

#### The Maharal of Prague

The Splendor of Israel - תפארת ישראל Chapter Thirteen - פֵּרֵק שִׁלשָׁה עָשֶׂר

גַם הַמַּלְבּוּשׁ שֶׁל תּוֹרָה קְשׁוּר לַמַּעֲלָה הַגְּבוֹהָה בְּיוֹתֵר Also the garment of Torah is connected to the most elevated level.

#### Introduction

This discourse, authored by the *Maharal of Prague* (Rabbi Yehuda Loew ben Betzalel, 1520–1609), one of the most prominent Torah scholars and mystics of the late 16th century, explores the metaphysical essence of mitzvah observance and Torah study. The Maharal served as a rabbi in Prague and other communities and is renowned for his deep philosophical works such as *Netiv HaTorah*, *Tiferet Yisrael*, and *Gevurot Hashem*. He is also associated with the famous legend of the Golem of Prague, though his lasting legacy is in his systematic, symbolic approach to Jewish thought. In this discourse, he leads the reader into the inner world of mitzvos—not as mere commandments but as vehicles of spiritual purification, culminating in true *deveikus* (cleaving to G-d). The progression of ideas moves from the foundational necessity of Torah, to the transformative power of halachah, and finally to a passionate call to follow the path of our spiritual ancestors in meticulous observance and study.

In this chapter we will explain to you, that those who thought that the superiority of the external sciences over the Torah lies in that the external sciences investigate important things like the spheres, and they are found to be important.	בְּזֶה הַפֶּרֶק נְבָאֵר לְךָ, כִּי אוֹתָם שֶׁחָשְׁבוּ כִּי יִתְרוֹן הַחָּכְמוֹת הַחִיצוֹנִיּוֹת עַל הַתּוֹרָה, בַּמָּה שֶׁהַחָּכְמוֹת הַחִיצוֹנִיּוֹת מְעַיְנוֹת בַּדְּבָרִים הַחֲשׁוּבִים כְּמוֹ הַגַּלְגַּלִים, וְהֵם נִמְצָאִים הַחֲשׁוּבִים
And the words of Torah, however, investigate low and inferior matters—and therefore they thought that success lies in the comprehension of important existences.	וְאָלּוּ דָּבְרֵי תּוֹרָה מְעַיֶּנֶת בַּדְּבָרִים הַשְּׁפָלִים הַפְּחוּתִים, וּלְפִיכָךְ חָשְׁבוּ כִּי הַהַצְלָחָה הִיא בְּהַשָּׁגַת הַנִּמְצָאִים הַחֲשׁוּבִים.
But we have already said (above Chapter 11) that what they see as important and valuable is not so.	וּכְבָר אָמַרְנוּ (לְעֵיל פָּרֶק י״א) כִּי מַה שֶׁחָשׁוּב בְּעֵינֵיהֶם וּבְדַעְתָּם אֵינוֹ כָּךְ,
Rather, the true importance is Torah—being the decrees of Hashem, blessed be He—upright and clear, as we have elaborated.	אֲבָל הַחֲשִׁיבוּת הִיא הַתּוֹרָה, בַּמֶה שֶׁהִיא גְזֵרוֹת הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ הַיְשָׁרִים וְהַבְּרוּרִים, כְּמוֹ שֶׁהָאֲרַכְנוּ.
And in this chapter we will further clarify.	וּבְזֶה הַפֶּּרֶק נוֹסִיף לְדְ בַּאוּר.
Know that the complete Torah is also dominant in all forms of comprehension, and lacks nothing in it.	ַדע פִּי הַתּוֹרָה הַתְּמִימָה תָּקִיף גַּם־כֵּן בְּכָל הַהַשָּׂגוֹת, וְלֹא תָּחְסַר כֹּל בָּה.
And although in man's eyes the words of Torah seem like lowly and insignificant matters, this is no wonder.	וְעָם כִּי נָרְאֶה בְּעֵינֵי הָאָדָם כִּי דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הֵם כִּדְבָרִים פְּחוּתִים וּשְׁפָלִים, אֵין בָּזֶה תְּמִיָּה.
For to the Torah of man happened what happened to man himself.	פִּי קָרָה לְתוֹרַת הָאָדָם מַה שֶׁקָּרָה אֶל הָאָדָם.

For man stands in the lower realms, even though he has a soul hewn from beneath the Throne of His Glory, may He be blessed, from a very high level.	כִּי הָאָדָם עוֹמֵד בַּתַּחְתּוֹנִים, עִם שֶׁיֵּשׁ לוֹ נְשָׁמָה שֶׁהִיא חֲצוּבָה מִתַּחַת כִּסֵא כְּבוֹדוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ מִמַּדְרֵגָה עֶלְיוֹנָה.
Also the Divine Image shines upon him, which is the highest of levels.	גַם זוֹרֵחַ עָלָיו צֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים, שֶׁהִיא הַמַּעֲלָה הָעֶלְיוֹנָה.
So too are the commandments of the Torah—even though they are physical things—they possess an inner secret that stands at the summit of the world.	כָּךְ הֵם מִצְוֹת הַתּוֹרָה, עִם שֶׁהֵם דְּבָרִים גַּשְׁמִיִּים, יֵשׁ לָהֶם סוֹד פְּנִימִי שֶׁהוּא עוֹמֵד בְּרוּמוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם.
And now let not man wonder how man merits the World to Come through Torah, since it is through small and inferior matters.	וּמֵעַתָּה אַל יִתְמַה הָאָדָם אֵיךּ יִזְכֶּה הָאָדָם לָעוֹלָם הַבָּא עַל־יְדֵי הַתּוֹרָה, שָׁשֶׁהִיא בַּדְּבָרִים הַקְטַנִים וְהַפְּחוּתִים
For this question is just like the question on man himself—how does one of matter merit eternal life?	כִּי הַשְׁאֵלָה הַזֹּאת גַּם־כֵּן כְּמוֹ הַשְׁאֵלָה אֶל הָאָדָם, אֵיךְ יִזְכֶּה בַּעַל חֹמֶר לַחַיִּים הַנִּצְחִיִּים.
The answer is: although man is a being of body and matter, do not look at the container, but at what is inside it (Avos 4:20).	שֶׁהַתְּשׁוּבָה בָּזֶה; עִם שֶׁהָאָדָם הוּא בַּעַל גוּף וְחֹמֶּר, אַל תִּסְתַּכֵּל בַּקַנְקֵן אֶלָּא בַּמָּה שֶׁיֵשׁ בּוֹ' (אבות ד, כ"א.
For within him is the Divine spirit, a holy soul, which is hewn from beneath the Throne of Glory.	כִּי יֵשׁ בּוֹ רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים נְשֶׁמָה קְדוֹשָׁה, אֲשֶׁר הַנְשָׁמָה הַזֹּאת חֲצוּבָה מִתַּחַת כִּסֵא הַכָּבוֹד.
And for the sake of this soul, man merits eternal life.	ּוּבִשְׁבִיל הַנְשָׁמָה הַזֹּאת זוֹכֶה הָאָדָם אֶל חַיִּים הַנִּצְחָיִים.
And likewise, though the commandments of the Torah seem to be in lowly things, they contain the highest of all things, reaching up to the World to Come.	וְכָדּ, עִם שֶׁמִּצְוֹת הַתּוֹרָה נִרְאֶה שֶׁהֵם בַּדְּכָרִים הַפְּחוּתִים, יֵשׁ בַּמִּצְוֹת דְּכָרִים עֶלְיוֹנִים עֵל הַכֹּל, מַגִּיעִים עַד עוֹלָם הַבָּא
So much so that the commandments of the Torah that a person must perform are entirely similar to man and his soul.	עַד שֶׁמִּצְוֹת הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁמְחַיָּב הָאָדָם לִפְעַל, הֵם דּוֹמִים לְגַמְרֵי אֶל הָאָדָם וְנִשְׁמָתוֹ.
And therefore, just like man himself, who stands in this world and his soul reaches the World to Come,	וּלְפִיכָךְ כְּמוֹ הָאָדָם עַצְמוֹ, אֲשֶׁר הוּא עוֹמֵד בָּעוֹלָם הַזָּה, וְנִשְׁמָתוֹ מַגִּיעַ עַד עוֹלָם הַבָּא.
So too the Torah and the commandments that a person must fulfill—though in this world—yet the end of their level stands at the peak of existence.	וְכָךְ הַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוֹת שֶׁמְחֲיֶב הָאָדָם לִפְעַל, בָּם בִּדְכָרִים שֶׁהֵם בָּעוֹלֶם הַזֶּה, וְתַכְלִית מֵדְרֵגָתָם עוֹמְדִים בְּרוּמוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם
And according to your opinion, the Tanna holds (Kiddushin 39b): 'There is no reward for a mitzvah in this world.'	וּלְבָךְ סְבִירָא לֵיהּ לַתַּנָא (קִדּוּשִׁין ל״ט, ב): יִשְׂבֵּר מִצְוָה בְּהַאי עַלְמָא לֵיכָּא.

