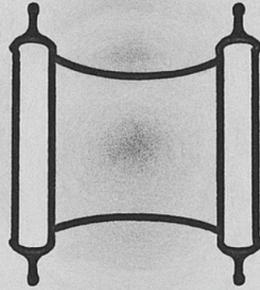


ד"ר

The Maggid of Mezritch
Ohr Torah
Parshas Shemos



*Dedicated in Honor of the
Yahrzeit of the
Alter Rebbe 24th of Tevet*

לע"נ

רבי שניאור זלמן בן רבי ברוך

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Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch

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Siman #65

And these are the names of the children of Israel who were coming to Egypt, etc.; each man and his household came.

Behold, seemingly it is difficult: it should have said “each man and his household” at the end, after mentioning the names of the tribes.

And it is possible to say according to what is written in the holy Zohar: the entire Torah, the names of the Holy One, blessed be He, they are. And even the names of human beings, above they are names.

For example, Reuben, that is to say: the combination of letters of Reuben, those are a holy name above. Reuben below, who is called by this name in this combination, because the root of his soul is from this combination that is above.

And similarly with the rest of the names. And even the names of uncircumcised ones, like Esau and Pharaoh, above they are in holiness, as is written in the previous discourses.

And it is possible to say that to this the verse alluded: “And these are the names,” etc., meaning that you should not say that this is merely a narrative of matters how they came to Egypt, rather all of them are names.

And if you will say: but behold the children of Israel, the verse is counting their names individually; how is it possible to call the names of human beings the holy names above? Therefore it said: each man and his household came.

Meaning: “man” is a name, a combination, above, and “his household” is below, because the combination that is above enclothes itself in the lower man who is called by a name like the name of the combination.

Therefore the lower man is called a “house” in relation to the upper, which is the essential one, and the lower is called only a house for the root of his soul.

ואלה שמות בני ישראל הבאים מצרימה כפי איש וביתו באו. הגהה לכאורה קשה, הנה ליה למימר איש וביתו לבסוף, אחר הזכרת שמות

השכבטים. ואפשר לומר על פי מה שכתוב בזהר הקדוש כולא אורייתא שמותיו דקדשא בריה הוא אינון. ואפלו שמות בני אדם, למעלה הם שמות

גגון ראובן, ר"ל צירוף אותיות [אלו] של ראובן הם שם קדוש לעילא. ראובן התחתון (מה) שנקרא שמו בצירוף זה, מפני ששרש נשמתו הוא מן הצירוף זה של מעלה

וכיוצא בזה שאר שמות. ואפלו שמות ערלים, כמו עשו ופרעה, למעלה הם בקדושה, כמו שכתוב בדרושים הקודמים

ואפשר לומר שלזה רמז הפסוק ואלה שמות וגו', כלומר שלא תאמר שזהו ספור דברים (בעלמא) איך באו למצרים, רק כלם הם שמות

ואם תאמר והלא בני ישראל הם קחשיב הכתוב שמותן בפרטיות, (כי) היאך יתכן לכנות שמות בני אדם לשמות הקדושים דלעילא, ולזה אמר איש וביתו באו

כלומר, איש הוא שם צירוף דלעילא, וביתו הוא התחתון, מפני שהצירוף שלמעלה מתלבש באדם התחתון אשר נקרא שמו בשם הצירוף

לכן נקרא האדם התחתון ב"ת בערך העליון שהוא העקרי, והתחתון אינו נקרא רק בית לשרש נשמתו

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[NOTE Summary:

This maamar explains that the opening verse “And these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt” is not merely historical narrative, but a profound metaphysical statement. Drawing on the Zohar’s teaching that the entire Torah consists of the Names of the Holy One, blessed be He, the text establishes that even human names are not arbitrary labels. Each name reflects a holy supernal name or letter-combination above, from which the individual’s soul is rooted.

Thus, names such as Reuven are not coincidental. The earthly Reuven is called by that name because his soul derives from a specific supernal configuration of letters bearing that same name. This principle applies to all names, even those of non-Jews such as Esav and Pharaoh, which also possess a holy root above, as explained in earlier teachings.

Accordingly, the verse emphasizes “And these are the names” to teach that what follows is not a simple account of migration to Egypt, but a revelation of spiritual identities. The Torah anticipates a possible objection: how can the names of human beings be considered divine names? The answer lies in the phrase “a man and his household came.” “Man” refers to the supernal name and essence above, while “his household” refers to the physical individual below. The earthly person is described as a “house” because he serves as the vessel and dwelling place for the higher spiritual root of his soul. The upper root is primary, and the lower person exists as its embodiment and residence in this world.

Practical Takeaway:

A person should recognize that their name and identity are not accidental or merely social constructs. One’s very being is an expression of a higher spiritual root and mission. This awareness can foster humility, purpose, and responsibility: humility, because the essence comes from above; purpose, because each soul carries a specific divine configuration it must express; and responsibility, because one’s actions determine how faithfully the “house” reflects the higher source dwelling within it. Understanding oneself as a vessel for something greater elevates daily life and personal choices into acts of spiritual significance. **END NOTE]**

Siman #66

And these are the names of the children of Israel. In the name of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem, of blessed memory, according to what is written: “They placed Jerusalem into ruins; they gave the corpse of Your servants as food for the birds of the heavens” (Psalms 79:1–2). Meaning:

וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. בְּשֵׁם רַבִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל בֶּעַל
שֵׁם זְכוּרֵנוּ לְבִרְכָה עַל פִּי מֶה שֶׁכָּתוּב שֶׁמוּ אֶת
יְרוּשָׁלַיִם לְעַיִים נִתְּנוּ אֶת נְבִלַת עַבְדֶּיךָ מֵאֲכָל לְעוֹף
הַשָּׁמַיִם]. כְּלוּמַר

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when some fear comes to a person, or some completeness in the performance of the commandment, from this comes to him haughtiness, for from this, because of our many sins, exile comes to the world, because “they placed Jerusalem,” their complete fear, “into ruins,” a term of a mound high and great.

כְּשֶׁבָּאָה לְאֲדָם אֵיזָה יְרָאָה, אוֹ אֵיזָה שְׁלִימוֹת בְּמַעֲשֵׂה הַמִּצְוָה, בָּאָה לוֹ מֵזָה גְבוּהוּת, כִּי מֵזָה בָּא בְּעוֹנוֹתֵינוּ הַרְבִּים גְּלוּת לְעוֹלָם בְּשִׁבִיל שְׂמוֹ אֶת [יְרוּשָׁלַיִם], יְרָאָה שְׁלֵם שְׁלָהֶם, לְעֵיִם, לְשׁוֹן גַּל גְּבוּהָ וְגָדוֹל.

And if he performs some service, such as Torah and prayer [variant reading: or prayer], and the like, he performs it as a lute and a harp, meaning without awe and love, only like one who plays upon a lute and a harp.

וְאִם עוֹשֶׂה אֵיזָה עֲבוּדָה, כְּמוֹ תוֹרָה וְתַפְלָה [נ"א: אוֹ תַפְלָה] וְכִיּוֹצֵא, עוֹשֶׂה אוֹתָהּ לְנֶבֶל וְכַנּוֹר, כְּלוֹמֵר בְּלֹא [דְּחִילוֹ וְרַחֲמֵי רַק כְּמוֹ מַגֵּן עָלַי נֶבֶל וְכַנּוֹר

and this causes, Heaven forbid, that all his service goes to the forces of impurity. And this is: “They gave the corpse of Your servants as food for the birds of the heavens,” which are the forces of impurity called thus.

וְזֶה גוֹרֵם חֵס וְשְׁלוֹם שֶׁהָעֲבוּדָה שְׁלוֹ הַכֹּל הוֹלֵךְ אֶל הַקְּלִיפּוֹת. וְזֶהוּ נָתַנוּ אֶת נְבֵלַת עֲבָדֶיךָ [מֵאֲכָל] לְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם, שֶׁהֵם הַקְּלִיפּוֹת הַנִּקְרָאִים כֵּן

and who caused this? Because he made his service [his] into a lute. And this is what is written: “the corpse of Your servants to the birds of the heavens and to the beasts of the earth” (Psalms 79:2).

וּמִי גָרַם זֶה מִחֲמַת שֶׁעָשָׂה עֲבוּדָה [שְׁלוֹ] לְנֶבֶל. [וְנ"ש .נְבֵלַת עֲבָדֶיךָ לְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלַחַיֵּת הָאָרֶץ]

And it is possible to say that this also is alluded to here. “And these are the names” meaning it causes the exile and the desolation, and this is “who are coming to Egypt,” meaning into the straits of exile.

וְאֶפְשָׁר לוֹמַר שֶׁזֶּה [גַּם] רְמָז כָּאֵן. וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת ר"ל גוֹרֵם (הַגְּלוּת) [הַגְּלוּת] וְהַשְׁמָמוֹן, וְזֶהוּ הַבָּאִים מֵצִרְיָמָה, ר"ל בְּמִצַּר הַגְּלוּת

and it explains: Reuben, etc. Meaning: when he performs some service he says [in his heart], “See what [difference there is] between me and other people, that I serve my service with completeness,” and it is fitting that the Holy One, blessed be He, should hear my voice and accompany me. And this is Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, and likewise the rest of the names.

וּמִפְּרֵשׁ רְאוּבֵן וְגו'. ר"ל, כְּאֶשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֵיזָה עֲבוּדָה אוֹמֵר [בְּלִבּוֹ] רְאוּ מֶה [בֵּין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל] [בֵּינִי] לְשָׂאֵר בְּנֵי אָדָם, שֶׁאֲנִי עוֹבֵד עֲבוּדַתִּי בְּשְׁלִימוֹת, וְרְאוּי הוּא שֶׁהַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ יִשְׁמַע בְּקוֹלִי, וְיִלְוֶה אֵלַי, וְזֶהוּ שְׂמֵעוֹן וְלוֹי, וְכֵן שָׂאֵר הַשְּׁמוֹת

[NOTE Summary:

This teaching, transmitted in the name of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, reads the verse “And these are the names of the children of Israel” as a warning rather than a neutral description. It draws on the verse “They placed Jerusalem into ruins; they gave the corpse of Your servants as food for the birds of the heavens” (Psalms 79:1–2) to explain a subtle but destructive spiritual dynamic.

