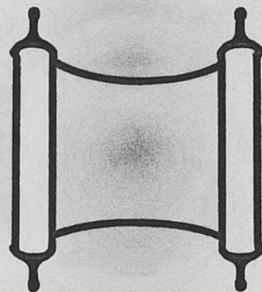


בס"ד

Alter Rebbe
Likkutei Torah
Parshas Va'eschanan
שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ



לע"נ

אלטר חיים בער בן זיסקינד אלכסנדר

Dedicated By:

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ליטשקאווסקי

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שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד ואהבת כו'

Introduction

This deeply layered discourse from the Alter Rebbe (Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, 1745–1812), the founder of Chabad Chassidus and author of the *Tanya* and *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, explores the inner dimensions of *Shema Yisrael* and the progression to *Ve'ahavta* (You shall love). The Alter Rebbe analyzes why not every Jew attains true love of God through daily recitation of *Shema* and how authentic Divine love is accessible only through profound inner work involving *bittul* (self-nullification), *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice), and the acceptance of the *ol malchus shamayim* (yoke of Heaven). Using vivid metaphors drawn from the human body and Kabbalistic cosmology, he illustrates how true Divine connection can be reached even amidst the concealments of this world.

Hear O Israel, Hashem is our God, Hashem is One, and [you shall] love, etc. And it needs to be understood: why is the name Hashem mentioned twice?

שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד ואהבת כו'.
 וצריך להבין למה הזכיר ב' פעמים ה'.

And furthermore, why did the Men of the Great Assembly interrupt between “One” and “And you shall love” with “Blessed is the name...”.

ועוד למה הפסיקו אנשי כנסת הגדולה בין אחד לואהבת בברוך שם כו'.

And we must also understand the meaning of “Shema” which is a language of gathering, as in “and Shaul heard the people,” and also a language of understanding.

וגם צריך להבין פירוש שמע שהוא לשון אסיפה מלשון וישמע שאול את העם וגם לשון הבנה.

And behold, “And you shall love” is a language of command, and also a language of future. The explanation is: the verse says that when a person will deepen his knowledge and understand that Hashem is One, he will come to the level of “And you shall love”—a future tense—“with all your heart,” with both your inclinations, that even the evil inclination will be subdued and nullified in relation to the love of Hashem.

והנה ואהבת הוא לשון צווי וגם לשון עתיד. פירוש שאומר הכתוב ששניעמין בדעתו ויבין שה' אחד יבוא לבחינת ואהבת לשון עתיד בכל לבבך בשני יצרך. שאפילו היצר הרע הוא נכנע ונטל לגבי אהבת ה'.

And behold, every person recites twice a day the recitation of Shema, morning and evening, and nevertheless they do not reach the level of “And you shall love.”

והנה כל אחד ואחד אומר ב' פעמים בכל יום קריאת שמע שחרית וערבית ואף על פי כן אינם מגיעים לבחינת ואהבת.

But the matter is as follows: behold it is written, “See I have set before you today life... and you shall choose life to love Hashem your God with all your heart, for He is your life.”

אבל הענין הוא כי הנה כתיב ראה נתתי לפניך היום את החיים כו' ובחרת בחיים לאהבה את ה' אלקיך בכל לבבך כי הוא חייך.

That is, every single person who wants to serve Hashem needs to first know the nature of his own choice.

הינו כל אחד ואחד שרוצה לעבד ה' צריך לדעת בתחלה הבחירה שלו.

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Therefore it is written: "And you shall choose life."

וְלָכֵן פְּתִיב וּבַחֲרַת בְּחַיִּים

But we must understand—who is it that would not want to choose life? After all, every person loves life! And on the contrary, one who loves life is drawn to the opposite, namely, the pleasures of this world.

וְצָרִיד לְהִבִּין מִי הוּא שְׂאִינוּ רוֹצֶה לְבַחֵר בְּחַיִּים וְהָלֹא כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד אוֹהֵב חַיִּים. וְאִדְרָבָּא מִי שְׂאוֹהֵב חַיִּים הוּא אִדְרָבָּא אוֹהֵב אֶת הַהֶפֶךְ דִּהֵינּוּ. תַּעֲנוּגֵי עוֹלָם הַנֶּה.

So how can it be written, "And you shall choose life to love Hashem your God," and yet the evil inclination also loves life?

וְאִיד פְּתִיב וּבַחֲרַת בְּחַיִּים לְאַהֲבָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ. וְהָלֹא הֵיצֵר הָרַע אוֹהֵב אֶת הַחַיִּים.

But one needs to understand: what is truly called "life"?

אֵלָּא צָרִיד לְדַעַת מַה נִּקְרָא חַיִּים

Behold it is written: "And God said, Let there be a firmament... and it shall divide," etc., and "God made the firmament and divided between the waters that are beneath the firmament and the waters that are above the firmament."

הִנֵּה פְּתִיב וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי רָקִיעַ כו' וְהִי מַבְדִּיל כו' וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָרָקִיעַ וַיַּבְדֵּל בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מִתַּחַת לָרָקִיעַ וּבֵין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל לָרָקִיעַ.

And it is necessary to understand: why, in this statement, was there a change more than in the other statements, where the matter of the division of the firmament was stated twice—"and it shall divide," and "He divided"?