For due to the lofty level of the mitzvos and their inner essence, it is not fitting that the reward for mitzvos be in this world.	כִּי לְמַעֲלַת מַדְרֶגֶת הַמִּצְוֹת וּפְנִימִית שֶׁלָּהֶם, אֵין רָאוּי שִׁיָּהְיֶה תַּשְׁלוּם שְׂכַר מִצְוֹת בָּעוֹלֶם הַזֶּה.
Except for a mitzvah that is good for others, like all those they said (Peah 1:1): honoring father and mother, acts of kindness, and bringing peace—	זוּלַת מִצְוָה שֶׁהוּא טוֹב לַבְּרִיּוֹת, כְּמוֹ כָּל אוֹתָם שֶׁאָמְרוּ (פַּאָה א, א): כִּבּוּד אָב וָאֵם, גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים, וַהְּבָאַת שָׁלוֹם.
since they are beneficial to a person who is in this world, it is fitting that he eat their fruits in this world.	מָתּוֹךְ שֶׁהֵם טוֹבוֹת הָאָדָם שֶׁהוּא בָּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, רָאוּי שִׁיֹאכַל פֵּרוֹת בָּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה.
But it is not so with other mitzvos, whose reward is only in the World to Come.	וְלֹא כֵן שְׁאָר מִצְוֹת, שֶׁאֵין שְׂכָרָן רַק בָּעוֹלָם הַבָּא.
And in the Hidden Midrash (Zohar, Behaaloscha 152a): Rabbi Shimon said: Woe to that person who says that the Torah came to tell stories of the world and words of the mundane.	וּבַמִּדְרָשׁ הַנְּעָלָם (זֹהֵר בְּהַצֵּלֹתְךּ קנ״ב, א): אָמֵר רַבִּי שָׁמְעוֹן: וַוֹי לְהַהוּא בַּר נָשׁ דַּאֲמֵר דְּהָא אוֹרַיְתָא אֲתָיָא לָאַחָזָאָה סִפּוּרִין בְּעָלְמָא וּמִלִּין דְהָדְיוֹטֵי.
For if so, even in this time we could make a Torah from mundane words and with greater praise than all of them.	דְאִי הָכִי, אֲפִלּוּ בְּזִמְנָא דָא אֲגַן יָכְלִין לְמֶעֲבַד בְּאוֹרַיְתָא, מִילִין דְּהֶדְיוֹטֵי וּבְשָׁבְחָא יָתֵיר מִכּוּלְהוֹן.
If to tell worldly matters, even the rulers of the world, there are among them lofty matters even more.	אִי לְאַחַזָאָה מִלָּה דְעָלְמָא, אֲפִלּוּ אִינוּן קַפְּסִירֵי דְעָלְמָא, אִית בֵּיהוֹן מִילִּין עִלָּאִין יָתֵיר.
If so, let us take after them, and make from them a Torah of this sort.	אִי הָכִי גֵּיזִיל אַבַּתְרַיִּיהוֹן, וְנַעֲבֵיד מִנַּיְיהוֹן אוֹרַיְתָא כְּהַאי גַּוְנָא.
Rather, all the words of Torah are lofty words and supernal secrets.	אֶלָּא כָּל מִילִּין וְאוֹרַיְתָא מִילִּין עָלָּאִין וְרָזִין עִלָּאִין.
Come and see: the supernal world and the lower world are measured on one scale.	תָא חֲזֵי, עָלְמָא עִלָּאָה וְעַלְמָא תַּתָּאָה בְּחַד מַתְקָלָא אָתְקַלּוּ.
Israel below, supernal angels above.	יִשְׂרָאֵל לְתַתָּא, מַלְאֲכֵי עֵילָאֵי לְעֵילָא.
Regarding the supernal angels, it is written (Tehillim 104:4): "He makes His angels spirits"—this is in the upper realm.	מַלְאֲכֵי עִילָאֵי כְּתִיב בְּהוֹן (תְּהִלִּים קד, ד): "עֹשֶׂה מַלְאָכָיו רוּחוֹת", הַאי בַּאֲתַר עִילָאָה.
When they descend below, they are clothed in garments of this world.	בָּשַׁצְתָא דְנָחַתִין לְתַהָּא, מִתְלַבְּשִׁין בִּלְבוּשָׁא דְּהַאי עַלְמָא.
And if they are not clothed in garments like those of this world, they are unable to endure in this world, and the world cannot tolerate them.	וְאִי לָא מִתְלַבְּשִׁין בִּלְבוּשָׁא כְּגַוְונָא דְהַאי עָלְמָא, לָא יָכְלִין לְמֵיקֵים בְּהַאי עַלְמָא, וְלָא סָבֵיל לוֹן עָלְמָא.
And if that is so with angels, then the Torah, which created them and created all the worlds and all stand through it—	וְאִי בְּמַלְאֲכֵי כָּדְּ, אוֹרַיְתָא דִּבְרָא לְהוֹן וּבְרָאָה עָלְמִין כָּלְהוֹן, וְקָאֵימִין בָּגִינָה,