When a person attains fear of Heaven or a sense of completeness in the performance of a mitzvah, there is a grave danger that this achievement gives rise to inner pride and self-importance. This spiritual arrogance, born specifically from holiness, is described as the root of exile. “Jerusalem,” representing complete awe and

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wholeness of service, is turned into “ruins,” meaning a high mound, an inflated elevation of self. What should have been humility before God becomes spiritual ego.

As a result, even genuine Torah study and prayer can be emptied of their inner life. When service is performed without awe and love, it is likened to playing a musical instrument mechanically, producing sound but lacking soul. Such service is called “nevel and kinor,” not as praise, but as degradation. In this state, the holy energy of one’s actions is diverted to the forces of impurity, described metaphorically as “the birds of the heavens” and “the beasts of the earth.” The verse “they gave the corpse of Your servants” means that the spiritual life-force of the mitzvah becomes lifeless and consumed elsewhere.

This idea is then read back into the opening of the book of Exodus. “And these are the names” is interpreted as causing exile and desolation. “They came to Egypt” is read as entering the constriction and narrowness of exile. The individual names of the tribes are reinterpreted as inner statements of self-justification: Reuven, Shimon, Levi, and the others reflect a mindset in which a person inwardly says, “See the difference between me and others. My service is complete. God should hear my voice and accompany me.” This inner narrative, subtle and often unconscious, is itself a descent into spiritual Egypt.

Practical Takeaway:

A person must be especially vigilant after spiritual success. Growth in mitzvot, prayer, or learning should lead to deeper humility, not to self-comparison or inner superiority. The test of authentic service is not how complete it feels, but whether it produces awe, love, and self-effacement before God. When religious practice becomes a source of ego, it drains the life from the act and leads to inner exile. The corrective is constant inner honesty: to serve not in order to feel elevated above others, but to become more transparent to the Divine presence. **END NOTE]**

Siman #67

And these are the names of the children of Israel who were coming, etc.; each man and his household came. Behold, the beginning [variant reading: the ultimate purpose] of everything is fear, for if there is no fear there is no wisdom [stored and] considered at all, and the ultimate purpose of wisdom is fear.

Although one must serve the blessed Name with love and fear, one does not need to seek [variant reading: to grasp] except fear, and automatically the love of the blessed Creator will rest upon him, for it is the way of a man to return, etc.

ואלה שמות בני ישראל הבאים וגוי איש וביתו באו. הנה תחלת [נ"א: תכלית] הכל היא היראה, פי אם אין יראה אין חכמה [ספונה ור] חשוכה כלל, ותכלית חכמה הוא יראה.

הגם שצריך לעבוד את השם יתברך באהבה ויראה, אין צריך לחפש [נ"א: לתפוס] רק יראה וממילא תשרה עליו אהבת הבורא יתברך, פי דרך איש לתזור וכו'.

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And in this quality a person can discern himself whether he has fear in completeness. This is a parable: if one of the ministers stands before the king and they pass before him some object, and we understand that it is for him the greatest of desires, that if he were not standing before the king he would greatly desire that thing, nevertheless, when standing before the king, he distances himself from the desire of that thing.

and all this is because such shame and dread have grown upon him because of the king, until he does not see even [variant reading: himself] in his traits, and all of them are nullified from existence in comparison to the fear of the king.

As our Sages of blessed memory said: “To what are the righteous likened before the Divine Presence? To a candle before a torch,” like a lamp in daylight, of what use is it, and it performs no action at all (Chullin 60b). So too their traits perform no action at all in worldly desires, for they are always nullified from their existence due to fear of the Holy One, blessed be He.

And behold, fear is a lower level of the king, [for the king himself has no fear, but from the king fear sparkles forth and rests upon his servants; if so, certainly fear is a lower level of the king], and it is that which connects between the king and the people.

The fear that is attached to him rests upon servants who are with him. And behold, even a great minister who has all good in his house, nevertheless when he comes before the king he is nullified from existence, as mentioned.

And this is what is written: “Fear the Lord, His holy ones, for there is no lack to those who fear Him” (Psalms 34:10); meaning, even though there is no lack for them, nevertheless they are nullified from existence, with all that they have, because of fear of the blessed Name.

And behold, the essence of kingship is fear, for the essence of the delight of the king in his kingship is that they fear him, and through this they obey him.

ובזאת הבחינה יבחין אדם עצמו אם יש לו יראָה בשלימות. זה משל. אם אָחד [מן השָׂרִים] עומד לפני המלך ונעבירו לפניו דָּבָר ונבין שְׁהִיא אֲצֵלוֹ הגדולה שְׁבַתְאוֹת, שָׁאם לֹא הָיָה עומד לפני המלך הָיָה מתאנה מאד לדָּבָר ההוא

ועם כל זה בעמדו לפני המלך נתרחק ממנו תאוות הדָּבָר ההוא. וכֵן זה הוא מפני שְׁכַל כָּה גְדֻלָּה עָלָיו הבושה והאימה מפני המלך עד שְׁאינו רואה אף [נ"א: את עצמו] במדותיו, וכֵן בָּטְלוּ ממצִיאות נגד יראת המלך.

כְּמוֹ שְׁאָמְרוּ רַז"ל לְמָה צְדִיקִים דּוֹמִים לְפָנָי הַשְּׂכִינָה כִּנּוּר לְפָנָי הָאֲבוּקָה, כְּמוֹ שְׁרָגָא בְּטִיהָרָא לְמַאי מְהִינְי וְאִינוּ עוֹשֶׂה פְעֻלָּתוֹ כָּלֵל (חולין ס' ע"ב). כֵּן מדותיהם אינן עושות שום פְּעֻלָּה בְּתַאוֹת הָעוֹלָם, כִּי תמיד הם בָּטְלִים ממצִיאותם מִיִּרְאֵת הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא.

וְהִנֵּה הִירָאָה הִיא מְדַרְגָּה תַּחְתּוֹנָה שֶׁל הַמֶּלֶךְ, [שְׁהַמֶּלֶךְ עֲצֻמוֹ אִין לוֹ יִרְאָה, אִף מִן הַמֶּלֶךְ מְתַנּוּצִין הִירָאָה וְחִלָּה עַל עֲבָדָיו. אִם כֵּן בּוֹדְאֵי הִירָאָה הִיא מְדַרְגָּה תַּחְתּוֹנָה שֶׁל הַמֶּלֶךְ] וְהִיא הַמְּחַבֵּרֵת בֵּין הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָעָם.

הִירָאָה הַדְּבוּקָה בּוֹ הִיא חִלָּה עַל עֲבָדִים שְׁהֵם עִמּוֹ. וְהִנֵּה אֲפִלוֹ שֶׁר גְּדוֹל שְׁיֵשׁ לוֹ כָּל טוֹב בְּבֵיתוֹ, אִף עַל פִּי כֵן כְּאֲשֶׁר בָּא לְפָנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ הוּא בָּטֵל ממצִיאות כַּנִּזְכָּר.

וְזֶהוּ יִרְאוּ אֵת ה' קְדוֹשׁוֹ כִּי אִין מְחִסּוֹר לִירְאָיו (תהלים ל"ד:י'), פְּרוּשׁ אִף עַל פִּי שְׁאִין מְחִסּוֹר לָהֶם, אִף עַל פִּי כֵן הֵם בָּטְלִים ממצִיאות עִם כָּל אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם מִפְּנֵי יִרְאֵת הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ.

וְהִנֵּה עֵיקַר הַמְּלָכוּת הִיא הִירָאָה, כִּי עֵיקַר הַתְּעֻנּוּג לְמֶלֶךְ בְּמְלָכוּתוֹ הוּא מֵה שְׁמַתִּירָאִים מִמֶּנּוּ, וְעַל יְדֵי כֵן צִיְתִים אוֹתוֹ.

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And behold, “God made it that they should fear before Him” (Ecclesiastes 3:14), and the essence of the creation of the worlds was for this delight, and it is called a bride, and we, His people, are obligated [variant reading: and we, His chosen people] to bear upon ourselves always fear of the blessed Name, blessed be He.

וְהִנֵּה הָאֱלֹקִים עֲשָׂה שְׂיִירָאוּ מִלְּפָנָיו (קהלת ג': י"ד),
וְעִיקַר בְּרִיאַת הָעוֹלָמוֹת הִתְהַב בְּשִׁבִיל תַּעֲנוּג זֶה,
וְהִיא נִקְרָאת פֶּלֶה, וְנִתְחַנְנוּ עִמּוֹ מְחֻיָּבִים [נ"א: וְנִתְחַנְנוּ
עִמּוֹ הַמּוֹבְחָרִים] לְהִיּוֹת נוֹשָׁאִים עֲלֵינוּ תָּמִיד יְרֵאת
הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ בְּרוּךְ הוּא

And this is what is written everywhere: wherever they were exiled, the Divine Presence was with them, meaning the [delight of] fear of the Creator is with us always.

וְזֶהוּ מָה שֶׁכָּתוּב בְּכָל מְקוֹם שֶׁגָּלוּ שְׂכִינָה עִמָּהֶם,
דִּהְיָנוּ [תַּעֲנוּג] יְרֵאת הַבּוֹרָא עִמָּנוּ תָּמִיד

And this is “for the bride” [written thus, by way of] the bride of hers. And this is: the market of the tanner appears to him like a market of spices.

וְזֶהוּ לְכַלּוֹתָם [כְּתִיב, בְּדִיל] פֶּלֶה דִּילִיָּהּ. וְזֶהוּ פֶלְתוֹ
שֶׁל שׁוּק שֶׁל בּוֹרְסֵי דוּמָה עָלָיו כְּשׁוּק שֶׁל בּוּשָׂם

And this is: “And God saw the children of Israel” (Exodus 2:25), meaning that He saw His delight, that they fear before Him, as mentioned; and this is “God,” which is the aspect of fear, He is with the children of Israel.

וְזֶהוּ וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (שְׁמוֹת ב': כ"ה),
דִּהְיָנוּ שְׂרָאָה הַתַּעֲנוּג שְׁלוֹ שְׂיִירָאוּ מִלְּפָנָיו כְּנִזְכָּר,
וְזֶהוּ אֱלֹקִים, הוּא בְּחִינַת יְרֵאָה, הוּא [אֶת] [בְּנֵי]
יִשְׂרָאֵל, [ר"ל] עִם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

Then, “and God knew” (Exodus 2:25), meaning that He became bound with that delight and set His heart to take them out.