וְצָרִיד לְהִבִּין לָמָּה שִׁנְיָה בְּמֵאמְרֵי זֶה יוֹתֵר מִבְּשָׂאָר מֵאֲמָרִים שְׁנֵאֲמַר עֲנִינוּ הַבְּדֵלֶת הָרָקִיעַ שְׁנֵי פַעַמִּים. וְהִי מַבְדִּיל וַיַּבְדֵּל.

But behold, from my flesh I shall perceive God. For example: all the life-force within man is drawn from the heart. That is, for instance, the formation of voice and speech comes from the heart to the lungs and from the lungs to the trachea—this is the voice and speech that comes from them.

אָבֵל הִנֵּה מִבְּשָׂרִי אֲחֻזָּה אֵלֹהִים מִשָּׁל כָּל הַחַיּוֹת שֶׁבָּאֲדָם נִמְשָׁךְ מִן הַלֵּב דִּהֵינּוּ עַד"מ הַתְּהוּוֹת קוֹל וְהַדְּבוּר הוּא שֶׁנִּמְשָׁךְ מִן הַלֵּב לְרִיאַה וּמִן הַרִיאַה לְקִנָּה וְזֶהוּ קוֹל וְדְבוּר שֶׁיוֹצֵא מֵהֶם.

And even the brain receives life-force from the heart, that ascends from the heart to the brain to think and to contemplate. And behold, this is the drawing down of spiritual vitality from the heart from which come speech and thought.

וְגַם אֶפְלוֹ הַמוֹחַ מִקְבֵּל חַיּוֹת מִן הַלֵּב שֶׁעוֹלָה מִן הַלֵּב לַמוֹחַ לְחֹשֶׁב וּלְהַרְהֵר וְהִנֵּה זֶהוּ בְּחִינַת הַמְּשַׁכֵּת חַיּוֹת רוּחָנִי מִן הַלֵּב שֶׁיִּמְשָׁךְ מִזֶּה הַדְּבוּר וְהַמְחַשְׁבָּה.

Likewise, physical life-force also extends from the heart to all the limbs—and this is the blood that flows from the heart to all the limbs. And from this, the growth of flesh occurs. And this blood is produced from food that is processed in the stomach and liver, and the choicest part rises to the heart, while the waste exits externally through the intestines.

וְכֵן נִמְשָׁךְ כֹּחַ חַיּוֹת גִּשְׁמִי לְכָל הָאֲבָרִים וְהוּא דָם הַנִּמְשָׁךְ מִן הַלֵּב לְכָל הָאֲבָרִים וּמִזֶּה נַעֲשֶׂה גְדוּל הַבָּשָׂר וְדָם זֶה נַעֲשֶׂה מִן הַמֵּאֲכָל שֶׁמִּתְבָּרֵר בְּקִיכָה וְכִבְד וְהַמּוֹבָחָר עוֹלָה לְלֵב וְהַפְּסוּלֶת יוֹצֵאת דָּרֵךְ בְּנֵי מַעֲיִם לַחוּץ.

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And all this is distributed through the membrane that divides, that is, the courtyard of the liver, which separates between the organs of breathing and the organs of digestion.

So too, exactly so, in the analogue, so to speak. Behold it is written: “The Rock of my heart”—that the entire vitality is drawn from Him, may He be blessed, as it is written: “And You give life to all.”

And behold, there are also two types of flow: the first is called the aspect of Upper Waters—that is, the Supernal Delight, “Then you shall delight in Hashem.”

And the second is the Lower Waters—these are the waste, the physical pleasures of This World, which are drawn through the partition and firmament that separates between the Upper Waters and the Lower Waters.

And this is [the meaning of] “And you shall choose life”—the Upper Life, which is the aspect of the Tree of Life and the Supernal Delight, and to despise physical pleasures, which are from the Lower Waters, from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

But how can one reach this level? It is through the recitation of Shema in the morning and evening. “Shema” has a large letter Ayin.

The letter Ayin refers to the seven attributes: “Yours, Hashem, is the greatness, and the strength,” etc.—the seven attributes, each of which includes ten [sub-attributes].

And “His Name” refers to the letters from the attributes [as explained in the discourse beginning “The Heavens are My Throne”]—that is, a radiance that is drawn and spreads to bring about existence from nothing.

That is, His Name, may He be blessed, gives life by itself. For indeed, it is written: “For His Name alone is exalted”—His Name is exalted; His glory is upon earth and heaven.

For even on the earth and heavens it is only His “glory”—a radiance, a glow from the letters.

וְכָל זֶה הוּא מִתְחַלֵּק עַל יְדֵי הַפֶּרֶסָא שֶׁמִּפְסָקֶת דְּהִינּוּ חֲצֵר הַכֶּבֶד שֶׁהוּא הַמִּבְדִּיל בֵּין אֲבָרֵי הַנְּשִׁימָה לְאֲבָרֵי הַמְּזוֹן.

כִּךְ מִמֶּשׁ בְּנִמְשָׁל כְּכִיכּוֹל הֵנָּה כְּתִיב צוּר לִבִּי שֶׁכָּלֵלוֹת הַחַיּוֹת נִמְשָׁק מִמֶּנּוּ וְיִתְבָּרַךְ כְּדִכְתִּיב וְאַתָּה מְחַיֶּה אֶת כָּלֶם.