how much more so that when it descends to this world, if it were not clothed in garments of this world, the world could not bear it.	עַל אַחַת כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה, כִּיוָן דְנָחֲתַת לְהַאי עָלְמָא, אִי לָאו דְּמִתְלַבְּשָׁא בִּלְבוּשָׁא דְּהַאי עָלְמָא, לָא יָבֵיל עָלְמָא לָמִסְבַּל.
And because of this, this story and Torah—it is the garment of Torah.	וְעַל דָא הַאי סִיפּוּרָא וְאוֹרַיְתָא – לְבוּשָׁא דְּאוֹרַיְתָא הוּא.
Whoever thinks that this garment is the actual Torah and not something else—may his spirit expire, and he will have no portion in the World to Come.	מַאן דְּחָשִׁיב דְּהַאי לְבוּשָׁא אִיהוּ אוֹרֵיְתָא מַמָּשׁ, וְלָא מִילֵי אַחַרִיתִי – תְּפַּח רוּחֵיה, וְלָא יְהֵא לֵיה חוּלָּקָא בָּעַלְמָא דְאָתֵי.
Therefore David said (Tehillim 119:18): "Uncover my eyes, that I may behold wonders from Your Torah"—	בְּגִין כָּךְ אָמַר דָּוָד (תְּהִלִּים קיט, יח): "גַּל עֵינַי "וְאַבִּיטָה נִפְלָאוֹת מִתּוֹרָתֶךְ,"
to see what is beneath the garment of Torah.	מַה דָתַחוֹת לְבוּשָׁא דְאוֹרַיְתָא.
Come and see: there is a garment that appears to all, and those fools—when they see a person in a garment that appears beautiful to them—they look no further.	תָּא חֲזֵי, אִית לְבוּשָׁא דְאִיתְחֲזֵי לְכֹּלָּא, וְאִינוּן טִיפְשִׁין כַּד חֲמָאָן לְבַר נָשׁ בִּלְבוּשָׁא דְּאִיתְחָזֵי לוֹן שַׁפִּירָא, לֹא מָסְתַּבְּלִין יָתֵיר.
They consider that this garment itself is the essence of the body and the soul.	הָשִׁיבוּ דְהַאי לְבוּשָׁא גּוּפָא חֲשִׁיבוּתָא דָגוּפָא נִשְׁמְתָּא.
In this manner is the Torah: it has a body, and these are the commandments of the Torah, which are called the bodies of Torah.	כְּהַאי גַּוְנָא אוֹרַיְתָא, אִית לָהּ גּוּפָא, וְאִינוּן פַּקוּדִי אוֹרַיְתָא דְּאִקְרוּן גּוּפֵי תּוֹרָה.
This body is clothed in garments, which are the stories of this world.	הַאי גּוּפָא מִתְלַבְּשָׁא בִּלְבוּשִׁין, דְאִינוּן סִיפּוּרִין דְּהַאי עָלְמָא.
The fools of the world look only at this garment, which is the story and the Torah, and they know nothing more; and they do not look at what is beneath this garment.	טָפָּשִׁין דְּעָלְמָא לֹא מָסְתַּכְּלֵי אֶלָּא בְּהַאי לְבוּשָׁא, דְּאִיהוּ סִיפּוּר וְאוֹרַיְתָא, וְלֹא יָדְעִי יָתֵיר, וְלֹא מִסְתַּכְּלִי בַּמַה דְאִיהוּ תַּחוֹת הַאי לְבוּשָׁא.
Those who know more, do not look at the garment, but at the body that is beneath this garment.	אִינוּן דְיָדְעִין יָתֵיר, לֹא מִסְתַּכְּלִין בִּלְבוּשָׁא, אֶלָּא בָּגוּפָא דְאִיהוּ תַּחוֹת הַאִי לְבוּשָׁא.
Beloved are the servants of the supernal King, those who stood at Mount Sinai—	חַבִּיבִין עַבְדֵי דְמַלְכָּא עַלָּאָה, אִינוּן דְּקָאֵימוּ בְּטוּרָא דְסִינֵי,
they look only at the soul, which is the root of all—the actual Torah.	לא מָסְתַּכְּלִי אֶלָּא בְּנִשְׁמְתָּא, דְאִיהִי עַקְּרָא דְכֹלָּא אוֹרַיְתָא מַמָּשׁ.
And in the future, in the World to Come, they are destined to gaze at the soul of the soul, and the supernal Torah.	וּלְעָלְמָא וּלְזִמְנָא דְאָתֵי, זְמִינִין לְאִסְתַּכְּלָא בְּנִשְׁמְתָּא דְנִשְׁמְתָּא וְתוֹרָא עִילָאָה.
Come and see: so too above, there is a garment, and a body, and a soul to a soul.	תָּא חָזַי, הָכִי נָמֵי לְעֵילָא אִית לְבוּשָׁא, וְגוּפָא וְנִשְׁמָתָא לְנִשְׁמָתָא.
Heavens and soul, and their hosts—these are the garment.	שְׁמַיָּא וְנִשְׁמָתָא, וְחֵילֵיהוֹן – הוֹן – אִילֵין אִינוּן לְבוּשָא.

And Knesses Yisrael—that is the body of the body, to receive the soul, which is Tiferes Yisrael.	וּכְנֶסֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל – דָּא גּוּפָא דְגוּפָא, לְמְקַבְּלָא לְנִשְׁמָתָא, דָּאִיהִי תִּפָאֶרֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל.
And therefore, it is the body to the soul.	ַוְעַל דָּא אִיהִי גּוּפָא לְנִשְׁמֶתָא.
And the soul of our Master—this is Tiferes Yisrael, for it is actual Torah.	וְשְׁמָתָא דְּמָארָן – דָּא תִּפְאֶרֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, דְּאִי דְאִיהִי אוֹרַיְתָא מַמָּשׁ.
And the soul of the soul—this is Atika Kadisha (the Ancient Holy One), and all is bound one to another.	וְנִשְׁמֶתָא לְנִשְׁמֶתָא – דָּא אִיהִי עַתִּיקָא קַדִּישָׁא, וְכֹלֶּא אָחִיד דָּא בְּדָא.
Woe to those guilty ones who say that the Torah is nothing but stories of the world, and they look only at this garment and no more.	וַוֹי לְאִינוּן חַיָּיבַיָּא דְּאָמְרִי דְּאוֹרַיְתָא לָאו אִיהִי אֶלָּא סִיפּוּרֵי דְּעָלְמָא, וְאִינוּן מִסְתַּכְּלִין בִּלְבוּשָׁא דָּא וְלָא יָתֵיר.
Fortunate are the righteous who look at the Torah as is fitting.	זַבָּאִין אִינוּן צַדִּיקַיָּא לְמָסְתַּכְּלָא בְּאוֹרַיְתָא בִּדְקָא יָאוּת.
Wine does not rest except in a flask; so too the Torah does not rest except in this garment.	חַמְרָא לָא יָתֵיב אֶלָּא בְּקַנְקַנָּא. כָּךּ אוֹרַיְתָא לָא יָתֵיב אֶלָּא בִּלְבוּשָׁא דָּא.
And therefore, one should not look except at what is beneath the garment.	וְעַל דָא לָא בָּעֵי לְאָסְתַּכְּלָא אֶלָא בַּמַה דְאִית תַּחוֹת לְבוּשָׁא.
And therefore all those words, and all those stories—they are garments.	וְעַל דָּא כָּל אִינוּן מִלִּין, וְכָל אִינוּן סִיפּוּרִין – לְבוּשִׁין אִינוּן.
Until here is his wording.	עַד כָּאן לְשׁוֹנוֹ.
And even Ibn Ezra did not say that the Torah is a garment to supernal matters except in regard to the stories in the Torah—so that a person should not belittle them.	וְאַף עַל פִּי כֵן אָבָּן עֶזְרָא לֹא אָמֵר שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה הִיא לְבוּשׁ לְמִלִּין עִילָּאִין רַק בִּשְׁבִיל הַסִּיפּוּרִין שֶׁהֵם בַּתּוֹרָה, שָׁלֹא יְבַנָּה אוֹתָם הָאָדָם.
Nonetheless, in this general principle, the mitzvos of the Torah are also included.	מָכָּל מָקוֹם בַּכְּלָל הַזֶּה גַם כֵּן מִצְוֹת הַתּוֹרָה.
For it is impossible that in this physical world there should be only the body, and these are the physical commandments.	שֶׁאִי אֶפְשֶׁר שֶׁיִּהְיֶה בָּעוֹלֶם הַחָמְרִי הַזֶּה רַק הַגּוּף, וְהֵם הַמִּצְוֹת הַגַּשְׁמִיּוֹת.
Just as man was created to possess a divine image that is separate [from the body], so too is this the Torah of man:	וּכְמוֹ שֶׁבָּרָא הָאָדָם שֶׁיִּהְיֶה בּוֹ הַצֶּלֶם הָאֱלֹהִי הַנִּבְדָּל, כָּדְ זֹאת תּוֹרַת הָאָדָם,
although the intellect of its words are supernal matters, they stand in physical matters.	עִם שֵׂכֶל דְּבָרֶיהָ דְּבָרִים עֶלְיוֹנִים, הֵם עוֹמְדִים בַּדְּבָרִים הַגַּשְׁמִיִּים.
And when one grasps in the physical things—behold, those things are drawn toward the matters that are the secrets of the Torah,	וְכַאֲשֶׁר מַשִּׂיג בַּדְּבָרִים הַגַּשְׁמִיִּים, הָלֹא הַדְּבָרִים הָהֵם נְמְשָׁכִים אֶל הַדְּבָרִים שֶׁהֵם סוֹדֵי הַתּוֹרָה,
and it is as if the person is cleaving to that Divine Intellect—	וּכָאִלוּ הָאָדָם דָּבֵק בְּאוֹתוֹ שֵׂכֶל הָאֱלֹהִי,
for the Torah is one.	פִי הַתּוֹרָה הִיא אַחַת.

