומתק הכל ולא תצטרך לרפואה כלל, אז טוב לך. והבון

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lzhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Va'eschanan

[NOTE

Summary

This teaching from Rebbe Elimelech of Lzhensk offers a deeply empowering perspective on suffering, judgment, and the path to transformation. The verse "בצָר לְךָ וְמַצָּאָךָ כָל הַדְּבָרִים הַאֲלָה בַּאֲחֶרֶת הַיּוֹם..." is interpreted not as a simple prediction of hardship, but as a spiritual map.

He explains that when a person is destined to experience pain or judgment, even the forces of accusation (the *baal davar*) cannot act freely. They can only strike at the very last possible moment—"בַּאֲחֶרֶת הַיּוֹם"—out of Divine compassion, so that the person is not subjected to prolonged suffering. But more than that, the tzaddik teaches that this suffering is not inevitable. A person who knows how to return the judgments to their Divine source and "sweeten" them there—through deep prayer, teshuvah, or spiritual work—can preempt the suffering entirely.

This process of sweetening is a central Chassidic concept: one does not battle darkness directly, but elevates it, reconnecting it to its root in Divine will. When this is done, no Satan, no illness, and no calamity can affect the person at all. The verse's promise, "לֹא יַرְפֵּךְ וְלֹא יַעֲזֹבּ", is re-read to mean: not only will God not abandon you, but He will remove the need for healing altogether—because no harm will come in the first place.

Practical Takeaway

When facing distress or the threat of suffering, do not simply brace for impact. Instead, seek to *elevate* and *sweeten* the source of the judgment through deep introspection, teshuvah, and connecting to your soul's root in Hashem. Even harsh decrees can be transformed before they manifest. Your consciousness and spiritual efforts can reshape the reality that awaits you.

Chassidic Story

Rebbe Elimelech once received a visitor, a simple Jew in terrible despair. His only daughter was gravely ill, and the doctors had given up hope. With tears streaming down his face, the man pleaded, "Rebbe, they say you can change judgments in Heaven..."

Rebbe Elimelech asked the man to wait in the shul. He then went alone to his room, locked the door, and began to cry and pray for hours. Witnesses heard him weeping: "Master of the World, if pain was decreed, let it come to me. Let the judgment be sweetened—let it be lifted from this family!"

That night, the girl's fever broke. The next day she was sitting up and eating. The father returned with joy and tried to thank the Rebbe, but Rebbe Elimelech stopped him and said, "Don't thank me. Thank the One who waits for us to return the judgment to Him, so He can show only mercy."

(Source: *Tzaddik Yesod Olam, Shivhei Noam Elimelech*)

END NOTE]

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lzhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Va'eschanan

“This day we have seen that God speaks with man, and he lives,” and afterward it is written, “If we continue to hear... we shall die.”

Now these two verses seem to contradict and oppose one another: for they themselves said “God speaks with man and he lives,” and then said “if we continue... we shall die.”

Let us first explain the verse in Tehillim: “I said you are gods, and sons of the Most High are you all; but indeed like man you shall die.”

Behold, we have written many times that the tzaddik is called “man of God,” as it is said, “Moshe, man of God,”

because the tzaddik is the master of judgments, and they are in his hands to tilt them however he desires—to subdue them and sweeten them.

And the tzaddik is the judge, for judges are called “Elohim.”

And when he judges and decrees below, so it is established above.

For when there is judgment below, there is no judgment above. Therefore, through this the tzaddik can nullify all judgments from upon Israel and all harsh decrees.

And this is why the tzaddik is called “man of God”—meaning, master of the Divine name “Elohim.”

And this is as we say in the Gemara: “The Holy One, blessed is He, decrees and the tzaddik nullifies,” as it is said (Job 22:28), “You shall decree a thing, and it shall be established.”

Now this verse seems to prove the opposite—that the tzaddik’s decree is upheld by Hashem, not that he nullifies Hashem’s decree.

But according to what we explained above, it fits perfectly: for when the tzaddik judges and decrees below, there is no longer any judgment above, and the decree is automatically nullified.