וְהִנֵּה יֵשׁ גַּם כֵּן ב' בְּחִינּוֹת הַשְּׁפָעוֹת. הָא' הוּא הַנִּקְרָא בְּחִינַת מִים עֲלִיּוֹנִים הוּא תַעֲנוּג עֲלִיּוֹן “אָז” “תִּתְעַנֵּג עַל ה'.

וְהַב' הוּא מִים תַּחְתּוֹנִים הֵם הַפְּסוּלֹת תַעֲנוּגֵי עוֹלָם הֵנָּה שֶׁנִּמְשָׁקִים עַל־יְדֵי הַפֶּרֶסָא וְרָקִיעַ הַמִּבְדִּיל בֵּין מִים עֲלִיּוֹנִים לְמִים תַּחְתּוֹנִים.

וְזֶהוּ וּבְחֵרַת בְּחִיּוֹת הָעֲלִיּוֹנִים שֶׁהוּא בְּחִינַת עֵץ הַחַיִּים וְתַעֲנוּג עֲלִיּוֹן וְלִמָּאֹס בְּתַעֲנוּגִים גִּשְׁמִיִּים שֶׁמִּבְחִינַת מִים תַּחְתּוֹנִים עֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע.

אָבֵל אֵיךְ יוֹכֵל לְהַגִּיעַ לְבְּחִינָה זוֹ הוּא עַל־יְדֵי קְרִיאַת שְׁמַע שְׁחֲרִית וְעֶרְבִית. שְׁמַע הוּא שֵׁם עֵי"ן רַבְתִּי.

עֵי"ן הוּא ז' מְדוֹת לָךְ ה' הַגְּדֹלָה וְהַגְּבוּרָה כו' ז' מְדוֹת כָּל אֶחָד כָּלוּל מֵעֶשֶׂר.

וְשֵׁם הוּא אוֹתִיּוֹת מִהֲמְדוֹת [כְּמוֹ שֶׁכְּתוּב בְּד"ה הַשְּׁמִים כְּסֵא] שֶׁהוּא הָאֶרֶץ הַנִּמְשָׁכֶת וּמִתְפַּשֵּׁט לְהוֹת יֵשׁ מֵאֵין.

דְּהִינּוּ שֶׁשְׁמוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ מְחַיֶּה בְּעֶצְמוֹ דְּהֵא כִּי נִשְׁגָּב שְׁמוֹ לְבָדּוֹ כְּתִיב שֶׁשְׁמוֹ הוּא נִשְׁגָּב הוֹדוֹ עַל אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם.

שֶׁאִפְלוּ עַל אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם אֵינוֹ אֵלָּא הוֹדוֹ זִיו הָאֶרֶץ מִהֲאוֹתִיּוֹת.

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And this is the aspect of “By the word of Hashem the heavens were made,” in which there is a division of time. That is: on the first day, “Let there be light.” On the second day, “Let there be a firmament.”

וְהוּא בְּחִינַת בְּדִבְרֵי ה' שְׁמִים נִעְשׂוּ שְׁיֵשׁ בּוֹ
הַתְחַלְקוּת הַזְּמַן. דְּהֵינּוּ בְּיוֹם א' יְהִי אוֹר. בְּיוֹם ב'
יְהִי רָקִיעַ.

And “in His goodness He renews each day continually the act of creation.”

וּבְטוֹבוֹ מְחַדֵּשׁ בְּכָל יוֹם תָּמִיד מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרָאשִׁית.

And the matter is as follows: that every single day, the matter of that day is revealed in its time—that is, the aspect of the letters and the speech that flows from the attribute associated with that day.

וְהַעֲנֵן הוּא כֶּף שֶׁבְּכָל יוֹם וְיוֹם מִתְגַּלֶּה דִּבְרֵי יוֹם
בְּיוֹמוֹ הֵינּוּ בְּחִינַת הָאוֹתִיּוֹת וְהַדְּבוּר הַנִּמְשָׁךְ
מִבְּחִינַת הַמַּדָּה שֶׁבְּיוֹם הַהוּא.

That is, on the first day, the letters of “Let there be light” are drawn from the attribute of Chesed; on the second day, “Let there be a firmament,” etc.

דְּהֵינּוּ בְּיוֹם א' נִמְשָׁךְ אוֹתִיּוֹת יְהִי אוֹר מִבְּחִינַת מֶדֶת
הַחֶסֶד. בְּיוֹם ב' יְהִי רָקִיעַ וְכו'.

And Shabbos day is a return to its source, as it was before—like the analogy of a person who is thinking or speaking, and when he ceases from his speech or from his thought, he returns to his original source.

יוֹם שַׁבָּת הוּא חוֹזֵר לְמִקּוּרוֹ כְּמוֹ שֶׁהָיָה בְּמַשָּׁל
אָדָם שֶׁהוּא מְחַשֵּׁב אוֹ מְדַבֵּר וְכַשִּׁיכִיל מִדְּבוּרוֹ אוֹ
מִמַּחְשְׁבֹתוֹ חוֹזֵר לְמִקּוּרוֹ הָרִאשׁוֹן.