אֲזַ וַיֵּדַע אֱלֹקִים (שְׁמוֹת ב': כ"ה), דִּהְיָנוּ שְׁנִתְקַשֵּׁר
בְּאוֹתוֹ הַתַּעֲנוּג וְנָתַן לֵב לְהוֹצִיאָם

And this is “each man and his household came,” meaning that each one came with fear of the Creator upon him. And fear is called a “house,” in the manner of “With wisdom a house is built” (Proverbs 24:3), “Abba founded the house” [variant reading: the daughter].

וְזֶהוּ אִישׁ וּבֵיתוֹ בָּאוּ, דִּהְיָנוּ כָּל אֶחָד בָּא עִם יְרֵאת
הַבּוֹרָא עָלָיו. וַיֵּרָאָה נִקְרָא בֵּית, עַל דְּרָךְ בְּחֻקָּהּ יִבְנֶה
[בֵּית (מְשָׁלִי כ"ד: ג'), אָבָא יוֹסֵד (בֵּיתָא) [בְּרִיתָא]

and for this reason it is called the lower wisdom.

וְעַל שֵׁם כֵּךְ נִקְרָאת חֻקָּהּ תַּתְּמָה

[NOTE Summary:

This maamar presents a unified and penetrating vision of יְרֵאָה, fear of Heaven, as the foundational bond between God and the Jewish people. The Maggid explains that fear is not merely an emotional state but a metaphysical level within divine kingship itself. Fear is described as a lower level of the King, not because it is insignificant, but because it is the point at which the infinite majesty of the King becomes accessible to servants. The King Himself does not experience fear; rather, fear emanates from Him and rests upon those who stand before Him. In this way, fear functions as the connective tissue between the King and the people.

This dynamic is illustrated through a parable. Even a powerful minister who possesses everything imaginable loses all sense of self when standing before the king. His wealth, desires, and personal identity dissolve in the presence of overwhelming awe and shame. This is the inner meaning of the verse “Fear the Lord, His holy ones, for there is no lack to those who fear Him” (Psalms 34:10). Even when there is no material lack, those

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who truly fear God experience ביטול, self-nullification, because all that they possess fades in comparison to divine awe.

The maamar then reveals a striking idea: the essence of kingship itself is fear. The king's deepest pleasure in ruling is not domination but the fact that people fear him, which leads them to obey and align with his will. Applying this to the divine realm, the verse "God made it so that they should fear before Him" (Ecclesiastes 3:14) teaches that the creation of all worlds was for this very delight. The Maggid calls this delight "the bride," evoking the language of marriage, intimacy, and mutual relationship. Fear, in this context, is not terror but the vessel that enables closeness.

Because of this, the Jewish people are obligated to carry fear of God upon themselves at all times. Even in exile, the Divine Presence is with them, meaning that the divine delight of fear remains present wherever they go. The Maggid interprets the enigmatic phrase "the market of a tanner appears to him like a market of spices" to mean that when one carries fear of Heaven, even spiritually unpleasant or degraded environments are transformed. What would normally repel becomes elevated, refined, and sweetened through awe of God.

This framework culminates in the verses "God saw the children of Israel" and "God knew" (Exodus 2:25). God "seeing" refers to perceiving His delight, that Israel still fears Him even in exile. "Knowing" signifies deep attachment and engagement, prompting divine intervention and redemption. The segment concludes by returning to the opening phrase, "each man and his household came." Every individual entered exile accompanied by fear of the Creator. Fear is called a "house," as in "With wisdom a house is built" (Proverbs 24:3). Drawing on Kabbalistic language, the Maggid explains that this "house" is associated with lower wisdom, the structure that allows divine presence to dwell within human life.

Practical Takeaway:

True fear of Heaven is not anxiety, withdrawal, or self-loathing. It is the steady awareness of standing before the King, an awareness that naturally dissolves ego, entitlement, and obsession with self. When a person carries this fear, desires lose their grip, environments are transformed, and even exile becomes a place where God can be encountered. The practical work is not to chase emotional intensity, but to cultivate presence: to ask oneself, "Am I living as if I am standing before the King?" When fear takes the form of humility and reverence, it becomes a home for the Divine.

Chassidic Story:

A well-known episode is told about the Maggid of Mezeritch himself. Once, a wealthy and influential visitor came to the Maggid seeking a blessing for success. The man spoke at length about his accomplishments, his generosity, and his standing in the community. Throughout the conversation, the Maggid listened quietly, without interruption.

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Finally, the Maggid asked the man a single question: “When you stand alone in your room at night, do you feel that the King of the world is standing before you?”

The man was silent.

The Maggid then said gently: “If you do, you do not need my blessing. And if you do not, all blessings will pass through you without a place to rest.”

Years later, that man related that this moment changed his life. He did not abandon his work or his wealth, but he reoriented his inner world. Before major decisions, before prayer, even before ordinary conversations, he trained himself to pause and recall that he was standing before the King. Over time, he noticed that his cravings softened, his anger diminished, and his generosity became quieter and more sincere.

He later said that what transformed him was not fear in the sense of dread, but fear as presence. Wherever he went, that presence went with him. And that presence became his בית, his home. **END NOTE]**

Siman #68

“I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, etc.”

(Exodus 3:6). Seemingly, [one could ask that] it should have said the opposite: first the forefathers, and afterwards “your father,” who is Amram. But this was truly a drawing down from above to below.

אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם וְגו' (שמות ג':ו').
 לְכַאוֹרָה [נִשׁ לְהַקְשׁוֹת דִּי] הָיָה לִיָּה לְמִימַר אֵיפְכָא,
 מְעִיקָרָא אַבוֹת, וְאַחַר כֵּן אָבִיךָ שֶׁהוּא עֲמָרָם. אִךְ זֶה
 הָיָה בְּאֵמַת הַמְשָׁכָה מִלְּמַעְלָה לְמַטָּה.

For it is stated: “And a man went from the house of Levi” (Exodus 2:1), and his name is not mentioned, because he went in modesty [variant: in concealment], and all his deeds were in concealment; therefore the Torah did not publicize his piety.

דְּאִיתָא וְנִלְךָ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לֵוִי (שמות ב':א'), וְלֹא נִזְכָּר
 שְׁמוֹ לְפִי שְׁהִלָּךְ (בְּצַנְיָעוֹת) [בְּצַנְעָא] וְכָל מַעֲשָׂיו הָיָה
 בְּאִתְכַסְיָא, עַל כֵּן לֹא פְרָסְמָה תּוֹרָה חֲסִידוֹתוֹ.

From the tradition we learned that he never tasted the taste of sin, as it is stated in the Talmud (Shabbat 55b), but the Torah concealed him because he was from the world of concealment.

מִפִּי הַקְּבֵלָה לְמַדְנוּ שֶׁלֹּא טַעַם טַעַם חָטָא, כְּדִאִיתָא
 בְּשׁוּ"ס (שבת נ"ה ע"ב), אָבָל הַתּוֹרָה כִּפְסָתָהּ לְפִי
 שְׁהִיָּה מְעַלְמָא דְאִתְכַסְיָא.

And his name testifies about him: ע"ם ר"ם, that he was [from “with the exalted”], from the primordial attributes.

וְשְׁמוֹ מוֹכִיחַ עָלָיו, ע"ם ר"ם, שְׁהִיָּה [מְעַם רַם],
 מְמַדוֹת רֵאשׁוֹנוֹת.

And this is “from the house of Levi,” an expression of attachment of grace, for there he is Levi, always in connection, “two companions who do not separate.”

וְזֶהוּ מִבֵּית לֵוִי, לְשׁוֹן לְוִיָּת חֵן, שְׁשֵׁם הוּא לֵוִי, תָּמִיד
 בְּהַתְחַבְּרוּת, תָּרִין רַעִין דְּלֹא מִתְפָּרְשִׁין.

“And he took the daughter of Levi” (Exodus 2:1), and this is that Moses emerged from there [variant: from them], that he merited understanding, and this is sufficient for the discerning.

וַיִּקַּח אֶת בַּת לֵוִי (שמות ב':א'), וְזֶהוּ שְׁנִיפָא מִשְׁהָ
 מִשְׁשׁ [נִי"א: מִהָם] שְׁזָכָה לְבִינָה, וְדִי לְמַבִּין.

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[NOTE Summary:

This maamar opens with the verse “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham” (Exodus 3:6) and raises a sharp question. Logically, the verse should have first mentioned the patriarchs and only afterward referred to “your father,” Amram. The Maggid explains that the order is intentional and reflects a process of divine flow from above to below. The revelation to Moses begins specifically through his immediate father, indicating a downward extension of divine presence into concealment and humility, rather than an ascent from below to above.

This theme is developed through the figure of Amram. The Torah states only “And a man went from the house of Levi” (Exodus 2:1) without naming him. The Maggid explains that this omission is not incidental but essential. Amram lived entirely in hiddenness and modesty. His actions were carried out in concealment, and therefore the Torah itself conceals his identity. Even though tradition teaches that Amram never tasted sin, as stated by the Sages, the Torah does not publicize his greatness, because his spiritual root belongs to the concealed world, the realm of hidden holiness.

Amram’s very name reflects this. It is read as “with the exalted,” indicating a soul drawn from primordial attributes, beyond display and self-assertion. Likewise, the phrase “from the house of Levi” is interpreted not merely genealogically, but spiritually. Levi represents attachment, constant connection, and unbroken unity, described in the Zoharic phrase “two companions who do not separate.” This points to an uninterrupted bond with the Divine that does not seek expression or recognition.

When the Torah states “And he took the daughter of Levi” (Exodus 2:1), the Maggid explains that this union produced Moses, who merited binah, deep understanding. This wisdom emerges precisely from hiddenness, modesty, and attachment, rather than from overt spiritual display. The maamar closes by indicating that this level of comprehension is hinted at rather than explained openly, concluding with the phrase “and this is sufficient for the discerning.”