היום ה'זה רأינו כי ידבר אליהם את האדם וחי, ואחר כך כתיב “אם יוספם אנחנו לשמע כו”. “עוד ומתקנו

הנה ה'שנינו כתובים הם מכך חיים וסוחרים זה את זה לאורה, שהם בעצם אמרו “כי ידבר אליהם את האדם וחי”, והדר אמר “אם יוספם כו”. “ומתקנו

ונקדים לפרש פסוק בטהילים “אני אמרתי אליהם אפסם ובני עליון כלכם אכו קאדים פמותון”.

זהנה כתבנו פעמים רבות זהצדיק נקרא “איש אליהם”, כמו שפתחו “משה איש האלים

מןני שהצדיק הוא בעל הדיןיהם והם בידיו לכל, אשר יחפץ יטלים להכיניהם ולתקתיק אותם

והצדיק הוא הדין, כי הינים נקראים אליהם אליהם, וכשידין ויגור למטה בו יקום

כפי בישיש דין למטה אין דין למעלה ולכך על ידי זה יכול לבטל כל הינים מישראל, וכל הగרות, וכן נקרא הצדיק איש אליהם פירוש בעל אליהם.

וניה דאמירנו בגמרא “הקב”ה גוזר והצדיק מבטל”, שנאמר (איוב כ”ב, כ”ח) ותגוזר אומר ויקם

והנה לאורה היא מזכה מה שהצדיק יבטל הינים והגירות שהקב”ה גוזר, ולא משמעות, הפסוק הוא בש הצדיק גוזר הקב”ה מכך

ועל פי הקרים הנ”ל ניחא שפיר, בש הצדיק דין למטה גוזר, אין דין למעלה ומפניו הם בטילים.

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lzhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Va'eschanan

However, this must be understood: From where does the tzaddik have the ability to heal a sick person through his prayer and to draw life into him, that he should live?

For the life-force of the tzaddik is not eternal—it is only incidental. How can something incidental give life to another person?

Hashem, blessed is He and blessed is His Name, who is Living and exists forever and for all eternity, and whose life-force is essential—He can give life to a temporal human being.

But it is not the same with a human being, whose life is not essential.

However, this is only because the tzaddik cleaves himself to Hashem, blessed is He, and it results that his life-force is bound with the eternal and essential Life.

And the tzaddik's life-force also becomes essential and eternal, for essence to essence will bind together.

Therefore, the tzaddik has the power to draw life into the sick person.

And if you say, then the tzaddik should live and exist forever—this is impossible, because the tzaddik is not always in a state of cleaving.

For at times, he is separated from the cleaving, for so were the worlds created—*mati velo mati* (“reaching and not reaching”) as written in Zohar I 16b and 65a.

That is, the tzaddik must constantly ascend from one level to the next.

And when he desires to ascend to a higher and loftier level, he must first descend slightly before ascending higher.

And when the time and moment arrives for his departure via “the way of all the earth,” to the world of truth, and he becomes separated from cleaving—

Then he goes and is gathered to his people.

But this was the will and desire of the Creator, blessed is He: that we all should be cleaving to Him.

אך זאת אֲרֵיך לְהַבִּין, מִן הוּא לְצִדְיק שִׁיכּוֹל לְרִפְאֹות לְחַזְלָה עַל יְדֵי תְּפִלָּתוֹ וְלְקַבְשִׁיךְ לְזַיִת, שִׁתְּחִיה הָאָדָם

וּבָלוֹא חִיּוֹת שֶׁל הַצִּדְיק אִינְהָה לְעוֹלָם, בָּלוֹא הוּא, בְּמִקְרִיוֹת וְהַיאָה ذְּכָר מְקָרָה יָכֹל לְמַן חִיּוֹת לְאָדָם

הַשִּׁיָּת בָּרוּךְ הוּא וּבָרוּךְ שְׁמוֹ שֶׁהָוָא חַי וְקִים לְעֵד וּלְעוֹלָם עַזְלָמִים וְחַיּוֹת הָוָא עַצְמִיוֹת יָכֹל לְמַן, חִיּוֹת לְאָדָם הַמְּקָרִי

אָכְל לֹא כָּנָה הָאָדָם שָׁאַיְן טִוּתָו עַצְמִיוֹת.

