

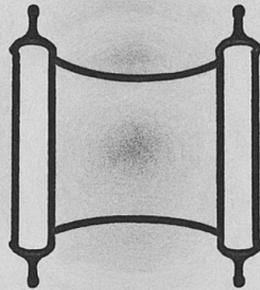
בס"ד

**Alter Rebbe**

**Torah Ohr**

**Parshas Terumah**

**ביאור לענין הכרובים**



*Dedicated To:*

**אילנה דבורה בת שרה מרים**

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Honor of the holiness of our master, teacher, and Rebbe, his soul in Eden.

כבוד קדושת אדמו"ר נשמתו ע"ן

**An explanation regarding the matter of the cherubim.** When the Nukva, which is Kneset Yisrael, stands face to face with Zeir Anpin in equality of stature, and also receives the mochin of Abba and Imma and one crown for both of them,

**ביאור לענין הכרובים** כשהנוקבא היא כנסת ישראל עומדת פנים בפנים עם זעיר אנפין ושיוון בקומתו ומקבלת גם כן המוחין דאבא ואמא וכתר אחד לשניהם.

then they are called brothers, and this was through the receiving of the Torah, which issues from Chochmah and Binah, face to face. And behold, in Atzilut they are called the great Man and great countenances, for the Infinite Light is en clothed also in the vessels, and therefore He and His vessels are one.

אז נקראים אחים וזה היה על ידי קבלת התורה (דנקבא מחכמה ובינה) פנים בפנים. והנה באצילות נקראים אדם הגדול ואנפי רכרבי להיות אור אין סוף מלובש גם בכלים ולזאת איהו וגרמוהי חד.

And through the Mishkan and the Beit HaMikdash, when He constricted His Shechinah between the poles of the Ark in Asiyah, then Zeir Anpin and Nukva are called small countenances in the Gemara, and they are the cherubim themselves. And since the world of Asiyah ascends to Atzilut three times every day,

ועל ידי המשכן ובית המקדש שצמצם שכניתו מבין בדי ארון בעשיה אז נקראים זון אנפי זוטרי בגמרא והן הן הכרובים. ולפי שעולם העשיה עולה לאצילות ג' פעמים בכל יום.

therefore the cherubim have wings spread upward to fly to Atzilut. And it is known that Zeir Anpin is the ultimate descent of the Infinite Light from above to below in order afterward to illuminate to Beriah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah through the Nukva, which is the lower mother, which is the source of Beriah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah within Atzilut.

לכן יש לכרובים כנפים פרושות למעלה לעופף לאצילות. ונודע שהזעיר אנפין הוא תכלית ירידת אור אין סוף מלמעלה למטה בכדי להאיר אחר כך לכריאה יצירה עשיה על ידי הנוקבא שהיא אמא תתאה שהיא מקור בריאה יצירה עשיה שבאצילות.

Therefore it is written: "One cherub from this end" (Exodus 25:19) this is the extremity of the Infinite Light in Zeir Anpin; "and one cherub from that end" (Exodus 25:19) this is the source of Beriah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah and their root in Atzilut, in which also the Infinite Light is en clothed through the mochin of Abba and Imma that are given into the head of the Nukva through Zeir Anpin her husband by way of passage only,

לכן פתיב כרוב אחד מקצה מזה הוא קצה אור אין סוף שבזעיר אנפין וכרוב אחד מקצה מזה הוא מקור בריאה יצירה עשיה ושרשם שבאצילות שמתלבש בהם גם כן אור אין סוף על ידי המוחין דאבא ואמא הנותנים בראש הנוקבא על ידי זעיר אנפין בעלה דרך מעבר בלבד.

and not by way of actual en clothement as it is at a time when she is not equal in stature with him but only from the chest and below, as is known. And the cherubim are made of one piece from the kaporet, which is the aspect of crown for both of them

ולא בדרך התלבשות ממש כמו שהוא בזמן שאינה שונה בקומתה עמו רק מהתנהגותה ולמטה כנודע. והכרובים נעשים מקשה אחת מן הכפרת שהיא

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and also an encompassing aspect over the tablets that are in the Ark,

בחינת קתר לשניהם וגם בחינת מקיף על הלחות  
 לשבארון.