And in the chapter "Bnei Ha'ir" (Megillah 32a): Rabbi Parnach said, "One who holds a Sefer Torah naked, is buried naked."	וּבְפָּרֶק בְּנֵי הָעִיר (מְגִלֶּה ל״ב, א): אָמֵר רַבִּי פַּרְנָךְ: הָאוֹחֵז סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה עֲרוֹם, נִקְבָּר עֵרְם.
And there it is explained: "naked"—without that mitzvah.	וּמוֹקֵי לֵיהּ שָׁם: "עַרְם" – בְּלֹא אוֹתָהּ מִצְוָה.
And one can ask: Why is he buried naked, without that mitzvah, specifically in this matter?	וְיֵשׁ לִשְׁאוֹל: לָמָּה נִקְבֶּר עֵרְם בְּלֹא אוֹתָהּ מִצְוָה בְּהָא ?מִלְתָּא דַּוְקָא
But the reason is: just as the Torah itself does not come into the world except in a garment,	אָבָל הַטַּעַם: כִּי כְּשֵׁם שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה בְּעַצְמָה לֹא בָּאָה בָּעוֹלָם אֶלָּא בְּמַלְבּוּשׁ,
and it would not be possible for man to hold the Torah except through the garment of Torah—	וְלֹא הָיָה אֶפְשָׁר שֶׁיִּהְיֶה הָאָדָם אוֹחֵז בַּתּוֹרָה כִּי אָם עַל־יְדֵי מַלְבּוּשׁ הַתּוֹרָה,
just as the soul cannot exist in the world except by means of a body, which is the garment of the soul—	ּכְשֵׁם שֶׁהַנְשָׁמָה אִי אֶפְשָׁר שֶׁתִּהְיֶה בָּעוֹלָם כִּי אִם עַל־יְדֵי גּוּף, שֶׁהוּא מַלְבּוּשׁ הַנְּשָׁמָה,
so too, one who holds a Sefer Torah that is written without an intermediate matter—there is no grasping of that mitzvah.	גַם כֵּן, הָאוֹחֵז סֵפֶּר תּוֹרָה הַכְּתוּבָה בְּלֹא דָּבָר אֶמְצָעִי, אֵין אֲחִיזָה לְאוֹתָהּ מִצְוָה,
Since there is no holding of the Torah except through a garment in the physical,	פִּיוָן שֶׁאֵין אֲחִיזָה לַתּוֹרָה כִּי אָם עַל־יְדֵי מַלְבּוּשׁ בַּשְׁמִי,
and therefore he is buried naked, without that mitzvah.	וּלְכָךְ נָקְפָּר עַרָם בְּלֹא אוֹתָה מִצְוָה.
For grasping the Torah without a physical garment is not a grasping.	שֶׁהָאֲחִיזָה לַתּוֹרָה בְּלֹא מַלְבּוּשׁ בַּשְׁמִי – אֵין זָה אֲחִיזָה.
Since the Torah that is in the world does not stand except through a garment,	כִּיוָן שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה שֶׁהִיא בָּעוֹלָם, אֵינָה עוֹמֶדֶת רַק עַל־יְדֵי מַלְבּוֹשׁ,
and through that is the grasping.	ָרְעַל־יְדֵי זֶה הוּא הָאֲחִיזָה.
And so too, the Torah that is before us, it is not fitting that there be grasp of it except through the garment.	וְכָדְּ הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁהִיא לְפָנֵינוּ, אֵין רָאוּי שֶׁיִּהְיֶה לָהּ אֲחִיזָה כִּי אָם עַל־יְדֵי הַמֵּלְבּוּשׁ.
And if he holds the Torah naked, without a garment, he is buried naked, without mitzvah.	וְאָם אוֹחֵז בַּתּוֹרָה עֵרְם בְּלֹא מַלְבּוּשׁ, נָקְבָּר עֵרְם בְּלֹא מִצְוָה.
And behold, these words are like the words of this Midrash, that the Torah has a garment in which it is clothed.	וְהנֵּה הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה כְּמוֹ דִּבְרֵי הַמִּדְרָשׁ הַזָּה, שֶׁיֵשׁ לַתּוֹרָה לְבוּשׁ שֶׁהִיא מִתְלַכֶּשֶׁת בָּהּ.
And all words of Torah are inner matters, standing at the summit of the world.	ְוְכָל דְּבְרֵי תּוֹרָה הֵם דְּבָרִים פְּנִימִיִּים, עוֹמְדִים בְּרוּמוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם.

#### [NOTE Summary:

This segment of the discourse explores the profound truth that **Torah**, in its essence, cannot be grasped directly—it must come clothed. Just as a soul cannot reside in this world without a body, the Torah's infinite light cannot manifest without garments—stories, mitzvos, and material expressions.

The Midrash teaches that one who holds a Sefer Torah "naked" is buried without the mitzvah. This is not merely a physical detail but a mystical principle: Torah must be engaged through its **outer form** to access its inner truth. These garments include its commandments, its narratives, and its physical scrolls. Holding the Torah without the "middle matter"—the structured vessels that make it accessible to our world—is not true grasp.

This theme is reinforced by the Zohar's insistence that **all of Torah's stories are garments**, and fools look only at the outer layer. The wise look through the garment to the soul within. The "bodies of Torah" are the mitzvos; their narratives are garments; and their soul is divine wisdom. Ultimately, all layers—body, garment, and soul—are interconnected and necessary.

#### **Practical Takeaway**

Don't dismiss the external forms of Torah—the stories, the laws, the rituals—as superficial or secondary. They are the **vessels** through which the infinite becomes graspable. Engage with Torah in the physical world with reverence and depth. When you perform a mitzvah, study a narrative, or read from a scroll, recognize that you are holding the garment—but through it, you are connecting with the divine soul within.

Even the seemingly mundane act—holding a Torah with proper respect, performing mitzvos with physical care—reflects your recognition that holiness needs form, and form requires holiness.

#### **Chassidic Story**

**The Alter Rebbe** (Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi) once asked a wealthy chassid why he didn't kiss the Torah scroll during hakafos. The man replied, "Why should I kiss parchment and ink? I connect to Torah through the mind, not the object."

The Alter Rebbe looked at him and said, "Do you also speak to your wife's soul without embracing her body?"

The man fell silent.

The Rebbe explained: Just as a soul expresses itself through the body, so too, Torah expresses itself through its physical garments. We embrace the scroll, not just because it is parchment, but because within it dwells the essence of Hashem's will clothed in a form we can hold.

Source: Shemuos V'Sippurim vol. 1, p. 60; Likutei Sichos vol. 4, p. 134. END NOTE!