אָכְל אַיִן זֶה אֶלְאָלָמַטְע שֶׁהַצִּדְיק מְדַבֵּק עַצְמוֹ בְּהַשְּׁמִיְתָה, וּמִמֶּא חִיּוֹתָו זְבוֹק בְּמַחְיִם הַנְּצִחִים הַעֲצִמִּוֹת,

וְקַוְיָה לִיהְיָה חִיּוֹת שֶׁל הַצִּדְיק גַּם כָּנָה עַצְמִיוֹת וְנַצְחִיוֹת, כִּי עַצְם אֶל עַצְם יָתַד יְקַבְּקוּ

וְלֹכְנוּ יְשַׁפֵּחַ בֵּין הַצִּדְיק לְהַמְּשִׁיךְ חִיּוֹת אֶל הַחַזְלָה.

וְאָמַר א"כ יְהִי הַצִּדְיק חַי וְקִים לְעוֹלָם, זֶה בְּלִתְיַא אָפְשָׁר מְמַטְע שֶׁהַצִּדְיק אִינְוּ פְּמִיד בְּהַדְבִּיקָה,

וְלַפְּעָמִים נְפָסָק מְהֻדְבָּקּוֹת כִּי הַעוֹלָמוֹת כְּבָנָרָאִים, מְטַי וְלֹא מְטַי (בְּזֹהָר ח"א ט"ז, ב) (בְּזֹהָר ח"א ס"ה, א),

דְּקַיְנָנוּ שֶׁהַצִּדְיק אֲרֵיךְ לְהַיּוֹת הַוּלָךְ פָּמִיד מְפִידָגָה, לְמִדְרָגָה, וּבְרָצָתוֹ לְעַלְוֹת לְמִדְרָגָה הַיּוֹתֵר גְּבוּהָ וְעַלְיוֹנָה,

אֲרֵיךְ לְהַוְרִיד וְלַשׁוּב קָצָת לְמִפְּתָחָה וְאַחֲרָה כְּבָעָלָה לְמִדְרָגָה הַיּוֹתֵר גְּבוּהָ

וּבְהַגִּיעַ עַת זָמָן הַלּוּכוּ בְּדַרְךְ כָּל הָאָרֶץ לְעַלְמָא, דְּקָשָׁוֹת וְהָוָא נְפָסָק מְהֻדְבָּקּוֹת

או יָלַךְ וַיַּאֲסִף אֶל עַמְּיוֹ.

וְאֵךְ זֶה קְנָה חַפְצָו וּרְצָוֹן שֶׁל הַמְּקוֹם יְתִבְרָא, שְׁנַפְנָה אֱנֹחָנוּ בָּלָנוּ זְבוֹקִים בּוֹ

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lzhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Va'eschanan

And that is why “Anochi” and “Lo Yihiyeh” (“I am” and “You shall have no [other gods]”) were spoken directly by the Divine voice,

because *Anochi* is a positive commandment, and *Lo Yihiyeh* is a negative commandment regarding Divinity—and both are expressions of cleaving.

And therefore, Hashem, blessed is He, said them Himself, in order that we would be cleaving to Him—into the eternal life.

And this is the explanation of the verse “I said, you are Elohim” — meaning, that you shall be cleaving to Hashem through the level of “Elohim,” which refers to the negative commandment “You shall have no [other gods].”

“And sons of the Most High, all of you” — this refers to the positive commandment “Anochi,” which is supreme over all.

Thus, you are cleaving to the eternal Life.

“Nevertheless, like men you shall die” — meaning, when you separate yourselves from cleaving.

And this is also the meaning of “And you who cleave to Hashem, you are all alive today.” The word “today” seems extra.

But according to the above it is understood: that because you are cleaving to Hashem, “all of you”—each and every one—through cleaving to Hashem in eternal life, he is alive.

But this is only “today” — meaning, every single day one must return and cleave to Him again, as explained above.

Because it is impossible to be in a state of constant cleaving.

And this is what Israel said: “This day we have seen that God speaks with man” — meaning, with man, like one speaks with another,

that Hashem, blessed is He, speaks and decrees—and the tzaddik decrees and nullifies.

Even if a decree of death was made against a person, God forbid, the tzaddik can draw life to him.