which are the aspect of Yesod of Abba that were enclothed in Asiyah at the time of the Mishkan and the Temple; and at the time of the ascent of the cherubim they elevate also the kaporet and the tablets to Atzilut. Therefore it is written: “covering with their wings over the kaporet” (Exodus 25:20),

שהן בחינת יסוד אבא שנתלבשו בעשיה בזמן  
 המשכן והמקדש ובזמן עלית הכרובים הם מעלים  
 גם הכפרת והלחות לאצילות לכן כתיב סככים  
 בכנפיהם על הכפרת.

that the kaporet ascends with them. And after the destruction, Zeir Anpin and Nukva of Atzilut were withdrawn to their place and did not return to be enclothed again in physical Asiyah even in the Second Temple, for the cherubim were hidden away; rather only in the inward aspect of the worlds through the occupation in Torah of the Tannaim in the days of the Second Temple and after it in halachot,

שהכפרת עולה עמם ואחר החורבן נסתלקו זון  
 שבאצילות למקומם ולא חזרו להתלבש עוד בעשיה  
 גשמית אף בבית שני כי נגנזו הכרובים אלא רק  
 בחינת פנימית העולמות על ידי עסק התורה של  
 התנאים שבימי בית שני ואחריו בהלכות.

which are the inwardness of the Supernal Will that was not revealed in Supernal Wisdom, which is the Written Torah. And as is known from what is written: “A woman of valor is the crown of her husband” (Proverbs 12:4).

שהן פנימית רצונו העליון שלא נתגלה בהכמה  
 עלאה הוא תורה שבכתב וכנודע ממה שכתוב אשת  
 חיל עטרת בעלה (משלי י"ב:ד).

**[NOTE Summary:**

In this maamar, the Alter Rebbe explains the inner meaning of the כרובים as expressions of the dynamic relationship between זעיר אנפין and בוקבא, identified with the Holy One, blessed be He, and כנסת ישראל. When Nukva stands פנים בפנים with Zeir Anpin in equal stature and receives the mochin of Abba and Imma with one shared crown, they are called “brothers.” This state was revealed at מתן תורה, which emerges from חכמה and בינה, creating a complete פנים בפנים union.

In the world of אצילות, this unity is described as אדם הגדול and אנפי רברבי, because the אור אין סוף is enclothed within the vessels, and therefore “איהו וגרמוהי חד” – He and His vessels are one. However, when the Shechinah descends and is constricted between the poles of the Ark in the Mishkan and the Beit HaMikdash, this sublime unity becomes expressed in a diminished mode within עשיה. There they are termed זוטרי and are symbolized physically by the כרובים atop the כפורה.

The cherubim possess wings spread upward because the world of עשיה ascends to אצילות three times daily; thus they represent perpetual ascent. One כרוב “from one end” alludes to the extremity of אור אין סוף as it concludes within זעיר אנפין, while the other corresponds to the source of עשיה יצירה בריאה rooted in אצילות. The flow of

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mochin from אבא ואמא enters Nukva through Zeir Anpin in a mode of מעבר, not full התלבשות, reflecting differing spiritual states depending on whether Nukva is equal in stature or only from the chest downward.

The כרובים are formed as one piece with the כפורת, which represents כתר for both and serves as a makif over the לוחות in the Ark. The לוחות embody אבא יסוד as it descended into עשיה during the Temple era. When the cherubim ascend, they elevate even the כפורת and לוחות back toward אצילות, as hinted by “סוככים בכנפיהם על” (הכפורת) (שמות כה:כ).

After the destruction of the First Temple, זעיר אנפין and נוקבא of אצילות withdrew and no longer became encloded in physical עשיה, even in the Second Temple, for the cherubim were hidden. Yet their inner reality persisted in the פנימיות of the worlds through Torah study. In particular, the הלכות of the תנאים express פנימיות תורה שבכתב as חכמה עילאה revealed in רצון העליון, a dimension deeper than what is revealed in עילאה as תורה שבכתב. This is alluded to in “אשת חיל” (משלי יב:ד): the feminine principle crowns and completes the masculine, signifying the elevation of Nukva to a supernal crown through פנימיות התורה.