And in the first chapter of Berachos (8a): Rabbi Huna the son of Rabbi Yehudah said in the name of Rabbi Ami:	וּבְפֶּרֶק קַמָּא דְּבְרָכוֹת (ח, א): אָמֵר רַב הוּנָא בְּרַבִּי יְהוּדָה אָמַר רַבִּי אַמִּי:
A person should always complete his Torah portions with the congregation—even [the portions of] "Ataros and Divon" (Numbers 32:3),	לְעוֹלֶם יַשְׁלִים אָדָם פָּרָשִׁיוֹתָיו עִם הַצִּבּוּר, אֲפִלּוּ (בְּמִדְבֵּר ל״ב, ג' (בְּמִדְבֵּר ל״ב, ג',
for anyone who completes his Torah portions with the congregation has his days and years lengthened.	שֶׁכָּל הַמַּשְׁלִים כָּּרָשִׁיּוֹתָיו עִם הַצִּבּוּר מַאֲרִיכִין לוֹ יָמֶיו וּשְׁנוֹתָיו.
And the explanation of this matter is: that the Torah has three levels.	וּבֵיאוּר עִנְיָן זֶה: שֶׁיֵשׁ לַתּוֹרָה שָׁלֹשׁ מַדְרֵגוֹת.
The first level is the revealed level, accessible to every person.	הַמַּדְרֵגָה הָאַחַת – מַדְרֵגָה הַנִּגְלֵית לְכָל אָדָם.
The second level is the hidden within the Torah, which is accessible only to sages and those of understanding.	הַמַּדְרֵגָה הַשֵּׁנִית – הוּא הַנִּסְתָּר בַּתּוֹרָה, שֶׁאֵינוֹ מוּכָן רַק לַחֲכָמִים וּלְנְבוֹנִים.
The third level is that in the Torah there are things that allude to the World to Come—	הַמַּדְרֵגָה הַשְּׁלִּישִׁית – הוּא שֶׁיֵּשׁ בַּתּוֹרָה דְּבָרִים מוֹרִים עַל עוֹלָם הַבָּא,
and this matter is not comprehensible to any person, for "no eye has seen it, O God, but You" (Isaiah 64:3).	וְדָבָר זָה לֹא יֵשַׂג לְשׁוּם אָדָם, כִּי "עַיִן לֹא רָאָתָה אֱלֹהִים זוּלָתְדָּ" (יְשַׁעְיָה ס״ד, ג'.
And all the prophets did not see except this world—not the World to Come—	וָכָל הַנְּבִיאִים לֹא רָאוּ רַק עוֹלָם הַזֶּה, לֹא עוֹלָם הַבָּא,
which is yet higher in level, about which it is said: "No eye has seen it, O God, but You."	שֶׁהוּא עוֹד יוֹתֵר בְּמַעֲלָה, שֶׁעָלַיו נָאֱמַר: "עַיִן לֹא רָאָתָה אֱלֹהִים זוּלָתְדָּ".
And therefore one should read the Torah with <i>Shnayim Mikra ve-Echad Targum</i> (twice in the original, once in translation).	וּלְפִיכָךְ יֵשׁ לִקְרוֹת הַתּוֹרָה שְׁנַיִם מִקְרָא וְאֶחָד תַּרְגוּם.
The Targum is the revealed level, for the Targum is a language everyone understands.	תַּרְגוּם – הוּא הַנִּגְלֶה, שֶׁהֲרֵי הַתַּרְגוּם הוּא לָשׁוֹן שֶׁהַכֹּל יוֹדְעִים.
And the two readings in the original: one corresponds to the level for sages, and therefore it is in the holy tongue;	וּשְׁנַיִם מִקְרָא – הָאֶחָד עַל מַדְרֵגָה שֶׁהִיא לַחֲכָמִים, וּוּלְפִיכָךְ הוּא בִּלְשׁוֹן הַקֹּדֶשׁ;
the second corresponds to a higher level—the inner aspect, which no man comprehends until the World to Come.	הַשָּׁנִי – הוּא עַל מַעֲלָה יוֹתֵר עֶלְיוֹנָה, וְהוּא הַפְּנִימִי, שֶׁאֵין לְשׁוּם אָדָם הַשָּׂגָה עַד עוֹלָם הַבָּא.
And this is what it means: whoever completes his Torah	וְזֶהוּ שֶׁאָמֵר: כָּל הַמַּשְׁלִים פָּרָשִׁיּוֹתָיו שְׁנַיִם מִקְרָא
portions with Shnayim Mikra ve-Echad Targum—	וְאֶחֶד הַּרְגוּם –
his days and years are lengthened, for from the World to Come, where longevity of days and years resides,	מַאֲרִיכִין לוֹ יָמָיו וּשְׁנוֹתִיו, כִּי מִן עוֹלָם הַבָּא, שֶׁשָׁם אֲרִיכוּת יָמִים וּשָׁנִים,
longevity of days and years comes to him.	בָּאִים לוֹ אֲרִיכוּת יָמִים וּשָׁנִים.
And so too man also has these levels: one, the revealed body;	וְכֵן הָאָדָם גַּם־כֵּן יֵשׁ לוֹ מַדְרֵגוֹת אֵלוּ: הָאֶחָד, הַגּוּף הַנְּגְלֶה;

the second, the hidden soul;	הָשֵׁנִי, הַנְּשֶׁמָה הַנֶּעֶלֶמֶת;
the third, the level that is within man which is prepared for the World to Come.	הַשְּׁלִישִׁי, הַמַּדְרֵגָה שָׁיֵשׁ בָּאָדָם, שֶׁהוּא מוּכָן לָעוֹלָם הַבָּא.
And this is what the sages said (Bereishis Rabbah 14:5):	ָן וָזֶה שֶׁאָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים (בְּרֵאשִׁית רַבָּה י״ד, ה:
"And Hashem Elokim formed" (Bereishis 2)—two formations:	"וַיִּיצֶר ה' אֱלֹהִים" (בְּרֵאשִׁית ב), שְׁתֵּי יְצִירוֹת.
one for this world, and one for the World to Come.	אַחַת לָעוֹלֶם הַגָּה, וְאַחַת לָעוֹלֶם הַבָּא.
And this is the final level.	ָן זֶהוּ מַדְרֵגָה אַחֲרוֹנָה.
And all is in potential in this creation—and that is the Image of G-d in which man was created (Bereishis 1:27).	וְהַכּּל בְּכֹחַ בְּרִיאָה זוֹ, וְהוּא צֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים שֶׁנִּבְרָא בּוֹ (בָּרֵאשִׁית א, כ״ז,
And through this he has the final level, which is the World to Come.	ָוְעַל־יְדֵי זֶה יֵשׁ בּוֹ הַמַּעֲלָה הָאַחֲרוֹנָה, הִיא עוֹלָם הַבָּא.
And this matter we have explained elsewhere more fully.	וָדָבָר זֶה בֵּאַרְנוּ בְּמָקוֹם אַחֵר בְּיוֹתֵר.
And it seems further—and this is correct—that the levels were stated from bottom to top.	ַןיוֹתֵר נִרְאֶה, וְהוּא נָכוֹן, כִּי מִלְמַטָּה לְמַעְלָה נֶאֶמְרוּ.
For the Targum is to the higher level—it is the level of the World to Come.	כִּי הַתַּרְגוּם הוּא לַמַּעֲלָה הָעֶלְיוֹנָה – הִיא מַדְרֵגַת עוֹלָם הַבָּא.
And this is because Targum is not considered a language at all, as they said (Megillah 10b):	וְזֶה כִּי הַתַּרְגוּם אֵינוֹ נֶחְשָׁב לָשׁוֹן כְּלָל, כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמְרוּ (מְגִילָה י, ב:
"And I will cut off from Bavel name and remnant" (Isaiah 14:22)—these are the Kasdim, who have no script or language.	וְהָכְרַתִּי לְבָבֶל שֵׁם וּשְׁאָר" (יְשַׁעְיָה י״ד, כ״ב), אֵלוּ" כַּשְׂדִים, שֶׁאֵין לָהֶם כְּתָב וְלָשׁוֹן.
And we explained this elsewhere, that the Aramaic tongue—which is the language of Bavel—is not considered a language.	וּבֵאַרְנוּ זָה בִּמְקוֹמוֹ, כִּי לְשׁוֹן אֲרָמִי, שֶׁהוּא לְשׁוֹן בָּבֶּל, אֵינוֹ נֶחְשָׁב לְשׁוֹן.
And since it is not considered a language, thought is primary.	ַןכַאֲשֶׁר אֵינוֹ נֶחְשָׁב לְשׁוֹן, הַמַּחֲשָׁבָה הִיא עֵקֶר.
And thought is the highest level—it is the level of the World to Come.	וְהַמַּחֲשֶׁבָה הִיא הַמַּדְרֵגָה הַיּוֹתֵר עֶלְיוֹנָה, הִיא מַדְרֵגַת עוֹלָם הַבָּא.
Therefore the third [reading] is Targum—for it corresponds to the World to Come,	לְכָךְ פַּעַם שְׁלִישִׁית הוּא הַּרְגוּם, כִּי הוּא כְּנֶגֶד עוֹלָם הַבָּא,
which has no relevance to the angels, for it is only for Israel—as is known.	ָשֶׁאֵין שַׁיָּךְ לַמַּלְאָכִים עוֹלָם הַבָּא, כִּי אָם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, כְּמוֹ שֶׁהוּא יָדוּעַ.
And this matter is clearly explained to the intelligent, and there is no doubt in this at all for one who knows the secrets of Torah.	וְהוּא דָּבָר מְבֹאָר בָּרוּר לַמַּשְׂכִּילִים, שֶׁאֵין סָפֵק בָּזָה בְּלָל לְמִי שֶׁיוֹדֵעַ בְּרָזֵי תּוֹרָה,
And it has been explained elsewhere.	ַןנִתְבָּאֵר בְּמָקוֹם אַחֵר.