Practical Takeaway:

True spiritual greatness does not require visibility, acknowledgment, or public validation. Some of the highest levels of holiness operate in concealment, shaping reality precisely because they are free of ego and display. A person should not measure their spiritual worth by recognition or influence, but by integrity, modesty, and quiet consistency. When service is rooted in hidden devotion and steady attachment to God, it becomes a vessel for profound wisdom and lasting impact, even if its source remains unnamed. **END NOTE]**

Siman #69

“**And he encountered him at the mountain of God**” (Exodus 4:27). Behold, the bird called *ra'ah* impregnates its female through sight and observation alone.

וַיִּפְגְּשֵׁהוּ בְהַר הָאֱלֹקִים (שמות ד':כ"ז). הִנֵּה הָעוֹרֵף
הַנִּקְרָא רָאָה הוּא מְעַבֵּר אֶת נֹקְבָא דִּילֵיהּ בְּרֵאֵיהּ
וְהִסְתַּכְּלוּת לְבַד.

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And from this there emerged for us a proof [great], that in every [thing or] place that a person's thought thinks, there is all of the person's vitality concentrated, and it is only there.

ומנה יצא לנו מופת [גדול] שבכל [דבר או] מקום שהמתחשבה של אדם מחשב, שם הוא כל חיות האדם מצומצם ואינו רק שם.

For sight is a vessel for thought. And there are several proofs of this, that in whatever place or thing a person thinks, behold all of his vitality is concentrated in that place or thing alone.

כי ההסתכלות הוא כלי אל המתחשבה. ויש על זה כמה מופתים, שבאיזה מקום או דבר שאדם מחשב, הרי כל חיותו מצומצם באותו מקום או דבר לבד.

and consequently, if his vitality is concentrated there, behold all of his traits and his body are also there, for the limbs are drawn after the root.

וממילא אם חיותו מצומצם שם, הרי כל מדותיו ונפשו גם כן שם, כי שדי נופא בתר עיקרא.

And behold, when Israel arose in the primordial thought, meaning that the delight and pleasures that He, blessed be He, would in the future receive from Israel arose before Him, behold the discerning will understand that this itself is the very essence of contraction.

והנה כשעלה ישראל במחשבה קדומה, דהינו שעלה התענוג והשעשועים שעתידי לקבל מישראל לפניו. יתברר, הנה המבין יבין שנה בעצמו עצם הצמצום.

For since He began to think of the delight that He would receive from Israel, who are now [bounded] [variant: limited], who have a boundary, and every place where thought is, vitality too is contracted.

שכיון שהתחיל לחשב תענוג שיקח מישראל שהם עתה (מגובלים) [מוגבלים], שיש להם גבול, וכל מקום שהמתחשבה שם החיות גם כן מצומצם.

And similarly here, when it arose in thought as mentioned, He Himself, blessed be He, was contracted, as it were, and through this Israel were made.

וכן עד זה הדרה כאן, כשעלה במחשבה פננפר הוא יתברר בעצמו נתצמצם כפניו, ועל ידי כן נעשו ישראל.

For were it not for the contraction, these worlds could not have come into being, nor could Israel, who are now within them, exist. But when there was contraction, the worlds were able to endure it, and all of them were made.

שאלמלא הצמצום לא הנה יכול להיות עולמות אלו ולהיות בתוכם ישראל שהם עתה. אף כשהנה הצמצום אז העולמות יכולים לסבלו ונעשו כלם.

Although it seemingly appears that the fact that Israel arose in thought was the attribute of love and kindness and delight, that He loved them, and because of His love for them He created all the worlds, and contraction is the aspect of judgment; behold, in truth this is the meaning of "love presses the flesh," that because of love for a thing one contracts himself only to that thing.

הגם שלכאורה נראה שמה שישאל עלה במחשבה זו היא מדת אהבה וחסד ותענוג שאהבם, ומחמת אהבתם ברא כל העולמות, והצמצום הוא בחינת דין. הנה באמת זהו הפרוש אהבה דוחקת הבשר, שמחמת אהבה לדבר מצמצם את עצמו רק לאותו דבר.

And in truth Rabbi Israel Baal Shem, of blessed memory, said, "and the priests, the Levites," that all influx that comes is in two aspects, namely love and contraction.

ובאמת אמר ר' ישראל בעל שם זכרוננו לברכה, והפגנים הלויים, שכל שפע הבאה היא בשתי בחינות, דהינו אהבה וצמצום.

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[Love from which] he bestows to the lower world, and the aspect of contraction [is always] that same influx descending from the upper world to dwell in the lower world.

שְׁמַחְמַתָּם (אֲהָבָה שְׁמַחְמַתָּה) מְשַׁפֵּיעַ לְעוֹלָם הַתַּחְתּוֹן, וּבְחִינַת צְמֻצוּם [לְעוֹלָם הַיָּא] אוֹתוֹ הַשֶּׁפַע הַיּוֹרֵד מֵעוֹלָם עֲלִיוֹן לְשֵׁרוֹת בְּעוֹלָם הַתַּחְתּוֹן.

And likewise, in the first contraction there was the aspect of love and the aspect of contraction all at one time, without any separation at all, that the love with which He loved Israel is itself the contraction, as mentioned, and this is sufficient for the discerning.

וְכֵן בְּצֻמְצוּם הָרִאשׁוֹן הָיָה בְּחִינַת אֲהָבָה וּבְחִינַת צְמֻצוּם הַכֹּל בְּפַעַם אַחַת בְּלִי פְרוּד פְּלִל, שְׂאֵהָבָה שְׂאֵהָבָה אֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל הִיא בְּעֻצְמָה הַצְּמֻצוּם כַּנֶּזְכָּר וְדִי לְמַבִּין.

And behold, through this all the worlds came into being, and without this His divinity, blessed be He, could not have been revealed [variant: in the worlds], and without His divinity, blessed be He, all the worlds could not endure even one moment.

וְהִנֵּה עַל יְדֵי זֶה נִתְהוּוּ כָּל הָעוֹלָמוֹת, וּבִלְעָדֵי זֶה לֹא הָיָה יָכוֹל לְהִתְגַּלּוֹת אֱלֹקוֹתוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ (בְּעֻצְמוֹ) [בְּעוֹלָמוֹת], וּבִלְעָדֵי אֱלֹקוֹתוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ לֹא הָיוּ יְכוּלִים כָּל הָעוֹלָמוֹת לְהִתְקַיֵּם אִפְלוּ רַגַע אֶחָד.

But through contraction the [worlds] are able to bear His divinity, blessed be He, and this is sufficient for the discerning.

אֲף עַל יְדֵי הַצְּמֻצוּם יְכוּלִים [הָעוֹלָמוֹת] לְקַבֵּל אֱלֹקוֹתוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ וְדִי לְמַבִּין.

And behold, in Egypt His divinity, blessed be He, was revealed as it was at the creation of the world, as is known, as it is written: "I and not an angel" (Exodus 12:12).

וְהִנֵּה בְּמִצְרַיִם נִתְגַּלְתָּה אֱלֹקוֹתוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ כְּמוֹ שֶׁהָיָה בְּחִידוּשׁ הָעוֹלָם כַּנֶּזְכָּר, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכְּתוּב אֲנִי וְלֹא מַלְאָךְ (שְׁמוֹת י"ב:י"ב).

For it was necessary that it be through Him Himself, blessed be He, because they were surrounded by impurities and by [great] sorceries, such that it could only be through Him Himself, as it were, and no angel had the power to do this.

כִּי הִכְרַח לְהִיּוֹת עַל יְדֵי עֻצְמוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ. [כִּי] לְפִי שֶׁהָיוּ מְסוּבָבִים בְּטֻמְאוֹת וּבְכַשּׁוּפִים [גְּדוּלִים] שְׁלֹא הָיָה יָכוֹל לְהִיּוֹת כִּי אִם עַל יְדֵי עֻצְמוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ (כַּנֶּזְכָּר) [כַּבְּיָכוֹל], וְלֹא הָיָה כַּח בְּשׁוּם מַלְאָךְ לַעֲשׂוֹת זֶה.

Therefore it was a great proof of the renewal of the worlds [variant: the world], for He overturns the systems according to His will, blessed be He.

עַל כֵּן הָיָה מוֹפֵת גָּדוֹל עַל חִידוּשׁ הָעוֹלָמוֹת [נִ"א]: הָעוֹלָם], כִּי הוּא הַמְשַׁדֵּד הַמְעַרְכּוֹת כַּרְצוֹנוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ.

And since it was necessary that His divinity be revealed, it was also necessary that it be through love and contraction so that they could bear Him, just as at the creation of the world.

וְכִינֵן שֶׁהָיָה צָרִיךְ לְהִתְגַּלּוֹת אֱלֹקוֹתוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ, הָיָה צָרִיךְ גַּם כֵּן לְהִיּוֹת עַל יְדֵי אֲהָבָה וְצְמֻצוּם כְּדִי שְׂיִוְכָלוּ לְקַבֵּל אוֹתוֹ, כְּמוֹ בְּחִידוּשׁ הָעוֹלָם.

And behold, even though there love and contraction were all in one moment [as above], nevertheless the world of action [variant: in the world of action] requires these two vessels.

וְהִנֵּה אֲף עַל פִּי שֶׁשָּׁם הָיָה אֲהָבָה וְצְמֻצוּם הַכֹּל בְּרַגַע אֶחָד [וְכַנ"ל], אֲף עַל פִּי כֵן הָעוֹלָם עֲשִׂיָה (נִ"א): הָעוֹלָם הַעֲשִׂיָה צָרִיךְ לָזֶה שְׁנֵי כֵלִים.

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For such is the way of the worlds, that what in the upper world is simple unity, like thought, in the lower world appears as greater separation [variant: with some division], and this is due to the vessels.

פי כן הוא דרך העולמות שמה שבעולם העליון היא אחדות פשוטה, כמו המחשבה, בעולם התחתון ממנו נראה יותר פרוז (נ"א: בהתחלקות קצת), והוא מצד הכלים.

But from the perspective of the vitality, which is from the upper world, it is even now [variant: here] simple unity, like thought.

אבל מצד החיות, שהוא מעולם העליון, הוא גם עתה [נ"א: כאן] אחדות פשוטה, כמו המחשבה

For thought is in the heart alone, and afterward when one wishes to reveal it through voice and speech it has several separate vessels, the five lobes of the lung, the articulators, and the windpipe; and afterward when it descends to action [variant: when it comes from speech to action], the separation appears even greater.