So too, so to speak, by Him, may He be blessed—it is called “Shabbos to Hashem your God.”

כֶּף בְּכִיכּוֹל אֲצִלוֹ יִתְבַּרְךָ נִקְרָא שַׁבָּת לַה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ.

And the meaning of “Yisrael” is: “Yisrael arose in [Divine] thought.” And when he contemplates that “Hashem is our God”—that the name Havayah is the aspect of contraction and expansion and drawing down—

וּפִירוּשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא יִשְׂרָאֵל עָלָה בְּמַחְשָׁבָה.
וְכַשִּׁמְתַּבִּינֵן שֶׁה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ שֵׁם הוִי הוּא בְּחִינַת
צְמֻצּוֹם וְהַתְפַּשְׁטוּת וְהַמְשָׁכָה

and that it becomes “our God,” the aspect of supernal thought, being the source of the creation of Jewish souls, who were created from the level of supernal thought, which is higher than the level of “Hashem is One.”

וְהוּא לְהִיּוֹת אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּחִינַת מַחְשָׁבָה עֵילָאָה לְהִיּוֹת
הַתְּהוּוֹת נִשְׁ"י שֶׁנִּתְהוּוּ מִבְּחִינַת מַחְשָׁבָה עֵילָאָה
—שֶׁהִיא גְבוּהָ יוֹתֵר מִבְּחִינַת הוִי אֶחָד

which is contraction, expansion, and drawing down to be the level of speech, from which the source of the creation of the seven firmaments and the earth and the four directions of the world (alluded to in the letters of “Echad”) originates.

שֶׁהוּא צְמֻצּוֹם וְהַתְפַּשְׁטוּת וְהַמְשָׁכָה לְהִיּוֹת בְּחִינַת
דְּבוּר שֶׁמִּזֶּה שָׂרֵשׁ הַתְּהוּוֹת ז' רָקִיעִים וְהָאָרֶץ וְד'
רוּחוֹת הָעוֹלָם הַנִּרְמְזִים בְּחִינַת דְּ"א דְּאֶחָד

And as mentioned above in the analogy: from the heart extends vitality both to speech and also to the brain to think and contemplate—and the extension to the level of thought is higher.

וְכַנִּל' בְּמַשָּׁל מִן הַלֵּב נִמְשָׁךְ חַיּוֹת לְדְבוּר וְגַם לַמוֹחַ
לְחַשֵּׁב וְלַהֲרַר וְהָיָה הַמְשָׁכָה לְבְּחִינַת מַחְשָׁבָה הוּא
גְבוּהָ יוֹתֵר כו'.

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And this is the reason it says two names of Havayah. And likewise, it is understood Above as well: that the meaning of “Hashem is our God” refers to Jewish souls that arose in thought—

וְזֶהוּ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר ב' שְׁמוֹת הו"י. וְכֵן יוֹבֵן גַּם כֵּן לְמַעַלָּה
 —שֶׁפִּירוּשׁ הו"י אֱלֹהֵינוּ הֵינוּ נִשְׁ"י עָלוּ בַּמַּחְשְׁבָה

which is higher even than the level of the drawing down from the level of speech, and even higher than the level of angels—“And by the breath of His mouth all their host [was created],” etc.

שֶׁהוּא גְבוּהָ יוֹתֵר מִבְּחִינַת הַמַּשְׁכָּה דְּבְחִינַת דְּבוּר
 וְאֶפְלוּ מִבְּחִינַת מַלְאָכִים “וּבְרוּחַ פִּיו כָּל צָבָא”
 כו'.

And the concept is that the level of “Hashem is One”—the word “One” only applies in the context of the chaining order of worlds (hishtalshelus)—the heavens and the earth, which are spiritual and physical six directions, etc.,

וְהַעֲנֵן שֶׁבְּחִינַת הו"י אֶחָד אֵין נּוֹפֵל לְשׁוֹן אֶחָד אֶלָּא
 בְּהַשְׁתַּלְשְׁלוֹת בְּחִינַת שְׁמִים וְאַרְצָן כו' שֶׁהֵם בְּחִינַת
 —שֵׁשֶׁת קְצוֹת רוּחָנִיִּים וְגִשְׁמִיִּים כו'

and He, may He be blessed, is One within them, because they are nullified to Him, may He be blessed [as explained in Parshas Behaaloscha and on the verse “And I appeared”].

וְהוּא יִתְבָּרַךְ אֶחָד בָּהֶם לְפִי שֶׁהֵם בְּטָלִים אֵלָיו
 [יִתְבָּרַךְ] [וְכַמֵּ"שׁ בְּפֶרֶשׁת בְּהַעֲלֹתָהּ וְעַל־פִּי וְאַרְא

But the level of “Hashem is our God” is a drawing down from the level of “Yachid”—He is Yachid (Only One) and Unique, and He alone is.

אֶבֶל בְּחִינַת הו"י אֱלֹהֵינוּ הוּא הַמַּשְׁכָּה מִבְּחִינַת יְחִיד
 שֶׁהוּא יִתְבָּרַךְ יְחִיד וּמִיָּחִיד וְהוּא לְבִדּוֹ הוּא

And as it says: “The seed of Yitzchak, his only one”—which is the level of the Life of Life, beyond even spiritual life, which is the level of “And You give life to all.”