In any case, the matters are clarified: that this Torah is higher than high, and it has level after level, up to the World to Come.	מָכֶּל מָקוֹם הַדְּבָרִים מְבֹאָרִים, כִּי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת גָּבוֹהַ עַל גָּבוֹהַ, וּמַדְרַגָּה עַל מַדְרֵגָה יֵשׁ לָה, עַד עוֹלָם הַבָּא.
And behold, all the matters have been explained: that even if the words of Torah seem like very lowly matters, nevertheless, they reach until the World to Come.	וְהָנֵּה הִתְּבָּאֵר כָּל הַדְּבָרִים, שֶׁאַף אָם נִרְאִים דִּבְרֵי תּוֹרָה כִּדְבָרִים פְּחוּתִים מְאֹד, עִם כָּל זֶה מַגִּיעִים עַד עוֹלָם הַבָּא.
And behold, the learning of Torah corresponds to man; for just as man, even though he is in this physical world and is flesh and blood,	ְוְהָנֵּה לִמּוּד הַתּוֹרָה מִתְיַחֵס אֶל הָאָדָם; כִּי כְּמוֹ שֶׁהָאָדָם, אַף שֶׁהוּא בָּעוֹלָם הַנֶּה הַגַּשְׁמִי, וְהוּא בָּשָּׂר ,וַדָם
he nevertheless merits the World to Come, which is removed from the physical—	זוֹכֶה לָעוֹלָם הַבָּא, שֶׁהוּא מְסוּלָק מִן הַגַּשְׁמִי.
so too is the Torah: even though man is engaged in matters that are physical—and they are the mitzvos—	כָּךְ הַתּוֹרָה: עִם שֶׁהָאָדָם מִתְעַסֵּק בִּדְבָרִים שֶׁהֵם גַשְׁמִיִּים, וְהֵם הַמִּצְוֹת,
through this, he reaches the supernal level, which is the inwardness of the Torah, and cleaves to this Name—these are the secrets of the Torah.	יַגִּיעַ עַל־יְדֵי זֶה אֶל הַמַּעֲלָה הָעֶלְיוֹנָה, שֶׁהוּא פְּנִימִית הַתּוֹרָה, וְדָבֵק בַּשֵּׁם – הֵם סוֹדֵי הַתּוֹרָה.
And therefore, one who engages in Torah—his engagement is in great matters.	וּלְפִיכָךְ, הָעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה – הָעֵסֶק הוּא בִּדְבָרִים גְּדוֹלִים
For you must not say that when one engages in physical matters, such as damages of ox and pit and the like,	פִּי אֵין לְדָּ לוֹמַר כִּי כַּאֲשֶׁר יַעֲסוֹק בַּדְּבָרִים הַגַּשְׁמִיִּים, כָּמוֹ נַזֶק שׁוֹר וּבוֹר וְכַיּוֹצֵא בָּזֶה,
that he has no engagement in the inner matters—	שָׁאֵין לוֹ עֵסֶק בַּדְּבָרִים הַפְּנִימִים.
for if so, man who stands in the lower world would have no portion in the upper separated world.	שֶׁאָם כֵּן, הָאָדָם שֶׁהוּא עוֹמֵד בָּעוֹלָם הַתַּחְתּוֹן, אֵין לוֹ חֵלֶק בָּעוֹלָם הָעֶלְיוֹן הַנִּבְדָּל.
Rather, it must be said that the separated soul stands in the body, and yet it has connection above, up to the upper world.	ַרַק שֶׁצָּרִיךְ לוֹמַר: כִּי הַנְּשָׁמָה הַנִּבְדֶּלֶת עוֹמֶדֶת בַּגוּף, וּמִכָּל מָקוֹם יֵשׁ לָה דְּבֵקוּת לְמַעְלָה עַד עוֹלָם הָעֶלְיוֹן.
And so too, when he engages in physical matters, he has connection to the inwardness of Torah, and reaches up to the upper world.	וְכָדְ, כַּאֲשֶׁר עוֹסֵק בַּדְבָרִים הַגַּשְׁמִיִּים, יֵשׁ לוֹ דְּבֵקוּת בָּפְנִימִיּוּת הַתּוֹרָה, וּמַגִּיעַ עַד עוֹלָם הָעֶלְיוֹן.
And people—because of their thoughts that wisdoms have advantage, in that they analyze great and important matters, and that Torah, by contrast, does not engage in important things—	וְעַם, כִּי לְפִי מַחְשְׁבוֹתֵיהֶם שֶׁיֵּשׁ יִתְרוֹן לַחָכְמוֹת, מֵה שֶׁהֵם מְעַיְּנִים בַּדְּבָרִים הַגְּדוֹלִים וְהַחֲשׁוּבִים, וְאִלּוּ – הַתּוֹרָה אֵינָהּ מְעַיֶּנֶת בַּדְּבָרִים הַחֲשׁוּבִים
behold, the opposite has been clarified: that Torah, even though its subjects appear to be in lowly matters, this Torah connects with the inwardness of Torah.	הֲרֵי הִתְּבָּאֵר הַכָּּךְ זֶה, כִּי הַתּוֹרָה, עִם שֶׁנִּרְאִים דְּבָרֶיהָ בַּדְּבָרִים הַשְּׁפָלִים – הֲרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת מִתְקַשֶּׁרֶת עִם בְּנִימִיּוּת הַתּוֹרָה.
And behold, the Torah's analysis is in greater matters than all other wisdoms.	וְהָנֵה, עִיּוּן הַתּוֹרָה – בַּדְּבָרִים הַגְּדוֹלִים עַל כָּל שְׁאָר הַחָּכְמוֹת.