שהמחשבה היא בלב לבד, ואחר כך פשוטה לגלותה על ידי קול ודבור יש לה כמה כלים נפרדים, ה' נפני ריאה והמבטאים והקנה, ואחר כך מזכירה לעשיה (נ"א: פשא מדבור לעשיה) נראה הפרוז עוד יותר.

And in truth, the sensitive man does not make division even in the lower world, since he sees that the entire stature and vitality of the lower world is from the upper world, and were it not for the upper world the lower world would be absolute nothingness.

ובאמת האיש הנלכב אינו עושה פרוז גם בעולם התחתון, כיון שרואה שכל קומתו וחיותו של העולם התחתון הוא מעולם העליון, ואלמלא העולם העליון הנה העולם התחתון אפס מחלט.

And likewise, if the influence of the upper world would depart even for one moment, the lower would return to absolute nothingness. If so, it is like the upper world; and just as there everything is simple unity, he will place its unity here as well,

וכן אם יסתלק השפעת העולם העליון אפלו רגע אחד הנה חוזר התחתון לאפס המחלט. אם כן הוא כמו העולם העליון, וכמו ששם הכל הוא אחדות פשוטה ישים לכאן אחדותו גם כן

[variant: if so, he is attached to the upper world, and just as there everything is simple unity, certainly here as well], and he does not pay attention to the vessels that appear separated, for he is in the aspect of the recipients, but speech itself is simple unity.

נ"א: אם כן הוא דבוק לעולם העליון, וכמו ששם הכל אחדות פשוטה בודאי גם כן כאן], ואינו משגיח על הכלים הנראים מפרדים, כי הוא בבחינת המקבלים, אבל הדבור בעצמו הוא אחדות פשוטה.

And through this he unifies the lower world with the upper, and he is able to ascend from level to level until the head of all of them, where everything is simple unity.

ובזה מחדד עולם התחתון לעליון, ויכול להעלות ממדרגה למדרגה עד ראש כלם, ששם הכל אחדות פשוטה.

And this is why the Torah writes the refusal of Moses our teacher, peace be upon him, to go to take the children of Israel out of Egypt, not in vain, but to inform us of a proper matter that the judgment is with him,

ונהי שנכתב בתורה סרוב משה רבנו עליו השלום לילך להוציא בני ישראל ממצרים לא על מגן, אלא להשמיענו דבר הגון שהדין הוא עמו

because he was only the aspect of love, as it is written: "for from the water I drew him" (Exodus 2:10), meaning the aspect of love and delight.

לפי שהוא הנה בחינת אהבה לחוד, כמו שכתוב פי מן המים משיתהו (שמות ב:'), דהינו בחינת אהבה ונתענוג.

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And this is what is said: “for I am heavy of mouth, etc.” (Exodus 4:10), because the way of the mouth is to contract the voice in articulation in order to cut speech, and he was not of the aspect of contraction but only of the aspect of delight.

And here it was necessary that His divinity, blessed be He, be revealed through the aspect of love and contraction. Therefore the blessed Name said to him: “Is there not Aaron your brother the Levite?” (Exodus 4:14), meaning the aspect of contraction, and he would be a mouth for you, as mentioned.

and at that time Moses was still fit for the priesthood and Aaron for the Levite status, as our Sages of blessed memory said (Zevachim 102a).

[And this is:] “And he encountered him at the mountain of God” (Exodus 4:27). “Mountain” is love, as with Abraham who called it a mountain (Pesachim 88a); “God” is the aspect of judgment, that is, contraction.

And this means that when they met, then both of them were already present here. And this is “and he kissed him” (Exodus 4:27), which is an attachment of spirit to spirit, meaning that both of them became simple unity.

[NOTE Summary:

This maamar develops a deep teaching about thought, divine contraction, and unity. It opens with the verse “And he encountered him at the mountain of God” (Exodus 4:27) and explains that encounter as the meeting of two fundamental divine modalities: love and contraction. The Maggid begins with a striking natural analogy. Just as the bird called *ra'ah* transmits life through sight alone, so too human vitality follows thought. Wherever a person's mind is focused, there their life-force is concentrated. Sight serves as a vessel for thought, and thought draws the essence of a person into whatever it contemplates. Because vitality follows its root, when thought is concentrated in a place or object, the person's traits and even bodily orientation follow after it.

This principle is then elevated to a cosmic level. When Israel arose in primordial divine thought, meaning when God envisioned the delight and pleasure He would one day receive from Israel, this itself constituted the very essence of contraction. Since Israel are finite and bounded beings, divine thought directed toward them necessarily entailed limitation. Wherever thought is present, vitality is present in a contracted form. Thus, when God thought of Israel, He, as it were, contracted Himself. Without this contraction, finite worlds could not exist, nor could Israel exist within them. Only through contraction could the worlds endure divine presence.

וזהו שאמר פי כבד פה וגו' (שמות ד':י), לפי שדברך הפה לצמצום הקול במבטא כפי לחתוף הדבור, והוא לא היה מבחינת צמצום רק בחינת תענוג לבד.

וכאן היה צריך להתגלות אלקותו יתברך [על ידי] בחינת אהבה וצמצום. על פן אמר לו השם יתברך הלא אהרן אחיך הלוי (שמות ד':י"ד), דהינו בחינת צמצום, והיה הוא לה לפה כנזכר.

ובאותו העת היה עדין משה ראוי לקהנה ואהרן (ללוינה כמו שאמרו רז"ל (זבחים ק"ב ע"א).

וזהו ויפגשוהו בהר האלקים (שמות ד':כ"ז). הר הוא אהבה, כאברהם שקראו הר (פסחים פ"ח ע"א), האלקים, בחינת דין, [והינו] הצמצום.

והינו כשנפגשו [אז] היו כבד שניהם כאן. וזהו וישק לו (שמות ד':כ"ז), [שהוא] אהבה וקרא ברוחא, דהינו שנעשו שניהם אחדות פשוטה.

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At first glance, this process appears paradoxical. Israel arose in divine love and delight, while contraction seems to belong to judgment. The Maggid resolves this by redefining contraction itself as an expression of love. This is the inner meaning of the phrase “love presses the flesh.” When one loves something deeply, one constricts oneself to that object. Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov taught that all divine influx comes through two inseparable qualities: love and contraction. Love motivates the flow toward the lower world, while contraction is the very form that allows that flow to be received within limitation. In the first contraction, love and contraction occurred simultaneously, without separation. God’s love for Israel was itself the contraction.

Through this unified process all worlds came into being. Without divine revelation, no world could exist even for a moment, yet unmediated revelation would overwhelm creation. Contraction therefore enables endurance. This same pattern reappears in the redemption from Egypt. There, divine revelation mirrored the original creation of the world. “I and not an angel” indicates that only God Himself could redeem Israel, since they were immersed in extreme impurity and sorcery beyond any angelic capacity. This direct revelation was a proof of divine sovereignty and of the renewal of creation itself. Yet once again, revelation had to be accompanied by love and contraction so that the world could survive it.

The Maggid then explains that while in the divine source love and contraction are unified in a single instant, in the world of action they appear as two distinct vessels. This reflects a general rule: in higher worlds there is simple unity, like thought itself, while in lower worlds that unity appears divided through vessels. The vitality itself remains unified, but its expression fragments as it descends. Thought in the heart is unified; speech requires multiple organs; action displays even greater division.

A refined person, however, does not create division even in the lower world. Such a person recognizes that all vitality of the lower world derives entirely from the upper world and would revert to absolute nothingness without it. Seeing this, the individual relates to the lower world as an extension of higher unity. He does not fixate on the apparent separateness of vessels, because he perceives the underlying oneness of vitality. Through this awareness, he unites the lower world with the upper and ascends from level to level until reaching the root, where all is simple unity.

This framework explains Moses’ initial refusal to lead Israel out of Egypt. The Torah records this refusal to teach that Moses’ claim was justified. Moses embodied love and delight alone, as hinted by “for I drew him from the water.” Speech, however, requires contraction, since articulation narrows sound into defined forms. Moses, rooted in delight without contraction, could not serve as the channel for a revelation that required both. Therefore God appointed Aaron, who embodied contraction, to serve as Moses’ mouth. At that time Moses was still destined for the priesthood and Aaron for the Levite role, reflecting their respective spiritual qualities.

The segment concludes by returning to “And he encountered him at the mountain of God.” “Mountain” signifies love, as Abraham called it, while “God” signifies judgment and contraction. When Moses and Aaron

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met, love and contraction were unified. “And he kissed him” expresses this as a complete bonding of spirit with spirit, forming a single, simple unity capable of revealing divinity within the world.

Practical Takeaway:

Spiritual wholeness comes from uniting love with discipline. Love alone overflows without structure, while contraction alone constricts without warmth. True service integrates both. A person should train their thought carefully, knowing that where the mind dwells, life follows. By recognizing the divine source of all vitality, one can live in the world without being fragmented by it, using limitation as a vessel rather than a barrier. When love and restraint work together, the finite becomes a home for the infinite.

Chassidic Story:

A well-documented account is told about Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli, a close disciple of the Maggid of Mezeritch. Once, Rabbi Zusha was seen walking through a rough marketplace filled with noise, foul smells, and crude behavior. A student asked how he could maintain spiritual clarity in such an environment.

Rabbi Zusha replied that when he was younger, such places disturbed him greatly. But after learning from the Maggid, he began to understand that the vitality of every place comes from above. “If God gives life here,” he said, “then my task is not to flee, but to reveal that life.” He explained that when one focuses on the outer vessels, the world appears divided and coarse. But when one focuses on the inner vitality, even a degraded setting can be uplifted.

Later, witnesses testified that Rabbi Zusha would pause in that same marketplace, close his eyes briefly, and then continue with calm joy. Those nearby felt a strange sense of peace. He once explained that he was not ignoring the world’s flaws, but uniting the lower with the upper by refusing to let separation define reality.

This story embodies the Maggid’s teaching. When love and contraction are unified within a person, even the most fragmented places can become sites of divine encounter. **END NOTE]**

Siman #70

The name of the one is Shifrah. Meaning: the one *Heh*, that is, the first *Heh*. Shifrah is understanding, which is the secret of repentance, for it improves the fetus;

שם האחת"ת שפֶּרָה. ר"ל ה' אחת, הינו ה' ראשונה,
שפֶּרָה, בינה, שהיא הסוד תשובה, שמשפֶּרַת הולד

and presumably at first it was soiled with sins, and through the repentance that one performs, the understanding improves it.

