

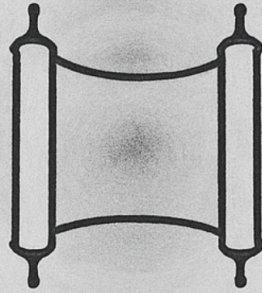
בס"ד

Alter Rebbe

Torah Ohr

Parshas Bo

לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת ה' בְּפִיךָ



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Introduction

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1745–1812), known as the Alter Rebbe, founder of Chabad Chassidus and author of the Tanya and Likutei Torah, here develops a unified explanation of the relationship between Torah, the Exodus from Egypt, Divine love, and Divine contraction. In this maamar, beginning with the verse “In order that the Torah of the Lord shall be in your mouth, for with a strong hand He took you out of Egypt,” the Alter Rebbe shows how all aspects of Torah, mitzvot, and avodat Hashem flow from God’s essential will and love, expressed through tzimtzum in a way the world can receive.

In order that the Torah of the Lord shall be in your mouth, for with a strong hand the Lord took you out of Egypt. And seemingly this is puzzling: what connection does the Torah have to the Exodus from Egypt, that it mentions them.

למען תהיה תורת ה' בפיך כי ביד חזקה הוציאך ה' ממצרים. ולכאורה הוא תמויה וכי מה ענין התורה ליציאת מצרים להוכיחם.

And to understand the matter of the Torah, behold it is written: “And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Sanctify to Me every firstborn,” and in the statement of Moses it is written: “And Moses said to the people: Remember this day on which you went out of Egypt,” and many like it in Scripture.

ולקבין ענין התורה, דהנה פתיב: וידבר הו"ה אל משה לאמר קדש לי כל בכור, ובאמירת משה פתיב: ויאמר משה אל העם זכור את היום הזה אשר יצאתם ממצרים כו', וכמוהו רבים במקרא.

And to understand this, an explanation of the commandment “and you shall meditate upon it day and night,” and even though there are several laws that are not practiced at this time, and those that are practiced are not equal for every soul.

ולקבין זאת באור מצות והגית בו יומם ולילה, ואף שיש כמה דינים שאינם נהגים בזמן הזה, והנהגים אינם שוים לכל נפש.

However, behold there are two kinds of loves. There is a love that is likened to water, as it is written: “Many waters cannot extinguish the love,” which goes continually without change or addition or diminution at all, as yesterday and the day before, so now.

אמנם הנה יש שני מיני אהבות. יש אהבה שנמשלה למים, כדכתיב: מים רבים לא יוכלו לכבות את האהבה, שהולכת תמיד בלי שנוי ותוספות ומגרעת בכלל, כתמול שלשום כמאז כן עתה.

And there is a love that is likened to fire, as it is written: “Its flashes are flashes of fire,” and so forth, and it is that it moves continually in running and returning.

ויש אהבה שנמשלה לאש, כדכתיב: רשפיה רשפי אש כו'. והוא שהיא מתנועעת תמיד כרצוא ושוב.

And these two loves are drawn from two understandings that are in a person.

וישתי אהבות אלו נמשכות משתי דעות שבאדם.

And behold it is written: “You are children to the Lord your God,” for He, may He be blessed, loves us as a father loves his son, and automatically it is drawn to know Him “as water

והנה פתיב: בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם, שהוא יתברך אוהב אותנו כאב את בנו, וממילא נמשך לדעת

Alter Rebbe
Torah Ohr
Parshas Shemos
למען תהיה תורת ה' בפיה

reflects a face,” and it is water specifically, which goes with equal constancy without any change.

אותו כמים הפנים כו', והוא כמים דוקא שהולך בתמידות שנה בלי שום שנוי.

For thus the love of a father for his son will never change.

לשכן אהבת האב שעל בנו לא תשתנה לעולם.