וְכַמֵּאֱמַר וְרַע יִצְחָק יְחִידוֹ שֶׁהוּא בְּחִינַת חַי הַחַיִּים
 שֶׁלְמַעַלָּה אֶפְלוּ מִבְּחִינַת חַיִּים הַרוּחָנִיִּים שֶׁהוּא
 “בְּחִינַת” “וְאַתָּה מַחְיָה אֶת כָּלֶם

The level of “Ve'atah” (And You) refers to the letters of speech—from Alef to Tav and the five articulations of the mouth.

בְּחִינַת “וְאַתָּה” אוֹתִיּוֹת הַדְּבוּר מֵא' עַד ת' וְה'
 מוֹצְאוֹת הֶפֶה

And this is [the meaning of] “Who sustains life.” And as it is said: “Yachid, Life of the Worlds, King”—He is Yachid and Unique, and the life of the worlds comes only from the level of “King,” etc.

וְזֶהוּ מְכַלְכֵּל חַיִּים. וְכַמֵּאֱמַר “יְחִיד חַי הַעוֹלָמִים
 מֶלֶךְ” —שֶׁהוּא יִתְבָּרַךְ יְחִיד וּמִיָּחִיד וְחַי הַעוֹלָמִים
 אֵינוֹ אֶלָּא מִבְּחִינַת מֶלֶךְ כו'

And this is [the meaning of] “For with You is the source of life.” And when one contemplates this—that “Hashem is our God” is truly the level of Yachid, as it says, “One is My dove,” “One is she,” meaning that the soul is called “Yechidah” (only one) because it receives from the level of Yachid.

וְזֶהוּ כִּי עִמָּךְ מְקוֹר חַיִּים. וְכַשֶּׁמִּתְבּוֹנֵן בְּזֶה שֶׁהוּי
 אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּחִינַת יְחִיד מִמַּשׁ וְכַמֵּ"שׁ “אַחַת הִיא יוֹנִתִי
 אַחַת הִיא” —הֵינוּ מֵה שֶׁהַנֶּשְׁמָה נִקְרְאָת יְחִידָה עַל
 שֵׁם שֶׁמְקַבֶּלֶת מִבְּחִינַת יְחִיד

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And through this contemplation, he will automatically come to the level of “And you shall love Hashem your God” in the truest sense—with all your heart, in the aspect of the “Yechidah” of the soul, which is within every spark of a person. For so to speak, “Yisrael arose in [Divine] thought.”

ועל־ידי התבוננות זו ממילא יבוא לבחינת ואהבה את ה' אלקיך ממש בכל לבבך בבחינת יחידה שבנפש שבכל ניצוץ האדם בפיכול ישראל עליה במחשבה.

And this is what Moshe Rabbeinu, peace be upon him, said: “And we sat in the valley, opposite Beis Pe’or,” when he warned [them] in Mishneh Torah. He said this should be opposite Beis Pe’or.

ועל זה אמר משה רבינו עליו השלום “ונשב בגיא מול בית פעור” כשהזהיר על משנה תורה אמר ושיהיה מול בית פעור.

And “Pe’or” is the name of an idol, for they wanted to draw vitality from above to the Lower Waters—that is, the pleasures of This World.

ופעור הוא שם עבודה זרה שרצו להמשיך החיות מלמעלה למים התחתונים שהוא תענוגי עולם הזה.

And this is like the matter of the rebellious son and glutton and drunkard in the Torah portion Ki Seitzei.

ובענין בן סורר זולל וסבא שבתורה פ' כי תצא

Therefore, they would expose themselves in order to draw down the waste, etc., as written in Eitz Chayim, Shaar Lamed Alef, Chapter 5.

לכן היו מתריזין עצמם להמשיך הפסולת כו' וכמ"ש בעץ חיים שער ל"א פרק ה'

Therefore, [Moshe] warned: “And we sat in the valley, opposite Beis Pe’or.” For “valley” means the level of humility and submission and nullification to Him, may He be blessed—this is opposite and the very opposite of Beis Pe’or.

ולכן הזהיר “ונשב בגיא מול בית פעור” כי גיא הינו בחינת שפלות והקנעה וביטול אליו ותפירה. שהוא מול והפך בית פעור.

“For every man who went after Ba'al Pe’or, Hashem your God destroyed him”—meaning they became as if they never were.

פי כל איש אשר הלך אחרי בעל פעור השמידו ה' אלקיך—שנעשו מהם כלא היו.

But “And you who cleave to Hashem your God are alive...”

אבל “ואתם הדבקים בה' אלקיכם חיים” כו'

And the explanation of “And we sat in the valley” is that this is the idea of the Shema, which is recited sitting down. And the Shema is to bring a person to the level of self-nullification unto mesirus nefesh (self-sacrifice) in “Echad.”

ופירוש “ונשב בגיא” יש לומר שזהו ענין קריאת שמע שהיא מיושב. וקריאת שמע הוא להיות “בחינת ביטול למסירת נפש ב”אחד

And behold, before the destruction of the First Temple, when the souls were lofty, they were able to reach the level of “Ve’ahavta” through contemplation alone—“Shema Yisrael... Ve’ahavta.”