ומסתמא הִיא תחלה מלוכלך בעונות ועל ידי
התשובה שעושה משפֶּרַת אותו הבינה

And the name of the second, the second *Heh*, is Puah, an expression of speech, for the *Heh* is the world of speech.

ושם [השנית], ה' שנית, פועה, לשון דבור, כי ה'
עולם הדבור

And understanding is also called Shifrah, which is the secret of the shofar, as is known.

וגם נקראת הבינה שפֶּרָה שהיא סוד השופר פנודע

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[NOTE Summary:

This maamar interprets the names שִׁפְרָה and פְּוָה not merely as historical figures, but as profound spiritual structures within the soul and within the Divine Name itself. “Shifrah” is explained as ה' אָהָה, the first ה' of the Divine Name, identified with בִּינָה. Binah is the source of תְּשׁוּבָה, repentance, because it refines, clarifies, and repairs. Just as Shifrah “improves the child,” so too repentance through binah improves the soul, which at its initial state is assumed to be sullied by sin and confusion. Through conscious return and understanding, the soul is reshaped and elevated.

The maamar then turns to פְּוָה, identified as ה' שְׁנִית, the second ה', corresponding to the world of speech. Puah is described as לְשׁוֹן דְּבִיר, expression and articulation. After repentance refines the inner state through binah, that refinement must descend into speech, communication, and outward expression. Speech is the bridge from inner transformation to lived reality.

The Maggid further deepens this by linking שִׁפְרָה to the שׁוֹפָר. The shofar is associated with binah, not with articulate speech but with a raw, simple cry that emerges from depth. This cry bypasses structured language and reaches directly upward, representing a level of repentance rooted not in explanation or justification, but in inner truth. Thus Shifrah encompasses both refinement and primal return, while Puah gives that inner work a voice in the world.

Together, Shifrah and Puah describe a complete spiritual process: inner repair through understanding and repentance, followed by externalization through speech. One without the other is incomplete. Inner insight without expression remains trapped within, while speech without inner refinement becomes hollow and ungrounded.

Practical Takeaway:

Real spiritual growth begins internally but must eventually shape how a person speaks and communicates. First comes Shifrah: honest reflection, repentance, and inner refinement. Only afterward should Puah emerge: speech that reflects the work done within. A person should ask not only, “Have I changed?” but also, “Does the way I speak show that change?” When inner understanding and outer expression are aligned, the soul becomes both refined and truthful.

Chassidic Story:

It is related about a disciple of the Maggid of Mezeritch that he once complained bitterly about his inability to articulate heartfelt prayer. He felt deep regret for his shortcomings and spent hours in silent reflection, yet when he opened his mouth to pray, the words felt empty and mechanical.

The Maggid told him to listen carefully during Rosh Hashanah. When the shofar was blown, the Maggid explained, no words were spoken, yet the cry pierced the heavens. “That sound,” he said, “comes from binah. It

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repairs what words cannot.” The Maggid then instructed him to spend time after the shofar reflecting quietly, allowing that inner stirring to settle, and only then to speak.

The student followed this guidance. Over time, his speech became slower, more deliberate, and more sincere. He later said that his prayers changed not because he learned better words, but because his inner understanding had been refined first. Only afterward did his speech find its proper place.

This story reflects the teaching of Shifrah and Puah. Inner refinement gives birth to authentic expression, and when repentance precedes speech, even simple words carry truth. **END NOTE]**

Siman #71

“A journey of three days we will go in the wilderness”
(Exodus 5:3). It is written: “Uncover my eyes and I will behold, etc.” (Psalms 119:18), and it is stated: “With the Torah the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world” (Zohar I, 134a).

דָּרַךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים גֵּלְיָה בְּמִדְבָּר (שמות ה':ג'). כְּתִיב גַּל עֵינַי וְאֶבְיטָהּ וְגו' (תהלים קי"ט:י"ח), וְאֵימָא בְּאוֹרֵייתָא בְּרָא קֳדָשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא עֲלָמָא (זוהר ח"א (קל"ד ע"א).

And not this world alone, but all the worlds, all of them were created through the letters of the Torah.

וְלֹא הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה בְּלֻבְדָּא, אֲלֵא כָּל הָעוֹלָמוֹת הַכֹּל בְּרָא בְּאוֹתֵיזוֹת הַתּוֹרָה.

And behold, it is impossible that in each portion of the Torah one portion of the worlds was created, since the Torah is primordial, and it is above time, and it is simple unity; divisions do not apply to it.

וְהִנֵּה זֶה אֵי אֶפְשָׁר שֶׁבְּכָל חֶלֶק מִן הַתּוֹרָה נִבְרָא חֶלֶק אֶחָד מִן הָעוֹלָמוֹת, כִּינֵן שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה [הִיא] קְדוּמָה וְהִיא לְמַעְלָה מִן הַזְּמַן וְהִיא אֶחָדוּת פְּשוּטָה, לֹא שִׁיךְ בָּהּ חֶלְקִים.

And behold, according to this it is necessary that in every portion of the Torah all of the Torah and all of the worlds are included within it, and likewise all is included in it, as mentioned;

וְהִנֵּה לְפִי זֶה מְכַרַח שֶׁבְּכָל חֶלֶק מִהַתּוֹרָה כְּלוּל בּוּ כָּל הַתּוֹרָה וְכָל הָעוֹלָמוֹת, וְכֵן כְּלוּל בָּהּ (הַכֹּל) לוֹ כִּנְזוּכָר.

but only particularity is revealed from it, while in concealment everything is included in it, just as we see only this world, and nevertheless we have a tradition that there are worlds without end.

אִךְ אֵין נִרְאָה מְמַנָּה רַק פְּרִטְיִוֹת, אֲבָל בְּהַעֲלָם כְּלוּל בָּהּ הַכֹּל, כְּמוֹ שֶׁאֵין אָנוּ רוֹאִים רַק עוֹלָם הַזֶּה, וְאִף עַל פִּי כֵן בְּאֵה לָנוּ הַקְּבָלָה שֶׁיֵּשׁ עוֹלָמוֹת לְאֵין קֵץ.

And likewise in every commandment, we see only the action, but everything is hidden within it, as mentioned. And this is: “Your commandment is exceedingly broad” (Psalms 119:96), that one commandment is exceedingly broad.

וְכֵן בְּכָל מִצְוָה אֵין אָנוּ רוֹאִים רַק הַעֲשִׂיָה, אֲבָל נֶעְלָם בָּהּ הַכֹּל כִּנְזוּכָר. וְזֶהוּ רַחְבָּה מְצִוְתָהּ [מְאֹד] (תהלים קי"ט:צ"ו), שֶׁמִּצְוָה אֶחָת רַחְבָּה הִיא מְאֹד.

And this is what is said: “Uncover my eyes and I will behold wonders from Your Torah” (Psalms 119:18), meaning those wondrous worlds that are concealed and hidden in Your Torah.

וְזֶהוּ שֶׁאֲמַר גַּל עֵינַי וְאֶבְיטָהּ נִפְלְאוֹת מִתּוֹרָתְךָ (תהלים קי"ט:י"ח), ר"ל אוֹתָם הָעוֹלָמוֹת הַמְּפְלְאִים וְהַמְּכֻסִּים בְּתוֹרָתְךָ.

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And this is: “With the Torah the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world,” meaning the Torah as it is with us; yet it enclothes itself in all the worlds according to what each is, and it itself does not change.

וְנִהוּ בְּאוֹרֵי־תֹא בְּרָא קֹדֶשׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא עֲלֵמָא, [ר"ל] הַתּוֹרָה כְּמוֹ שֶׁהִיא אֲצֻלָּנוּ, אֲדָּהּ הִיא מְתַלְבָּשֶׁת בְּכָל הָעוֹלָמוֹת כְּפִי מַה שֶׁהִיא, וְהִיא בְּעֶצְמָהּ אֵינָה מִשְׁתַּנֶּה.

And this is that the Patriarchs learned Torah, and Noah learned Torah, meaning that they grasped the Torah as it is, even though at that time it had not yet enclothed itself in the garment that it has with us, which is like a sheath for the Torah itself, as it were [variant: etc.].

וְנִהוּ שֶׁהֶאֱבֹת לְמַדוּ תּוֹרָה, וְנִחַ לְמַד תּוֹרָה, הִנְנוּ שֶׁהִשְׁיֵגוּ הַתּוֹרָה כְּפִי מַה שֶׁהִיא, הַגַּם שֶׁעַד־יָן לֹא נִתְלַבְּשָׁה בְּעֵת הַהִיא בְּלְבוּשׁ שֶׁהוּא אֲצֻלָּנוּ, שֶׁהוּא [כַּנְּרַתִּיק אֶל הַתּוֹרָה עֲצָמָה כְּבִיכּוֹל [נ"א: וְכו']

And this is: in the future to come the Holy One, blessed be He, will take the sun out of its sheath, meaning that they will grasp it as it is, without garment.

וְנִהוּ לְעֵתִיד לְבֹא יוֹצִיא הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא חֲמָה מִבְּנִרְתִּיקָהּ, דְּהִנְנוּ שֶׁיִּשְׁיֵגוּ אוֹתָהּ כְּמוֹ שֶׁהִיא בְּלִי לְבוּשׁ.

For now they were not able to bear its brightness by itself, and not every mind can endure this, but only the righteous who are divested of physicality can grasp it, each and every one according to his divestment from physicality.

לְפִי שֶׁעַכְשֵׁיו לֹא הָיוּ יְכוּלִים לְסַבֵּל בְּהִירְתָּהּ בְּפָנֵי עֲצָמָה, וְלֹא כָּל מוֹחָא סְבִיל דָּא, כִּי אִם הַצְּדִיקִים הַמְּפֹשְׁטִים מִגִּשְׁמִיּוֹת יְכוּלִים לְהִשְׁיֵגָהּ כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד לְפִי הַתְּפֹשְׁטוֹתוֹ מִגִּשְׁמִיּוֹת.

By way of analogy: if he is divested only from this world, he can grasp according to how it is in a more elevated world, and likewise without end.