And even if the great matters are not known to the one attaining them, nonetheless, the garment is close to the body, and the body is close to the soul, until all are joined and	וְאַף אָם אֵין הַדְּבָרִים הַגְּדוֹלִים יְדוּעִים אֶל הַמַּשִּׂיג, מִכָּל מָקוֹם, הַמַּלְבּוּשׁ קָרוֹב אֶל הַגוּף, וְהַגוּף הוּא קָרוֹב אֶל הַנְּשָׁמָה, עַד שֶׁהַכּּל מִתְחַבֵּר וּמִתְדַּבֵּק בְּהַשָּׁנָה 
connected in the supernal year.	ָצֶלְיוֹנָה.
And in this, man has connection to the highest level, which is the level of the World to Come.	וּבָזֶה, יֵשׁ דְּבֵקוּת לָאָדָם בַּמַּדְרֵגָה הַיּוֹתֵר עֶלְיוֹנָה – הִיא מַדְרֵגַת עוֹלָם הַבָּא.
And man has learning according to the measure of the man, for he is also "man in My name," and nonetheless, from the soul he has cleaving higher and higher.	וְיֵשׁ לָאָדָם לִמּוּד כְּפִי עֵרֶךְ הָאָדָם – אֲשֶׁר הוּא גַּם כֵּן "הָאָדָם בַּשְּׁמִי", וְעִם כָּל זֶה, מִצַּד הַנְּשָׁמָה – יֵשׁ לָאָדָם דְבֵקוּת לְמַעְלָה לְמַעְלָה.
And so too, when he engages in matters that are [only] body, this Torah connects with the supernal year, and through this, the question is also resolved.	וְכֵז, פַּאֲשֶׁר עוֹסֵק בִּדְּבָרִים שֶׁהֵם גּוּף – מִתְחַבֶּרֶת תּוֹרָה זֹאת בְּהַשָּׁנָה עֶלְיוֹנָה, וּבָזֶה – הַתְּרָה הַשְּׁאֵלָה גַּם כֵּן
Behold before you most noble and precious words, that there should no longer remain to you doubt as to "how good is our portion and how pleasant is our lot," that Hashem has given us engagement in the Torah.	הָרֵי לְפָנֶידְ דְּבָרִים נִכְכָּדִים וִיקָרִים מְאֹד, שֶׁשׁוּב לֹא יִהָיֶה לְדְ סָפֵּק – כִּי "מַה טוֹב חֶלְקֵנוּ וּמַה נָּעִים גוֹרָלֵנוּ", אֲשֶׁר נָתַן הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ לָנוּ – הָעֵסֶק בַּתּוֹרָה
But the clear matter through which you will know the greatness of Torah learning even more is that which was explained to you earlier—	אֲבָל, הַדָּבָר הַבָּרוּר, אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ יִנְּדַע לְדּ מַצְלַת לְמוּד הַתּוֹרָה בְּיוֹתֵר – הוּא אֲשֶׁר הִתְבָּאֵר לְדָּ רִאשׁוֹנָה.
that this Torah brings man out of nature, until he has cleaving to Him, blessed be He.	כִּי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת – מוֹצִיאָה אֶת הָאָדָם מִן הַטֶּבַע, עַד שַׁיֵשׁ לוֹ דְּבֵקוּת בּוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ.
For if the mitzvos had not been from Hashem, blessed be He, then man would be grouped together with the rest of the natural creations.	שָׁאָם לֹא הָיוּ הַמִּצְוֹת מָן הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרֵךְ – הָיָה הָאָדָם מְשַׁאָר עִם שְׁאָר הַנִּבְרָאִים הַטִּבְעִיִּים.
But the mitzvos bring man out from the level of the beastly creatures.	ְהַמָּצְוֹת – הֵם מוֹצִיאִים אֶת הָאָדָם מִמַּדְרֵגַת הַמִּבְעָיִים.
And they are a refinement and purification of his soul until man acquires cleaving to Him, blessed be He, as was explained above.	וְהֵם צִרוּף וְזִכּוּךְ נַפְשׁוֹ, עַד שֶׁיִקְנֶה הָאָדָם הַדְּבֵקוּת בּוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ, כְּמוֹ שֶׁהִתְבָּאֵר לְמַעְלָה.
For the mitzvos are a refinement and purification of his soul until he acquires cleaving to Him, blessed be He.	כִּי הַמִּצְוֹת – הֵם צִרוּף וְזִכּוּךְ נַכְשׁוֹ, עַד שֶׁיִקְנֶה הָאָדָם הַדְּבֵקוּת בּוֹ יִתְבָּרַדְּ
And because of this, Torah learning, which is the acquisition of the intellect, beyond the mitzvos which are refinement of soul,	וּמִפְנֵי זֶה, לִמּוּד הַתּוֹרָה – שֶׁהוּא קִנְיָן הַשֵּׁכֶל, מִן – הַמִּצְוֹת שֶׁהֵם צִרוּף נֶפֶשׁ
it is even more [refined], until one cleaves to Him, blessed be He.	קבָק בּוֹ יִתְבָּר – עַד שֶׁהוּא דָבֵק בּוֹ יִתְבָּרַד.

Therefore, the Sages of the Mishnah, and the Sages of the Gemara, and after them all the wise-hearted of the later generations, did not toil in vain in the discussions of Abaye and Rava—	לָכֵן חַכְמֵי הַמִּשְׁנָה, וְחַכְמֵי הָאֲמוֹרָאִים, וְאַחֲרֵיהֶם כָּל חַכְמֵי לֵב הָאַחָרוֹנִים, לֹא בְּחַנָּם טָרְחוּ בַּהָוָיוֹת דְּאַבַּיֵי ,וְרָבָא
—in matters which appear light in the eyes of people—	בְּדָבָר שֶׁנִּרְאֶה קַל אֵצֶל בְּנֵי אָדָם,
for all the commandments are a refinement of a person's soul,	כִּי הַמָּצְוֹת כָּלָם הֵם צַרוּף נֶפֶשׁ הָאָדָם,
and therefore the wisdom within them is complete refinement.	וּלְפִיכָךְ הַחָּכְמָה בָּהָם הוּא הַצֵרוּף הַגָּמוּר.
Not so with something that does not reach any mitzvah,	ָןלֹא כָּךְ דָּבָר שֶׁאֵינוֹ מַגִּיעַ לְשׁוּם מִצְוָה,
even if it is a great discussion of exalted and lofty matters—	אַף אָם הוּא הַשָּׂנָה גְדוֹלָה בַּדְּכָרִים הַגָּדוֹלִים וְעֶלְיוֹנִים,
this matter is not a refinement of the soul through which one cleaves to Hashem,	ָהַרִי הַדָּבָר הַנָּה אֵין צַרוּף הַנֶּפֶשׁ שָׁעַל יָדוֹ יִדְבַּק בּוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ
as is the case with a mitzvah.	ָּבְמוֹ שֶׁהוּא הַמִּצְוָה,
As it is written (Proverbs 30:5): "Every word of G-d is refined."	וּכְדָכְתִיב (מִשְׁלֵי ל, ה): "כָּל אָמְרַת אֱלוֹהַ צְרוּפָה,"
As we have said above.	בְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַרְנוּ לְמַעְלָה.
And just as a mitzvah itself is a refinement of the soul until, through this, one cleaves to Him,	וּכְמוֹ שֶׁהַמִּצְוָה בְּעַצְמָה הִיא צַרוּף נַפְשׁוֹ עַד שֶׁעַל־יְדֵי־זֶה הַדְּבֵקוּת בּוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ,
how much more so Torah study, which is an even greater refinement of the soul,	יוֹתֵר בָּלֶמוּד בַּתּוֹרָה הוּא צַרוּף הַנָּפֶשׁ יוֹתֵר,
until one acquires cleaving to Him.	עַד שֶׁיִקְנֶה הַדְּבֵקוּת בּוֹ יִתְבָּרַדְּ.
For every wisdom is a refinement of the soul.	שֶׁכַּל חָכְמָה הִיא צַרוּף הַנָּפָשׁ.
And this is what they said at the end of Niddah (73a) and the last chapter of Megillah (28b):	וְזֶה אָמְרָם בְּסוֹף נִדָּה (עג, א) וּבְפֶּרֶק כָּתְרָא דִּמְגְלֶּה :((כח, ב
"Tanna D'vei Eliyahu: Whoever recites halachos every day is guaranteed to be a son of the World to Come,"	תַּנָּא דְבֵי אֵלִיֶּהוּ: כָּל הַשׁוֹנָה הַלָּכוֹת בְּכָל יוֹם מַבְטָח לוֹ שָׁהוּא בֶּן עוֹלָם הַבָּא,
as it is said (Habakkuk 3:6): "His ways are eternal,"	"שֶׁנָּאֱמֵר (חֲבַקוּק ג, ו): "הֲלִיכוֹת עוֹלָם לוֹ,
do not read 'ways' (halichos) but rather 'laws' (halachos).	אַל תִּקְרֵי "הַלִּיכוֹת" אֶלָּא הִלְכוֹת עוֹלָם',
Until here [the citation ends].	עַד כָּאן.
And the explanation of this matter is that halachah is a clarification and refinement of law,	וּבָאוּר עִנְיָן זֶה, כִּי הַהָּלָכָה הוּא בֵּרוּר וְצֵרוּף הַדִּין.
and therefore halachah is also a refinement of the person,	וּמְמִפְנֵי זֶה רָאוּי שֶׁהַהְלָכָה הִיא צַרוּף הָאָדָם גַּם־כֵּן,
until he becomes a "ben Olam Haba."	עָד שֶׁהוּא בֶּן עוֹלָם הַבָּא,
As will be explained in the next chapter.	וּכְמוֹ שֶׁיִּתְבָּאֵר בַּבֶּרֶק שָׁאַחַר זֶה.