Thus the physical cherubim were but the outer garment of an ongoing cosmic process: the ascent and union of Divine attributes, the elevation of worlds, and the transformation of exile into a concealed yet inwardly intensified union achieved through Torah.

**Practical Takeaway:**

The maamar teaches that revelation is not limited to visible holiness. When the Temple stood, Divine unity was manifest in physical symbols. After destruction, that unity did not vanish; it shifted inward. Today, the ascent of worlds occurs through immersion in Torah, especially halachah, which embodies the inner will of the Divine. Even when outward structures fall, the פנימיות remains accessible. Our task is to create פנים בפנים connection through study, prayer, and alignment of will, thereby restoring the inner crown of union between the Divine and the Jewish soul.

**Chassidic Story:**

It is recorded that during times of persecution when the physical splendor of Jewish life was broken, the Alter Rebbe intensified his emphasis on learning practical halachah. Once, a chassid lamented before him that without the Temple and without open miracles, how can one feel closeness? The Alter Rebbe responded that when a Jew opens a Gemara and clarifies a halachic detail with precision, he is entering the Holy of Holies. There, in the inward dimension of Torah, the cherubim still face one another. The visible wings may be hidden, but in the world of פנימיות, they continue to ascend and unite.

**Therapeutic Psychological Integration**

**When the Wings Disappear**

The Alter Rebbe's teaching about the כרובים is not just cosmology. It is a map of the human psyche.

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There are moments in life when everything feels face-to-face. Alignment. Clarity. You feel integrated. Your thoughts, emotions, and actions stand in equality of stature. Nothing is fragmented. That is the state of פנים בפנים. In Kabbalistic language, זעיר אנפין and נוקבא are equal and receive one crown.

Psychologically, this is coherence.

You know who you are.

You know what you value.

You act accordingly.

Then life shifts.

The Shechinah “descends into Asiyah.” The light constricts. The unity that once felt expansive now feels small. What was אנפי רברבי becomes אנפי זוטרי. The great face becomes the small face.

In emotional language: your higher vision becomes trapped in daily survival.

And here is the radical insight: the cherubim still have wings.

Even when the Divine presence is constricted between the poles of the Ark, even when you feel boxed in by circumstances, the wings are spread upward. Because ascent is built into the structure.

Every day, three times a day, the world of action rises.

Every day, three times a day, you rise.

When you pause for prayer.

When you learn.

When you realign your intention.

You may not feel like אדם הגדול, but your wings are still designed for Atzilut.

**After the Destruction**

The Alter Rebbe makes an even deeper psychological point.

After the Temple was destroyed, the cherubim were hidden. The visible symbol of intimacy was gone. But the פנימיות did not disappear. It moved inward into Torah, into halachah, into the precise alignment of will.

Externally: exile.

Internally: intensified union.

This is a trauma model.

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Sometimes after a rupture, the relationship looks broken. The physical structure is gone. But internally, something deeper is forged. If you work through it consciously, the bond becomes less dramatic and more integrated.

The feminine crowns the masculine. “אשת חיל עטרת בעלה.”

The receptive dimension becomes the crown.

Emotion becomes the crown of intellect.

Embodiment becomes the crown of insight.

Practice becomes the crown of inspiration.

You stop chasing light and start building vessels.

That is mature spirituality.

**A Contemporary Story**

A man once described to me how in his early twenties he felt spiritually on fire. He prayed with intensity, learned mystical texts, felt expansive love. Then life happened. Marriage. Children. Bills. Career stress. Fatigue.

He thought he had lost the light.

Years later he told me, “I don’t feel like I used to. But every night, no matter what, I sit and learn halachah for twenty minutes. Quietly. Consistently.”

I asked him what that felt like.

He said, “It’s not dramatic. It’s steady. It feels like something deep is being built.”

That is the hidden cherubim.

The wings are not always visible. But when you choose alignment over impulse, consistency over intensity, and inner coherence over external display, the worlds ascend.

The Alter Rebbe is telling us: Greatness is not when you feel like heaven.

Greatness is when you build heaven inside the ordinary.

And even when the Temple seems destroyed, the cherubim are still facing each other.

**END NOTE]**