עַל דֶּרֶךְ מִשָּׁל אִם הוּא מְפֹשֵׁט מֵעוֹלָם הֵנָּה בְּלִבְדּוֹ יְכוּל לְהִשְׁיֵג כְּפִי מַה שֶׁהוּא בְּעוֹלָם יוֹתֵר עֲלִיוֹן, וְכֵן עַד אֵין קֵץ,

The more he binds himself to a higher world, so [variant: in it] his grasp spreads, and he is not so contracted; and the more he distances himself from his root, there the Torah is more contracted,

כָּל מַה שֶׁמְדַבֵּק עֲצָמוֹ אֶל עוֹלָם יוֹתֵר עֲלִיוֹן כֵּן [נ"א: בּו] תִּתְפַּשֵּׁט הַשְּׂגָתוֹ וְאֵינּוּ מְצוּמָצָם כָּל כּוֹ, וְכָל מַה שֶׁמְתַרְחֵק יוֹתֵר מִשְׁרָשׁוֹ שֶׁם הַתּוֹרָה יוֹתֵר מְצוּמָצָמָת

until he comes to this world, in which everything is in absolute contraction, to the point that there is almost no commandment that does not have measures and limits.

עַד שֶׁבָּא לְעוֹלָם הֵנָּה שָׁבוּ הַכָּל בְּצַמְצוּם גָּמוּר, עַד שֶׁכִּמְעַט אֵין לָהּ מִצְוָה שֶׁאֵין בָּהּ מִדּוֹת וְשַׁעוּרִין.

And this is that the Holy One, blessed be He, contracts Himself and dwells in this world through the Torah and the commandments that are here in contraction and measures.

וְנִהוּ שֶׁהַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְצַמְצָם עֲצָמוֹ וְשׁוֹרָה בְּעוֹלָם הֵנָּה עַל יְדֵי הַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוֹת שֶׁהֵם כָּאֵן בְּצַמְצוּם וְשַׁעוּרִים.

And this is: “Known in the gates is her husband,” in his measures (Psalms 31:24).

וְנִהוּ נוֹדֵעַ בְּשַׁעְרִים בְּעֵלָה, בְּשַׁעוּרֵין דִּילֵיהּ (תהלים (ל"א:כ"ד).

And one who merits and sees higher worlds while performing the commandments, meaning that he is divested of physicality, each according to his level, has greater delight,

וְמִי שֶׁזוֹכֶה וְרוֹאֶה עוֹלָמוֹת עֲלִיוֹנִים בְּעֵת עֲשׂוֹתוֹ הַמִּצְוֹת, דְּהִנְנוּ שֶׁהוּא מְפֹשֵׁט מִן הַגִּשְׁמִיּוֹת, כָּל אֶחָד לְפִי מִדְּרָגָתוֹ, יֵשׁ לוֹ יוֹתֵר תַּעֲנוּג

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because the more elevated it is, the broader it is, and it is not in contraction as it is here.

לפי שכל מה שיהיה יותר עליון הוא יותר רחב, ואינו
בצמצום כמו כאן.

And this is “the reward of a commandment is a commandment,” meaning that the reward of the commandment that one performs in this world is in that very commandment itself in the upper world,

וזהו שכר מצוה [מצוה], ר"ל שהשכר של המצוה
שעושים בעולם הזה הוא [נ"א: ר"ל שבשכר המצוה
שעושים בעולם הזה, השכר הוא] באותה מצוה,
עצמה בעולם העליון,

and there he has delight from it, because here he has no delight from it, since it is in contraction and garment, as mentioned.

ושם יש לו תענוג ממנה, לפי שכאן אין לו תענוג
ממנה מפני שהיא בצמצום ובכבוש כנזכר.

And this is: “For the Lord God is a sun and a shield” (Psalms 84:12), meaning that the sun is surrounded by the element of water,

וזהו כי שמש ומגן ה' אלקים (תהלים פ"ד: י"ב),
דהיינו כי השמש מסבב אותו יסוד המים

and this is as a shield and a sheath for the sun [variant: meaning that the sun is within the shield and sheath],

וזהו למגן ולנרתיק לשמש (נ"א: דהיינו שהשמש הוא
[בתוך המגן ונרתיק

for the world would not be able to bear the brightness and heat of the sun. Therefore it has the element of water as a shield and sheath [variant: therefore it is clothed within a shield and sheath].

לפי שהעולם לא היה יכולין לסבל הבהירות והחם
של השמש. על כן היה לו יסוד של מים למגן
ולנרתיק (נ"א: על כן הוא מלוכש בתוך מגן
[ונרתיק].

And this is in this world. But one who is divested of physicality and binds himself to higher worlds, then he sees there that the Lord God is, as it were, a sun and a shield, as mentioned above.

וזהו בעולם הזה. אבל מי שיהיה מפשט מן הגשמיות
ומקושר עצמו לעולמות עליונים, אז רואה שם שה'
אלקים [נ"א: אז רואה שפככול שם ה' אלקים] הוא
כפככול שמש ומגן, כנזכר לעיל [נ"א: במקום אחר]
באריכות.

And this is: “In the future it will be said: the sun will no longer be for you for light by day, and the Lord will be for you an everlasting light” (Isaiah 60:19), and this is sufficient for the discerning.

וזהו לעתיד לבא נאמר לא יהיה לך השמש לאור
יומם והיה לך ה' לאור וגו' (ישעיהו ס': י"ט) ודי
למבין.

And let us return to the matter: that the Torah and the commandments, which are contracted in this world, are themselves commanded in the upper worlds, only with greater expansiveness, since they are closer to their root.

ונחזור אל הענין שהתורה והמצוות שהם מצומצמים
בעולם הזה הם בעצמם מצוים בעולמות עליונים, רק
ביותר התרחבות באשר שהיא קרובה לשרשה.

Therefore every person must intend, at the time of performing the commandment, in action, speech, and thought, for through this he elevates the commandments and divests them of their physicality,

על כן צריך כל אדם לכוון בעת עשיית המצוה במעשה
ודבור ומחשבה, כי כזה מעלה את המצוות ומפשיט
אותן מגשמיותן

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and brings them closer to their root and unifies them [variant: and their unification] in the upper worlds; and understand this.

וּמְקַרְבֵי אוֹתָן אֶל שְׂרָשׁוֹן וּמְיַחְדָּן [נ"א: וְיַחְוֶדָן] בְּעוֹלָמוֹת עֲלִיּוֹנִים, וְהִבְנֵן.

And the essential element is the delight at the time of performing it. And this is seen tangibly, for delight is what connects two things;

וְהַעֲיָקָר הוּא הַתַּעֲנוּג בְּעֵת עֲשִׂיתָהּ. וְנִרְאָה זֶה בְּחוּשׁ, כִּי הַתַּעֲנוּג הוּא הַמְחַבֵּר שְׁנֵי דְבָרִים,

for example, male and female, that which connects them is delight. Therefore every person who performs the commandment in speech and action and thought,

לְמִשְׁלַל דְּבָר וְנוֹקְבָא הַמְחַבֵּרֵם הוּא הַתַּעֲנוּג. עַל כֵּן כָּל אִישׁ שֶׁיַּעֲשֶׂה לְזוֹ הַמִּצְוָה בְּדַבּוּר וּבְמַעֲשֵׂה וּבְמַחְשָׁבָה

and above all of them is the delight that connects them. And through this he binds all the worlds to the Holy One, blessed be He.

וְעֲלִיוֹן עַל הַכֹּל הוּא הַתַּעֲנוּג הַמְחַבֵּרֵם. וּבְזֶה הוּא מְקוּשֵׁר כָּל הָעוֹלָמוֹת לְקְדוּשַׁת בְּרוּךְ הוּא.

And there is no commandment that is not included from the entire Torah, as mentioned, for it is simple unity, but it is contracted.

וְאִין לָהּ כָּל מִצְוָה שְׂאִינָה כְּלוּלָה מִכָּל הַתּוֹרָה כְּנִזְכָּר, כִּי הִיא אֶחָדוּת פְּשוּטָה, אַךְ שֶׁהִיא מְצוּמָצֶמֶת

But when one divests it of its physicality it is exceedingly broad and includes everything, and is greater than a world and its fullness.

אֲבָל כְּשֶׁמְפַשְׁטֶהּ מִגִּשְׁמִיּוּתָהּ הִיא רְחֵבָה מְאֹד וְכְלוּלָה מֵהַכֹּל, וְגְדוּלָה יוֹתֵר מֵעוֹלָם וּמְלוֹאוֹ.

And this is what is said: “Your commandment is exceedingly broad” (Psalms 119:96), for he was seeing it in the upper worlds.

וְזֶהוּ שֶׁאָמַר רְחֵבָה מְצוּמָצֶמֶת מְאֹד (תהלים קי"ט:צ"ו), שֶׁהִיָּה רוֹאֶה אוֹתָהּ בְּעוֹלָמוֹת עֲלִיּוֹנִים

And this is what our Sages of blessed memory said: David came and did not explain it, meaning that he said generally “Your commandment is exceedingly broad,” without measure.

וְזֶהוּ מֵה שֶׁאָמְרוּ רַז"ל בָּא זוּד וְלֹא פִרְשָׁה, הִיָּנוּ שֶׁאָמַר סֵתֵם רְחֵבָה מְצוּמָצֶמֶת כְּלֵי שְׁעוֹר

Ezekiel came and did not explain it: “And behold, a flying scroll, written lamentations and mourning and woe” (Ezekiel 2:10),

בָּא יַחְזַקְאֵל וְלֹא פִרְשָׁה, וְהִנֵּה מְגֵלָה עֹפֶה כְּתוּבָה (קִינִים וְהִגָּה וְהִי יַחְזַקְאֵל ב'י')

meaning that he saw the sufferings of the righteous in this world, that is, [that he saw them together with the commandments in this world, which are all contracted with measures, and he saw their delight in the World to Come,

דְּהִיָּנוּ שֶׁרְאָה וְסוּרִים שֶׁל צְדִיקִים בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, רַז"ל [שֶׁרְאָה אוֹתָם עִם הַמִּצְוֹת בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה שֶׁהֵם כְּלֵם מְצוּמָצֶמִים בְּשְׁעוּרֵין, וְרְאָה הַתַּעֲנוּג שֶׁלָּהֶם בְּעוֹלָם הַבָּא,

meaning that he saw those very commandments themselves, but he saw them in the upper worlds, where they are the great delight without contraction, close to their root, broad and inclusive as mentioned.