והנה קדם חרבן בית ראשון שהיו נשמות גבוהות היו יכולים להגיע ל”ואהבת” על־ידי התבוננות “לבד” שמע ישראל” כו' “ואהבת

But after the destruction, one cannot reach “Ve’ahavta” except through “Baruch Shem kevod malchuso,” which is the acceptance of the yoke of His kingship.

אבל אחר החרבן אינו יכול להגיע ל”ואהבת” אלא על־ידי “ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו” שהוא קבלת על מלכותו.

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And with this is answered the above question: why does not every person reach the level of “Ve’ahavta”? For in order to now reach the level of “Ve’ahavta,” it must be through the acceptance of the yoke of Heaven—this is the meaning of “Baruch Shem kevod malchuso,” which they required to be said before “Ve’ahavta.”

ובנה מתורץ הקשנא דלעיל למה אין כל אחד מגיע לבחינת ואהבת כי כדי להגיע עכשיו לבחינת ואהבת צריך להיות על-ידי קבלת על מלכות שמים שנהו ענין פרוף שם כבוד מלכותו שהצריכו לומר קדם ואהבת.

And this is the matter of subjugating the Other Side—that is, “nullify your will,” the nullification of physical desire. This is the aspect of service and the acceptance of the yoke of His kingship, for “there is no king without a nation,” which comes from the word “amomus”—dullness—that there is a being and a thing, and yet he nullifies his will entirely.

והינו ענין לאכפנא סטרא אחרא דהינו בטל רצונה בטול הרצון גשמי הוא בחינת עבודה וקבלת על מלכותו יתברך דאין מלך בלא עם לשון עממות שהוא יש ודבר ואף-על-פי-כן מבטל רצונו מכל וכל.

And anything that is not with the nullification of will is not called “service” at all (see what is written on Parshas Shelach on the verse “And now let the power [of Hashem] be great,” and on the verse “For with You is the source of life”).

וכל דבר שאינו בבטול רצון אינו נקרא עבודה כלל (ועין מה שכתוב בפרשת שלח על-פי “ועתה”) (“גדל” ועל-פי “כי עמך מקור חיים”).

And “nullification of will” means literally—to do the opposite of what the heart desires, both in the aspect of “turn from evil” and in the aspect of “do good.”

ובטול רצון הינו כפשוטו לעשות הפך מה שהלב חומד, בין בבחינת “סור מרע” בין בבחינת “ועשה טוב”.

In “turn from evil” it is: “sanctify yourself in what is permitted to you”—this is the aspect of a vow. “When a man makes a vow to Hashem”—vows are a fence for abstinence, which brings to holiness. This is the aspect of love “with all your heart.”

ב“סור מרע” הוא “קדש עצמך במותר לך” והוא בחינת נדר “ואיש כי ידור נדר לה” נדרים סייג לפרישות מביא לידי קדושה—הוא בחינת “בכל לבבך”. (ועין מה שכתוב על-פי “ראשי המטות” (כו').

And sometimes it is said that “cleanliness” brings to “abstinence”—and this is because before the destruction, they attained the level of “vow” (see Zohar Raya Mehemna at the end of Parshas Yisro, 291b): “A vow is above, and they are life...” and see what is written in the explanation of “life.”

ופעמים נאמר “נקיות מביא לידי פרישות” והינו שקדם התרבו השיגו בחינת נדר (עין פרע”מ סו”פ יתרו דף צ”א ע”ב) “נדר איהו לעילא ואינון” “חי” כו'. ועין מה שכתוב בפירוש “חיים”.

But nowadays we say “bli neder” (without a vow).

אבל כהיום אנחנו אומרים בלי נדר.

And in the aspect of “do good,” it is the opposite—that is, “one who reviews his lesson one hundred times is not like one who reviews it one hundred and one times.”

ובבחינת “ועשה טוב” ההפך הוא, הינו “אינו דומה שונה פרקו מאה פעמים לשונה פרקו מאה” — “פעמים ואחד”

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For that one extra time which is beyond one's habit is more significant than the one hundred which are habitual. So too with charity: the extra coin that a person gives beyond his norm is more precious than the usual amount.

שהפעם האחד שהוא יותר מרגילותו חשוב ממאה אשר הוא רגילותו. וכן בצדקה שהפרוטה שהוא נותן יותר מרגילותו חשוב ביותר מן הרגילות.

And this is the acceptance of the yoke of Heaven, and through this one can come to the level of "Ve'ahavta... with all your might."

וזהו קבלת על מלכות שמים ועל-ידי זה יכול לבוא "לבחינת" ואהבת "בכל מאדך".

For behold, it is written: "Light is sown for the righteous," and "I will sow her for Me in the land" (see what is written on the verse "When Pharaoh sent forth...").

כי הנה כתוב "אור נרע לצדיק" ו"נרעתיה לי" ("בארץ") (ועין מה שכתוב על-פי "בשלה פרעה").

And this is the general rule: that it is impossible to transfer from one existence to another except through nullifying one's essence—like the analogy of planting: one seed is planted, and it does not grow until it decays. And when it decays, many stalks grow from it.

וזהו כלל שלא יוכל השתנות מיש ליש אחר אלא בבטיל מהותו כמשל הזריעה שזורעין גרעין אחד אינו צומח עד שנקרב, וכשנקרב צומחים ממנו כמה שבולים.