ולכו אַנְכִי וְלֹא יְהִי מִפִּי קָבּוֹרָה שָׁמְעוּנוּ

כִּי אַנְכִי הָוָא מִצּוֹת עֲשָׂה, וְלֹא יְהִי לְךָ הָוָא מִצּוֹת
לֹא מִצּוֹת בְּאַלְקָוֶת, וְהַמִּדְבָּרִ זְבּוּקָוֶת

ולכו אָמַר לְנוּ הַשֵּׁם יְתִבְרַךְ בְּעַצְמוֹ לְמַעַן גְּנִיה
זְבּוּקָוֶת בְּחִים הַנְּצָחִים

וְזֹה פִּירּוֹשׁ “אַנְכִי אָמַרְתִּי אֱלֹקִים אַפְּם”, דְּבִינוּ
שְׁתְּהִיוּ זְבּוּקִים בָּהּ עַל יְדֵי מִזְרִיגָת אֱלֹקִים, כִּי
הַלְּתָה לֹא יְהִי לְךָ כֵּרֶ

וּבְנִי עַלְיוֹן” דְּבִינוּ מִעַד אַנְכִי שֶׁהָוָא עַלְיוֹן עַל כָּל

וּגְמַצָּא שָׁאָפְם זְבּוּקָוֶת בְּחִים הַנְּצָחִים

אָכְן כָּאָדָם פָּמוֹתוֹן” דְּבִינוּ בְּהַפְּסָק עַצְמָכֶם מִן
זְבּוּקָוֶת.

וְזֹה פִּירּוֹשׁ גַּם כֵּן “וְאָפְם זְבּוּקִים בָּהּ סִימָם כָּלְכָם
בְּהִיּוֹם”, הַבָּהּ מְלַת “בְּיּוֹם” מִיּוֹתְרָה

אָכְלָל עַל פִּי הַפְּנִיל יְתִבְאָר, דְּבִינוּ שָׁאָפְם זְבּוּקָוֶת
בָּהּ, “כָּלְכָם” כָּל אָחָד וְאָחָד עַל יְדֵי זְבּוּקָוֶת בָּהּ
יְתִבְרַךְ בְּחִים הַנְּצָחִים הָוָא סִי

אָכְלָל אַיּוֹן זֶה כִּי אָמַ “בְּיּוֹם”, דְּבִינוּ בְּכָל יוֹם וְיוֹם
אָזְרִיךְ לְחַזּוֹר וְלְהַזְּבַק בּוּ יְתִבְרַךְ כְּנָל

כִּי אִי אָפְשָׁר שִׁיחָנָה בְּהַזְּבַקָּוֶת בְּתִמְדִידָה

וְזֹה שָׁאָמְרוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל “בְּיּוֹם קָזָה רָאַיָּנוּ כִּי יְדַבֵּר
אֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאָדָם”, דְּבִינוּ עַם הָאָדָם כְּמַדְבָּרִים זֶה
עַם זֶה

שְׁהָשָׁם יְתִבְרַךְ מִדְבָּר וְגֹזֵר וְהַצִּדְיק גֹּזֵר וְמַבְטֵל

אָרֶף אָמַ נְגַזּוּר חָס וְשַׁלּוּם מִיתָּה עַל הָאָדָם, הָאָדָיק
יָכֹל לְהַמְשִׁיק לֹא חַיָּה

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lzhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Va'eschanan

And if you ask, as above: How can a human being, whose life is not essential, give life?

The answer is: “and he lived”—that is, through the cleaving he has with Hashem in the eternal Life, his life becomes essential.

And they said, “If we continue [to hear]...” — meaning, what we already heard from the Divine mouth, “Anochi” and “Lo Yhiyeh,” which are a positive and negative commandment in Divinity—this is *deveikus*.

That we were able to hear and live.

But if we were to continue hearing the rest of the mitzvos from Hashem’s mouth directly—this is impossible: that Hashem should speak with man and he live,

unless it is for a specific purpose—namely, that Hashem spoke with Moshe face to face in order to speak to Israel.

But if not for this, “Who of all flesh...” [could survive it]?

Therefore, “You approach and hear.”

וְאֵם תֹּאמֶר כִּנְנֵל הַיָּאֵק הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר חַיָּתוֹ בְּלִתי
עַצְמָתִי יִכּוֹל לְפָנֶן סִוִּיתִי?