And if you have a heart to understand, you will understand what they hinted when they said:	וְאָם יֵשׁ לְדָּ לֵב לְהָבִין, אָז תָּבִין מֵה שֶׁרָמְזוּ בַּמָּה שֶׁאָמְרוּ:
"He who studies halachos"—these are the things we said.	זֶה שֶׁשׁוֹנָה הַלָּכוֹת', הֵם הַדְּבָרִים שֶׁאָמַרְנוּ.
For one who learns halachos, even if he learns a small matter,	פִּי הַשׁוֹנָה הָלָכוֹת, אַף כִּי שׁוֹנָה בְּדָבָר קָטְן,
this thing ascends upward.	דָּבָר זֶה הוֹלֵךְ וְעוֹלֶה עַד לְמַעְלָה.
Therefore they said: "This one who studies halachos," and it is impossible to explain more.	וְלָכֵן אָמְרוּ: זֶה שָׁשׁוֹנָה הֲלָכוֹת', וְאִי אֶפְשָׁר לְפָרֵשׁ יוֹתֵר.
Therefore, my son, listen to my voice in that which I advise you:	ּוּלְכָךְ בְּנִי שְׁמַע בָּקוֹלִי לַאֲשֶׁר אִיעָצְדְ,
follow in the footsteps of the Fathers of the world,	הַלֵּךְ בְּעַקְבוֹת אֲבוֹת הָעוֹלָם,
who made the primary thing Torah study and its mitzvos,	ָשֶׁהֵם עָשׂוּ עָקָר - לָמוּד הַתּוֹרָה וּמִצְּוֹתֶיהָ,
and the fine details of mitzvos and their sub-details.	ָוִדְקְדּוּקֵי הַמִּצְוָה, וְדְקְדּוּקֵי דְּקְדּוּקֵיהָ,
And other wisdoms—even though their eyes saw everything, and nothing was hidden from them—	וּשְׁאָר חָכְמוֹת אַף כִּי כֹּל רָאֲתָה עֵינֵיהֶם, וְלֹא נֶעְלַם מֵהֶם דָּבָר,
nevertheless they cleaved to the ways of the Torah, its laws and judgments,	מָכָּל מָקוֹם דָּבְקוּ בְּדַרְכֵי הַתּוֹרָה, בְּדִינֶיהָ וּבְמִשְׁפָּטֶיהָ,
"Small and great are there." (Job 3:19)	קָטְן וְגָדוֹל שָׁם הוּא.
For the word of Hashem in the mitzvos is the refinement,	רָּי אָמְרַת הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ בַּמָּצְוֹת הֵם הַצֵּרוּף,
until a person reaches cleaving to Him, may He be blessed.	ּעַד שֶׁיַגִּיעַ הָאָדָם אֶל הַדְּבּוּק בּוֹ יְתְבָּרַדְ
Therefore it is written (Psalms 18:31): "He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him,"	וּלְפִיכָךְ כָּתוּב (תְּהָלִים יח, לא): "מָגֵן הוּא לְכֹל ,"הַחוֹסִים בּוֹ
and they expounded (Tanchuma Shemini 8): He protects him, he shelters him—	וָדָרְשׁוּ (הַנְחוּמָא שְׁמִינִי, ח) מַגִּין עָלָיו סוֹכֵךְ עָלָיו,
and this is the cleaving to Him, as explained above.	ָןהוּא הַדָּבּוּק בּוֹ, כְּמוֹ שֶׁנִתְבָּאֵר לְמַעְלָה.
And knowledge of the mitzvos is an even greater refinement of the soul.	יוֹתֵר יוֹתֵר בְּמָצְוֹת הוּא הַצֵּרוּף הַנָּפֶשׁ עוֹד יוֹתֵר.
Therefore, prepare these words and bind them upon your heart,	ָןהָכֵן הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלּוּ, וְקָשְׁרֵם עַל לְבָּדְ,
and make them a crown to your head.	ָרְאִשֶּׁך אוֹתָם עֲטָרָה לְרֹאשֶׁךְ,
And do not let your eyes stray from them,	קאַל יָלְזוּ מֵהֶם עֵינֶים,
for they are words of truth and uprightness, exceedingly clear.	פִי הֵם דָּבְרֵי אֱמֶת וְיֹשֶׁר בְּרוּרִים מְאֹד:

#### The Maharal of Prague

#### The Splendor of Israel - תפארת ישראל Chapter Thirteen - פַרָק שִׁלשַׁה עשׂר

#### **NOTE: Summary**

The Maharal teaches that mitzvos are not just commands to fulfill duties but are fundamentally a process of *tziruf hanefesh*—refining and purifying the soul. Even the smallest halachic discussion, such as those found in the debates of Abaye and Rava, should not be viewed as intellectual exercises but as alchemical tools to shape the soul into a vessel for *deveikus*—cleaving to Hashem. In contrast, even lofty ideas or esoteric knowledge unconnected to mitzvah practice do not effect the same transformation, as they lack the refining fire of Divine instruction.

Torah study, and especially the study of *halachah*, carries an even more elevated power of soul-refinement, drawing on verses like "Kol imras Elokah tzerufah" ("Every word of G-d is pure") and "Halichos olam lo"—interpreted as *halachos*—to prove that those engaged in daily halachic study are assured a portion in the World to Come. The Maharal emphasizes that this is not merely reward, but the *natural consequence* of being shaped by Divine fire.

The discourse concludes with passionate advice: follow in the footsteps of our sages, who knew all wisdom yet chose to attach themselves to Torah and mitzvos because therein lies the only true pathway to *dveikus* and eternal refinement. This path is not only the holiest but the most secure—"Magen hu lechol hachosim bo"—Hashem is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.

#### **Practical Takeaway**

This teaching compels us to reframe how we see our daily learning and mitzvah performance. Rather than seeing mitzvos as obligations or Torah study as academic, we are to approach each moment of halachah, each mitzvah—no matter how small—as a spiritual crucible. Every halachic question, every nuanced observance, is a chance to align ourselves with Hashem's truth and purify our souls. Focus not on the loftiness of topics but on their connection to mitzvah—because that is where true transformation lies. Halachah isn't just law—it is a ladder to eternity.

#### **Chassidic Story**

One evening, the Maharal of Prague was visited by a local nobleman who had heard of the rabbi's legendary wisdom and mystical abilities. Skeptical of religious rituals, the nobleman asked: "Rabbi, you speak of commandments and law. But surely, G-d—if He exists—is above such detail. Why would He care if you say a blessing this way or that, if you tie a strap here or there?"

The Maharal smiled. He brought the nobleman into his study and showed him a finely crafted glass prism. "Observe," he said, "the prism looks like nothing special. But shine a beam of sunlight through this precise point, and look what happens."

He aligned the prism with a ray of light, and the nobleman gasped as the beam split into a dazzling spectrum of colors that danced across the walls.

"Had I misaligned the angle by even a hair's breadth," said the Maharal, "the light would have passed through unchanged, and this beauty would remain hidden."

"That," he concluded, "is a mitzvah. You may not see its power unless aligned precisely. But when performed in exact detail—law by law, word by word—it reveals light hidden since Creation."

The nobleman was moved to tears and, it is told, later became a supporter of the Jewish community. The story is preserved in Czech Jewish lore and cited in various adaptations of the Maharal's life stories (see: Y. Y. Rosenberg's "Niflaos Maharal" and retellings in "Legends of the Maharal"). **END NOTE**