רַז"ל שֶׁרְאָה] אוֹתָן הַמִּצְוֹת עֲצֻמָּן, אֲבָל רְאָה אוֹתָן בְּעוֹלָמוֹת עֲלִיּוֹנִים שֶׁהֵם הַתַּעֲנוּג הַגְּדוֹל כְּלֵי צְמֻצִים קְרוּבִים לְשְׂרָשָׁם וְרְחִיבִים וְכְלוּלִים כְּנִזְכָּר

And afterward Zechariah came and explained it: “A flying scroll, etc.” (Zechariah 5:1),

וְאַחַר כֵּן בָּא זְכַרְיָה וּפְרָשָׁה, מְגֵלָה עֹפֶה וְגו' (זכריה ה':א'),

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because Zechariah was at the beginning of the Second Temple, which is letters in the world of speech, and five things were lacking, as is known, and speech is also contracted;

לפי שזכריה היה בתחלת בית שני שהוא אותיות שבעולם הדבור, והיו חסרים ה' דברים פגועים, ובדבור הוא גם כן מצומצם, פגוע,

therefore he saw it with measures.

על כן ראה אותה בשעורין.

And let us return to the matter, that the commandment must be performed in speech and action and thought and delight (meaning that one must draw himself into great attachment until he reaches delight).

ונחזור אל הענין כי המצוה צריכה לעשותה בדבור ובמעשה ובמחשבה ותענוג (דהינו שצריך להמשיך עצמו לדבקות [גדול] עד שמגיע לתענוג) ל"ט.

Behold, when the Torah was given at Sinai, it was given in speech, and as we see, and certainly [variant: certainly] it must have had thought there, for speech is drawn from thought; it follows that the Torah was given in speech and in thought.

הנה קשנתנה תורה בסיני נתנה בדבור, וכמו שאנו רואים ובודאי [נ"א: בודאי] מכרח להיות שם מחשבה, כי הדבור נמשך מן המחשבה, נמצא שהתורה נתנה בדבור ובמחשבה.

But the action is in our hands: when we perform the commandments in action, then we unify the action of the commandment, which is the world of action, with the speech and the thought, which are the worlds of formation and creation.

אבל המעשה הוא בידנו, כשאנו עושים המצות במעשה אז אנו מחדדים מעשה המצוה שהיא עולם העשייה עם הדבור והמחשבה שהם עולם היצירה והבריאה.

And this is: "on the day of his wedding," this is the giving of the Torah (Song of Songs 3:11). Seemingly, what wedding was there?

וזהו כיום חתונתו זה מתן תורה (שיר השירים ג' י"א). ולכאורה איזה חתונה היה שם?

But the matter is as it is written, that there was a true unification, for the world of action had an ascent and was unified with the world of hearing,

אבל הענין הוא כמו שכתוב שהיה יחוד באמת, כי עולם העשייה היה לו עליה ונתחדד לעולם השמיעה,

when it [variant: which] is a vessel prepared for the world of speech, meaning to receive the speech, together with the action, and through this the world of action was unified with the upper worlds.

כשהיא [נ"א: שהוא] כלי מוכן לעולם הדבור, דהינו לקבל הדבור) עם המעשה ובזה (ניחד) [נתחדד] עולם העשייה לעולמות עליונים.

And this is: "A journey of three days we will go in the wilderness" (Exodus 5:3), meaning the three worlds we will go through in the receiving of the Torah, which was given in speech, as mentioned; and understand this.

וזהו דרך שלשת ימים גלף במדבר (שמות ה' ג'), דהינו שלשת עולמות גלף בקבלת התורה שנתנה בדבור פגוע והבן.

[NOTE Summary:

This maamar unfolds a far-reaching vision of Torah and mitzvot as expressions of absolute unity that appear limited only because of the world in which they are revealed. The Maggid begins by establishing that the Torah preceded time and is simple unity, without parts or divisions. Therefore, it is impossible to say that only one portion of creation corresponds to one portion of Torah. Rather, every part of Torah contains all of Torah, and

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within it all worlds are included. What appears to us as a specific law, verse, or commandment is only a revealed פרטיות, while in concealment it contains infinite expansiveness.

This principle explains the verse “Uncover my eyes and I will behold wonders from Your Torah” (Psalms 119:18). The wonders are not additions to the Torah but the concealed worlds already present within it. Likewise, “With the Torah the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world” teaches that the Torah as we have it is the same Torah that animates all worlds. It merely clothes itself differently in each realm, while its essence never changes. This is why the Patriarchs and even Noah could learn Torah before Sinai. They grasped the Torah as it exists in its essence, prior to its being clothed in the concrete forms familiar to us.

The Maggid then explains the concept of “the sun emerging from its sheath” in the future. At present, divine light is clothed so that creation can endure it, since not every mind can bear unfiltered radiance. Only those who divest themselves of physicality can perceive higher levels, each according to their refinement. The closer a person is to the root, the broader and less constricted their perception of Torah becomes. Conversely, the further Torah descends, the more it appears bound by measures and limits, until in this world nearly every mitzvah has precise quantities and definitions. This contraction is not a flaw but the means by which God dwells within the world through Torah and mitzvot.

The Maggid deepens this by teaching that the reward of a mitzvah is the mitzvah itself. In this world, mitzvot are constricted and often lack palpable delight. In the upper worlds, the very same mitzvot appear in their expansive form, close to their source, where they are pure delight without limitation. This explains the progression among the prophets. David declared “Your commandment is exceedingly broad” without defining its scope. Ezekiel saw the same mitzvot together with suffering, because he perceived them as they appear in this world, bound to limitation and pain. Zechariah, living at the beginning of the Second Temple, perceived them already within defined measures, because he stood in the realm of speech, itself a constricted mode of revelation.

Returning to practical avodah, the Maggid teaches that a mitzvah must be performed with action, speech, thought, and delight. At Sinai, the Torah was given through speech, which necessarily emerged from thought. Action, however, was entrusted to human beings. When a person performs a mitzvah in action while uniting it with speech and thought, they unite the world of action with the worlds of formation and creation. This is the inner meaning of “on the day of his wedding,” referring to the giving of the Torah. Sinai was a true union, where the lowest world ascended and bonded with higher worlds. This is also the meaning of “a journey of three days we will go in the wilderness,” an allusion to traversing and uniting the three worlds through receiving the Torah.

Practical Takeaway:

A mitzvah is never small. Even the most technical act contains infinite depth. One should strive to perform mitzvot not mechanically, but with awareness in thought, articulation in speech, commitment in action, and, above all, inner delight. Delight is the force that binds all levels together. When a person brings joy and inner

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connection into their mitzvot, they strip away the outer concealment and allow the mitzvah to reconnect with its source. In doing so, they unify worlds and transform finite actions into vessels for the infinite.

Chassidic Story:

It is recorded about a disciple of the Maggid of Mezeritch that he once complained that his mitzvot felt dry and technical. He followed every detail carefully, yet felt no inner vitality. The Maggid asked him how he sharpened his knife before slaughtering a chicken for Shabbat. The student replied that he inspected it carefully, slowly, and with full attention, because a small flaw would invalidate the entire act.

The Maggid responded, "If you are so careful with the vessel for the mitzvah, how much more so must you refine the vessel of your heart." He explained that the mitzvah itself was whole and infinite, but the student was encountering it only in its most constricted form. The Maggid instructed him to pause before each mitzvah, recall that it connects him to all worlds, and allow himself to feel gratitude for being commanded.

Months later, the student testified that nothing in his external practice had changed, yet everything felt different. The same acts now carried warmth and joy. He said that it felt as though the mitzvah itself had expanded. The Maggid smiled and said, "It did not expand. You rose closer to its root." **END NOTE]**

Siman #72

"And God knew." Rashi explains: He set His heart to contemplate (Exodus 2:25).

וַיֵּדַע אֱלֹהִים, פֶּרַשׁ רִשְׁוִי נָתַן לֵב לְהִתְבּוֹנֵן (שמות
ב' כ"ה).

Meaning that, as it were, He brought thought into revelation.

פִּי שֶׁהֵבִיא כְּכִיכּוֹל אֶת הַמַּחְשְׁבָה לְהַגְלוֹת.

And this is called the world of freedom, and "all the workers of iniquity were scattered" (Psalms 92:10).

וְהוּא נִקְרָא עֲלֵמָא דְחִירוֹת וַיִּתְפָּרְדּוּ כָּל פּוֹעְלֵי אֲוֶן
(תהלים צ"ב:י).

And therefore they went out before their time, because all the shells fell.

וּלְפִיכָד יֵצְאוּ קִדְמָם וְזַמְנָם, כִּי נָפְלוּ כָּל הַקְּלָפוֹת.

[NOTE Summary:

This maamar focuses on the verse "And God knew" and Rashi's explanation that God "set His heart to contemplate" (Exodus 2:25). The Maggid explains that this knowing is not mere awareness, but an active turning of divine attention. It means that God, as it were, brought thought out of concealment into revelation. Until that point, redemption existed only in hidden thought. When "God knew," the concealed intention became revealed consciousness, initiating actual liberation.

This state is called *alma de'cheirut*, the world of freedom. Freedom here does not mean political release alone, but the breaking of all inner and outer constraints. When divine thought emerges into revelation, separation and distortion cannot survive. This is why the verse states "all the workers of iniquity were scattered" (Psalms 92:10). The forces of concealment, confusion, and opposition cannot remain once divine clarity is revealed.

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Because this revelation shattered all spiritual barriers, Israel left Egypt before the predetermined time. Redemption was accelerated not by gradual merit alone, but by a decisive collapse of the forces that sustained exile. Once the klipot fell, exile could no longer continue, even for a moment. The timing of redemption was overridden by the revelation of divine thought itself.

Thus, “And God knew” marks the turning point where hidden intention becomes manifest reality. Freedom begins not with external movement, but with revealed awareness. When the root shifts, the branches fall automatically.

Practical Takeaway:

True freedom begins with clarity. As long as a person’s higher purpose remains only a vague thought, inner obstacles retain their power. When one brings intention into conscious focus and commits to it fully, many internal barriers dissolve on their own. Change does not always require prolonged struggle; sometimes it requires a decisive moment of awareness. When clarity replaces confusion, unhealthy patterns lose their grip, and movement becomes inevitable.

END NOTE]