לֹזֶה אָמַר “זָהִי”, הַיָּינוּ עַל זֶה הַדְּבָרוֹת שִׁישׁ לֹזֶה
בָּה יִתְבָּרֵךְ בְּחַיִם הַגְּאַחִים וּגְמַזְאָה חַיָּתוֹ גַּם כֵּן
עַצְמָתִי,

וְאָמַרְוּ “אִם יוֹסְפִים אֲנַחֲנוּ”, דַּהֲיָינוּ מֵה שְׁשַׁמְמָעַנוּ
מִפִּי הַגְּבוּרָה אָנָּכִי וְלֹא יְהִי לְךָ, שְׁהָם מַעַ"וּ וְלֹא
בְּאֶלְקָוֹת, וְהָוָא הַדְּבָרוֹת,

יִכּוֹלִים הַיָּינוּ שְׁפֵיר לְשָׁמוּעַ וְלִחְיוֹת
אָכָל אִם יוֹסְפִים אֲנַחֲנוּ לְשָׁמוּעַ שֶׁאָר מִצּוֹת מִפִּי
הַשָּׁם יִתְבָּרֵךְ בְּעַצְמוֹ, זֶה אֵי אָפָּשָׁר שְׁזִדְבָּר הַי' עִם
הָאָדָם זָהִי,

כִּי אִם לְצֹרֶךְ אֵיזֶה דָּבָר, הַיָּינוּ שְׁדִבְרָה ה' עִם מִשְּׁהָה
פָּנִים בְּפָנִים כִּי לְדִבָּר אֶל יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְאַלּוּלִי זֹאת “מֵכָּל בָּשָׂר כֹּוֹ”, לְכֹן “קָרְבָּאָפָה
וּוֹשְׁמָעַ”.

[NOTE Summary]

Rebbe Elimelech of Lzhensk delves into the power of *deveikus*—spiritual cleaving to Hashem—as the core source of a tzaddik’s vitality and spiritual influence. He begins with the verse “*I said, you are Elohim...*” which refers to the ideal that every Jew, especially the tzaddik, can become unified with the Divine through two central commandments: “*Anochi*” (positive connection to God) and “*Lo Yhiyeh*” (negation of false divinity). Through these, a person becomes a *ben Elyon*, a “child of the Most High,” and gains access to eternal life.

But if one ceases to cleave to Hashem—even for a moment—one reverts to mortality: “*Achen ke adam temuson*” (“Yet like man you shall die”). Even the righteous are not in a state of constant *deveikus*; they rise and fall in spiritual cycles, as described in the Zohar’s pattern of “*mati velo mati*”—approaching and retreating.

This dynamic explains the paradox in the verses: “*Today we have seen that God speaks to man and he lives*”—but also, “*If we hear again, we will die*.” The tzaddik can receive Divine speech and draw life even to those marked for death, because his *deveikus* binds him to Hashem’s own eternal vitality. However, the people understood that they could only survive hearing “*Anochi*” and “*Lo Yhiyeh*”—mitzvos rooted in Divine oneness and negation of idolatry. Hearing the rest

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lzhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Va'eschanan

of the Torah directly from Hashem would overwhelm their finite vessels. Therefore, they begged Moshe to act as intermediary: “*You draw near and hear.*”

Practical Takeaway

Spiritual life comes from daily *deveikus*—actively reconnecting to Hashem anew each day. It’s not enough to rely on yesterday’s inspiration. Even the greatest tzaddikim must continually renew their bond with the Source of Life. You don’t need to be perfect—just present, yearning, and open to that Divine connection through Torah, mitzvos, and inner refinement.

Chassidic Story

Once, a young man came to Rebbe Elimelech and asked, “Why do I feel that my connection to Hashem fades even after moments of inspiration?” Rebbe Elimelech brought him outside and pointed to a well. “See how the bucket rises full but must be lowered again? Only through that cycle can we continue drawing water. So it is with the soul—it rises in *deveikus*, then returns to earth to grow.”

The man asked, “But what if I fall too far and can’t return?” Rebbe Elimelech smiled gently. “Then Hashem Himself will draw you back, for He thirsts for your closeness more than you can imagine.”

(Source: *Tzaddik Yesod Olam, Shivchei Noam Elimelech*) END NOTE]