And there is another understanding, that one recognizes his Creator, who set aside all the hosts of heaven and the heavens of the upper heavens, and desired to have for Himself a dwelling in the lower ones.

ויש דעה אחרת שמפיר בוראו, שהניח כל צבא השמים ושמי השמים העליונים, ורצה להיות לו דירה בתחתונים.

That is, that His infinite intellect be contracted into physical boundaries, and this is the Torah that He placed, in which He speaks in physical matters.

דהינו שיהיה שכלו האינסוף להצטמצם בגבולים גשמיים, וזאת התורה אשר שם הוא מדבר בדברים גשמיים.

And everything is for the sake of His love for us, not according to the way of nature, for love disrupts the order, and everything is from His will, may He be blessed, for His will, may He be blessed, is His wisdom, that because He is exalted and uplifted and very high, He is able to enclothe Himself in the most limited and constricted way, and this is the reasons of the commandments, which are His will, may He be blessed, that have not been revealed, for it is impossible to grasp them until the coming of our Messiah.

והכל בשביל אהבתו אותנו שלא פדרה הטבע, כי אהבה מקלקלת את השורה, והכל מרצונו יתברך, שרצונו יתברך חכמתו, שבשביל שהוא רם ונשא וגבוה מאד, יכול להתלבש ביותר גבולי ומצמצם, וזהו טעמי מצוות, שהוא רצונו יתברך, לא נתגלו, כי בלתי אפשר להשיגם עד ביאת משיחנו.

And this is what is known: “He is known in the gates by her husband,” and so forth, that what they are able to grasp of the Holy One, blessed be He, is when He sits with the elders of the land.

וזהו נודע בשערים בעלה וגו', מה שיכולים להשיג את הקדוש ברוך הוא, הוא בשבתו עם זקני ארץ.

That is to say: because of His sitting, which is His lowering and His chainlike descent with the elders of the land, that is to say, the wisdom that is in the land, for an elder means one who has acquired wisdom.

פרוש: בשביל שבתו, הוא הורדתו והשתלשלותו עם זקני ארץ. פרוש: החכמה שבארץ, דזקן הינו זה ששקנה חכמה.

And this a person should place upon his heart, and an exceedingly great love should be aroused within him, not to think any will regarding his own matters, but rather to nullify his will before the will of Heaven, so that he should have only one will, for the service of the Creator, and according to his will, the intellect also acts, for the intellect is drawn after the will.

וזאת ישים האדם אל לבו, ויתעורר בו אהבה גדולה מאד, שלא לחשב שום רצון בעניניו, רק יבטל רצונו מפני רצון שמים, שלא יהיה לו רק רצון אחד לעבודת הבורא, וכרצונו יעשה השכל גם כן, שהשכל נמשך אחר הרצון.

Alter Rebbe
Torah Ohr
Parshas Shemos
למען תהיה תורת ה' בפיה

And as we find in the Gemara regarding a bribe, that he said: if he wanted, he could argue this way, and that is because his will inclines to this, for the intellect also made peace with it.

וּכְמוֹ שֶׁמִּצִּינוּ בַּגְּמָרָא גַבֵּי שַׁחַד, דְּאָמַר אִי בְּעֵי טַעִין הָכִי, וְהִינוּ מְשֻׁם שְׂרָצוֹנוּ נוֹטָה לְזֶה, דְּגַם הַשֶּׁקֶל הַשְּׁלִים אֹתוֹ.

And just as the Holy One, blessed be He, desires to have for Himself a dwelling in the lower realms, not according to the way of nature, for the Infinite One without limit to be limited and constricted, so too should a person make his will to separate from the body and nature, to cleave to Him, may He be blessed, and not according to the way of nature.