So too, exactly so, in the analogue: when one nullifies his will and subjugates the Other Side, then he can come to the level of "Ve'ahavta... with all your might"—the level of great love that cannot be received in a vessel.

כך ממש בנמשל כשמבטל רצונו ואתפכית סטרא אחרא אזי יוכל לבוא לבחינת "ואהבת בכל מאדך" בחינת אהבה רבה שאינה יכולה להתקבל בכלי.

For the level of "with all your soul" is love that is received in the mind, which is a vessel. But the level of "with all your might" cannot be held by any vessel—its vessel is the attribute of speech, the mouth, and the Oral Torah.

שבחינת "ובכל נפשך" הוא בחינת אהבה שנתקבל במוח שהוא בחינת קלי. אבל בחינת "ובכל מאדך" לא הנה בשום קלי, אלא הקלי שלה הוא מלכות פה ותורה שבעל פה קרינו לה.

And it is called "the command of the King"—permitted and forbidden, impure and pure, valid and invalid, Mishnah, etc.

ונקראת מצות המלך אסור ומותר טמא וטהור כשר ופסול ומתניתין וכו'.

And this is [the meaning of the verse] "So shall your seed and your name stand." "Your seed" is the level of "Light is sown"—"Happy are those who sow," etc.

וזהו "כן יצמוד זרעכם ושםכם"—"זרעכם הוא בחינת" אור נרוע, "אשריכם זורעי" כו'.

And "your name" refers to "And David made a name"—the acceptance of the yoke of Heaven, which is the aspect of bittul, the decay of the seed, through which growth becomes possible.

"שםכם" בחינת "ועש דוד שם" קבלת על מלכות שמים שהוא בחינת הבטול רקבת הגרעין שעל-ידי זה יוכל להיות הצמיחה.

(And behold, through this Knesses Yisrael is called "Tamasi" (My perfect one), for they draw down that the revelation below should be like the revelation Above.

והנה על-ידי זה נקראת כנסת ישראל בחינת "תמתי" שממשיכים שגם למטה יהיה הגילוי כמו (למעלה).

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And this is what is written regarding the future: "And a spring shall go forth from the House of Hashem and water the valley of Shittim"—which refers to the Lower Waters.

וְהָיוּ שְׁכָתוֹב לְעֵתִיד "וּמַעַיִן מִבֵּית ה' יֵצֵא וְהִשְׁקָה אֶת נַחַל הַשִּׁטִּים"—שֶׁהוּא בְּחֵינַת מַיִם תַּחְתּוֹנִים.

[At that time,] they will no longer be in the state of "and from there it separated," etc., as explained elsewhere on the verse "Sixty are they, queens..."

שֶׁלֹא יִהְיוּ עוֹד בְּבְחִינַת "וּמַשֶּׁם יִפְרֹד" כו' וּכְמוֹ שְׁכָתוֹב בְּמָקוֹם אֲחֵר עַל־פִּי "שְׁשִׁים הֵמָּה מְלָכוֹת" כו'.

And this is through the acceptance of the yoke of Heaven and "with all your might," which is the aspect of a "well of living waters," that the waters become "living waters" by passing through the earth, etc.,

וְהִינּוּ עַל־יְדֵי בְּחֵינַת קִבְּלַת עַל מְלָכוֹת שָׁמַיִם וּבְכָל מַאֲדָה שֶׁהוּא בְּחֵינַת "בְּאֵר מַיִם חַיִּים" שֶׁנֶּעֱשִׂים הַמַּיִם בְּחֵינַת "מַיִם חַיִּים" עַל־יְדֵי עֲבָרָם דְּרָף הָאָרֶץ כו'.

as explained in Parshas Chukas on the verse "Ascend, O well..."

וּכְמוֹ שְׁכָתוֹב פָּרָשַׁת חֻקַּת עַל־פִּי "עֲלִי בְּאֵר" כו'.

And through this is drawn down the aspect of "and a spring shall go forth," etc., and water, etc.)

וְעַל־יְדֵי זֶה נִמְשָׁךְ בְּחֵינַת "וּמַעַיִן יֵצֵא" כו' ("וְהִשְׁקָה" כו').

And see regarding the verse "Shema Yisrael" in Midrash Rabbah, end of Parshas Vaeschanan, and in Vayechi, 89, and Vayikra, end of chapter 4; Shir HaShirim on the verse "And for me is his desire"; Eicha, end of "Nashkada al."

וְעֵינֵינוּ מַעֲבִירִים פָּסוּק "שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל" בְּרַבָּה סו"פ וְאַתְחַנּוּ, וַיְחִי פ' צח, וַיִּקְרָא סו"פ ד'. בְּשִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים עַל־פִּי פָּסוּק "וְעָלִי תִשְׁקָתוֹ", בְּאֵיכָה "סו"פ" נִשְׁקָדָה עַל

And there regarding the episode of Miriam on the verse "Therefore I shall wait for Him."

"וְשָׁם גַּבִּי מַעֲשֶׂה בְּמִרְיָם בְּפָסוּק "עַל כֵּן אוֹחִיל לוֹ".