וּכְמוֹ שֶׁהַשֵּׁם יִתְבַּרְךָ רוֹצֵה לְהִיּוֹת לוֹ דִּירָה בְּתַחְתּוֹנִים שְׁלֵא כְּדֶרֶךְ הַטִּבֵּעַ, לְהִיּוֹת אֵין-סוֹף בְּלִי גְבוּל מְגָבֵל וּמִצְמָצָם, כֵּן יַעֲשֶׂה הָאָדָם רְצוֹנוֹ לְהַפְרֵד מִן הַגּוּף וְהַטִּבֵּעַ לְדַבְּקָה בּוֹ יִתְבַּרְךָ, וְשְׁלֵא כְּדֶרֶךְ הַטִּבֵּעַ.

And therefore it is said: “And you shall meditate upon it day and night.” He shall not cease by day from seeing to His will, may He be blessed.

וְלָכֵן נֶאֱמַר: וְהִגִּיתָ בּוֹ יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה. לֹא יִשְׁבַּת יוֹמָם מִרְאוֹת לְרְצוֹנוֹ יִתְבַּרְךָ.

And this is the honor of the Omnipresent: in His love for us He enclothes Himself and limits and constricts Himself, and from Him a person should see and do likewise, and live, and so forth.

וְזֶהוּ כְבוֹדוֹ שֶׁל מְקוֹם: בְּאֶהְבְּתוֹ אוֹתָנוּ מִתְלַבֵּשׁ וּמִגְבִּיל וּמִצְמָצָם, וּמִמְנוֹ יִרְאֶה הָאָדָם וְכֵן יַעֲשֶׂה, וְחֵי וְכוּ'.

And this is: “In order that the Torah of the Lord shall be in your mouth, for with a strong hand He took you out,” and so forth. The explanation is that every place where “hand” is stated, it refers only to the right hand (Menachot page 10), which is mercy, and it is stated: “And I shall pass through the land of Egypt.”

וְזֶהוּ לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת ה' בְּפִיהָ כִּי בְּיַד חֲזָקָה הוֹצִיאָהּ כו'. פְּרוּשׁ דְּכָל מְקוֹם שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר יָד אֵינוֹ אֶלָּא יְמִין (מְנַחֲוֹת דף י') שֶׁהוּא רַחֲמִים, וְנֶאֱמַר וְעַבְרַתִּי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.

The explanation is that He passed over His attributes, that He enacted judgments in Egypt even though His attributes are to have mercy and to do good to His creations, and everything was because of His love for Israel, like the parable of a father, that because of his love he wants to do kindness with his son, he suppresses his kindness and becomes angry with others who cause pain to his son.

פְּרוּשׁ שֶׁהַעֲבִיר עַל מְדוּתָיו שֶׁעָשָׂה דִּינִים בְּמִצְרַיִם אַף-עַל-פִּי שֶׁמְדוּתָיו לְרַחֵם וּלְהִיטִיב לְבְּרִיאָיו, וְהַכֹּל מִחַמַּת אֶהְבְּתוֹ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, כְּמִשְׁלַל הָאָב, שֶׁבְּעִבּוֹר אֶהְבְּתוֹ שְׂרוּצָה לַעֲשׂוֹת חֶסֶד עִם בְּנוֹ, כּוֹבֵשׁ חֶסֶד וְכוּעֵס עַל אֲחֵרִים הַמִּצְעָרִים אֶת בְּנוֹ.

And this is “with a strong hand,” that the right hand was restrained in order to take them out of Egypt, and there was a change not according to the natural order.

וְזֶהוּ בְּיַד חֲזָקָה שֶׁהוּא הֵימִין הֵימִין הֵימִין כְּבוֹשָׁה בְּכַדִּי לְהוֹצִיאָם מִמִּצְרַיִם, וְהִיָּה שְׁנוֹי שְׁלֵא עַל-פִּי הַטִּבֵּעַ.

Therefore, “the Torah of the Lord shall be in your mouth,” to do your will like His will, and since everything is from His simple will, He needed to contract Himself in order that the world could receive Him.

לָכֵן תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת ה' בְּפִיהָ לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹנָה כְּרְצוֹנוֹ, וְכִיּוֹן שֶׁהַכֹּל הוּא מִרְצוֹנוֹ הַפְּשוּט, הַצָּרָה לְצַמְצָם בְּכַדִּי שִׁיּוּכַל הָעוֹלָם לְקַבְּלוֹ.

Alter Rebbe
Torah Ohr
Parshas Shemos
 למען תהיה תורת ה' בפיך

And therefore it is said sometimes: “And the Lord said to Moses,” and sometimes the saying of the Lord to Moses is not stated, but rather the saying of Moses to the people, according to the strength and ability of the people, that as much as they were able to receive, so He contracted Himself.

And everything is revealed and known before Him, in which manner He is able to contract Himself in order that the world will be able to endure Him.

וְלָכֵן נֶאֱמַר פֶּעַם וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה, וּפְעַם לֹא נֶאֱמַר אֲמִירַת ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה, אֶלָּא אֲמִירַת מֹשֶׁה אֶל הָעָם, לְפִי כַח וְיִכְלֹת הָעָם, שְׂוִיבֵלוּ לְקַבֵּל, כִּי צִמְצָמָם אֶת עֲצָמוֹ.

וְהַכֵּל גְּלוּי וְנִדְוָע לְפָנָיו, בְּאַיִזָּה אִפֹּן יִוָּכַל לְצִמְצָמָם בְּכַדֵּי שְׂוִיבֵל הָעוֹלָם לְסַבְּלוֹ.

[NOTE Summary:

The maamar explains why the Torah repeatedly links itself to the Exodus from Egypt. At first glance, Torah study and the historical event of redemption seem unrelated. The Alter Rebbe explains that both stem from the same Divine root: God’s essential will and love for Israel.

The phrase “with a strong hand” refers not to severity but to the right hand, the attribute of kindness and mercy. The Exodus required God to “pass over His attributes,” meaning that He acted in judgment against Egypt even though His inherent tendency is to bestow kindness upon all creation. This departure from His usual mode of mercy was driven solely by His love for Israel, like a father who restrains his natural kindness toward others and becomes stern with those who harm his child.

This act involved a change beyond the natural order. The right hand of kindness was *כבושה*, restrained, in order to bring about redemption. Because redemption came through such supra-natural Divine will, the Torah that follows must likewise be rooted in that same will. Therefore, “the Torah of the Lord shall be in your mouth” means that a Jew’s Torah study and observance should align one’s own will with God’s will.

The maamar explains that God’s will is identical with His wisdom. Since He is exalted beyond all limitation, He alone can choose to enclothe Himself within extreme finitude. This is the meaning of Torah and mitzvot: the Infinite will of God expressed through concrete, physical commands. The inner reasons of the mitzvot remain concealed, because finite intellect cannot grasp the Divine will at its source until the coming of Mashiach.

This principle also explains why Scripture sometimes states “And the Lord said to Moses,” and sometimes records only “Moses said to the people.” Divine revelation is always precisely measured according to the capacity of the recipients. God contracts Himself to the exact degree that the world, and the people of a given generation, can bear. All of these contractions are fully known to Him, for He knows exactly how His Infinite light must be limited so that creation can endure it.

Thus, Torah, redemption, tzimtzum, and love are not separate ideas but expressions of a single truth: God’s essential will to dwell within the lower world out of love for Israel.

Alter Rebbe
Torah Ohr
Parshas Shemos
 למען תהיה תורת ה' בפיך

Practical Takeaway:

A person must internalize that true service of God means aligning one's own will with His will. Just as God constricts Himself for the sake of creation and redemption, a person must set aside personal desires and reshape both will and intellect toward serving the Creator. Torah study "day and night" means continuous attunement to God's will, training the mind and heart to desire what He desires. When one lives this way, one reflects Divine behavior in human form, fulfilling the purpose of Torah and the Exodus together.

Chassidic Story:

It is related that a chassid once complained to the Alter Rebbe that despite years of learning and prayer, he still felt bound by his natural habits and inclinations. The Alter Rebbe answered him gently: "You think the miracle is that God split the sea. The greater miracle is that the Infinite allowed Himself to be enclosed in letters, laws, and human minds. When you sit and learn Torah, you are touching a miracle far greater than the splitting of the sea. But just as the sea split only because God willed it so, your nature will change only when you truly want what He wants."

The chassid later testified that these words transformed his approach. He stopped focusing on self-perfection as a personal project and instead worked to align his will with God's will. Over time, changes he once thought impossible began to occur naturally. In this way, he learned that the same Divine love and contraction that redeemed Israel from Egypt continues to redeem a person from their inner limitations.

Therapeutic Psychological Integration

At the psychological core of this teaching is a radical claim: transformation does not begin with insight, discipline, or even effort. It begins with will. Not surface-level desire, but the deepest organizing force inside a person. The Alter Rebbe is describing a model of the psyche in which cognition follows motivation, not the other way around. What you want shapes what you see as reasonable, justified, or even true.

The Torah's connection to the Exodus is not historical symbolism. It is structural. Leaving Egypt was not a gradual self improvement process. It was a rupture of nature. God did not persuade reality to cooperate. He overrode the default system out of love. Psychologically, that means real change does not come from negotiating with habits or slowly educating impulses. It comes from accessing a level of will that is willing to override the system entirely.

In modern terms, Egypt represents a closed loop nervous system. Automatic reactions. Predictable behaviors. The same emotional scripts replaying again and again. The Alter Rebbe is saying that redemption happens when the deepest will steps in and says: this pattern does not get to decide anymore. That moment feels unnatural because it is. It is not evolution. It is intervention.

The metaphor of the right hand being restrained is critical. Kindness here does not mean comfort. It means commitment. Sometimes love restrains itself from soothing in order to protect what matters most. In therapy

Alter Rebbe
Torah Ohr
Parshas Shemos
 למען תהיה תורת ה' בפיהך

language, this is healthy frustration. The parent who allows short term discomfort to preserve long term attachment. God acts this way with Egypt. A person must act this way with their own inner saboteurs.

This also explains why Torah is built from constraints. Fixed times. Concrete actions. Physical boundaries. These are not limitations imposed on freedom. They are containers that allow infinite intention to function in a finite psyche. Without structure, desire dissipates. With structure, desire becomes executable.

The line that the intellect follows the will is psychologically precise. People do not believe what is true. They believe what serves their internal commitments. Once will shifts, cognition rapidly reorganizes. Resistance disappears not because arguments improved, but because motivation realigned.

Meditating on Torah day and night does not mean constant analysis. It means repeated re orientation. Returning again and again to the question: what do I actually want to serve. Over time, this trains the nervous system to recognize Divine will as familiar, safe, and desirable. That is inner redemption.

Modern Illustrative Story

A man in his forties entered therapy for chronic burnout. He had read extensively. Productivity systems. Emotional intelligence. Mindfulness. Nothing lasted. Every breakthrough collapsed under pressure. In one session, the therapist stopped him mid explanation and asked: "What do you want badly enough that you would disappoint your old habits for it?"

He had no answer.

Over the next weeks, the work shifted away from techniques and toward clarifying will. Not goals. Not values. Will. Eventually, he articulated something simple: "I want my life to serve something bigger than managing my anxiety."

That sentence changed everything. His behavior did not improve immediately. But his inner negotiations stopped. He began making decisions that felt uncomfortable but clean. Saying no. Showing up consistently. Letting certain coping strategies die. Six months later, he said: "My mind finally agrees with me."

That is what the Alter Rebbe is describing. When will aligns upward, the psyche contracts around it. Old Egypt loses jurisdiction. And what once felt impossible begins to feel obvious.

This is not self control. It is inner redemption. **END NOTE]**