And in the verse "Cheilki Hashem" ("Hashem is my portion"), and in Koheles in the verse "There is one," and in the verse "Better is one," and in Esther in the verse "There is one nation"—

וּבְפָסוּק "חֵילְקִי ה'", בְּקוֹהֵלֶת בְּפָסוּק "יֵשׁ אֶחָד", וּבְפָסוּק "מֶרַע אֶחָד", בְּאֶסְתֵּר בְּפָסוּק "יֵשְׁנוּ עִם אֶחָד"—

And this is [the meaning of the verse] "See, I have set before you today life and good, and death and evil."

וְהָיוּ "רְאֵה נִתְּנִי לְפָנֶיךָ הַיּוֹם אֶת הַחַיִּים וְאֶת הַטּוֹב "וְאֶת הַמָּוֶת וְאֶת הָרָע

And it was explained above that the level of "life" refers to what is above the "parsa" (barrier), and "death" refers to the waste that is separated below the parsa.

וּמִבּוֹאֵר לְעֵיל דְּבְחֵינַת "חַיִּים" זֶהוּ מָה שֶׁלְּמַעַל מִהַפָּרְסָא, וּ"מָוֶת" נִקְרָא הַפְּסָלֶת שֶׁנִּתְּבָרַר מִתַּחַת לַפָּרְסָא.

However, behold, "evil" is more bitter than death—that is, the matter of Pe'or, that they would make from the waste a complete and independent being. This is worse than the waste itself.

אָבָל הִנֵּה הָרָע" הוּא מֶרַע מָוֶת, דִּהְיָנוּ עֲנִינוּ פְּעוֹר שֶׁהָיוּ עוֹשִׂים מִהַפְּסָלֶת יֵשׁ גָּמוֹר—הָרִי זֶה רַע יוֹתֵר מֵעֲצָם הַפְּסָלֶת מִצַּד עֲצָמוֹ.

Alter Rebbe
Likkutei Torah
Parshas Va'eschanan

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד וְאַהֲבָה כו'

And similarly, the level of “good” is higher than the level of “life.” As our Sages say: “Better one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world than all the life of the World to Come.”

וְהִנֵּה עַל־דֶּרֶךְ זֶה בְּחִינַת הַטּוֹב הוּא לְמַעַל מִבְּחִינַת הַחַיִּים, וּכְמֵאֲמַר רַז"ל “יִפֶּה שְׁעָה אַחַת בְּתַשׁוּבָה וּמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה מִכָּל חַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא”.

And it is written: “For Your kindness is better than life,” for the vitality of all worlds is only from the two letters “Y-H”—“Hashem, the Rock of worlds,” “with the Yud Heh He created the world to come...”

וּבְתִיב “כִּי טוֹב חֶסֶדְךָ מִחַיִּים” כִּי חַיּוּת כָּל הָעוֹלָמוֹת הוּא רַק מִשְׁתֵּי אוֹתִיּוֹת י-ה—ה' צוּר עוֹלָמִים, “כִּיּוּד נִבְרָא הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא” כו'

and they are considered as nothing compared to His essence and being, blessed is He.

וְהֵם כָּלָא חֲשִׁיבִין לְגַבֵּי מַהוּתוֹ וְעֲצָמוּתוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ.

And also, as it is written: “And wisdom gives life...” but He, blessed is He, is far above wisdom—“He lives and is not [just] with life...” etc.

וְגַם כְּמוֹ שֶׁכְּתוּב “וְהַחֲכָמָה תַחְיֶה”, וְהוּא יִתְבָּרַךְ לְמַעַל מִמַּעַל מִחֲכָמָה—“חַי וְאֵל בְּחַיִּים” כו'

And it is written: “For with You is the source of life”—that even the level of the “source of life” is only “with You,” secondary and nullified to You...

וּבְתִיב “כִּי עִמָּךְ מְקוֹר חַיִּים”—שֶׁאַפְלוּ בְּחִינַת מְקוֹר הַחַיִּים הוּא רַק “עִמָּךְ”, טָפַל וּבִטֵּל לָךְ כו'

and see what is written in the explanation of “Uvetuvo mechadeish” (“and in His goodness He renews...”), in the discourse beginning “Shechorah ani.”

וְעֵינַי מֵה שֶׁכְּתוּב בְּפִירוּשׁ “וּבְטוּבוֹ מַחְדִּישׁ” בְּד"ה “שְׁחֹרָה אֲנִי”.

And this is the matter of the division of the firmament that is stated twice. And this drawing down comes through “with all your might,” etc.

וְזֶהוּ עֵינַי הַבְּדִלַת הָרָקִיעַ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר שְׁנֵי פַעַמִּים, וְהִמְשָׁכָה זֶה הִיא עַל־יְדֵי “בְּכָל מְאֹדְךָ” כו'

[NOTE Summary

The discourse opens with the classic verse *Shema Yisrael... Ve'ahavta*, and questions why it mentions Hashem's name twice, and why *Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuso* is interposed before *Ve'ahavta*. The Alter Rebbe explains that true love of God doesn't come from intellectual contemplation alone. The name “Shema” itself connotes both hearing and internalization. *Ve'ahavta* is phrased in the future tense because love is not automatic—it is the result of deep contemplation on the unity of God and the nullification of all else before Him.

Why then, despite saying *Shema* twice daily, do most not reach *Ve'ahavta*? The answer lies in *Bechira* (free choice). The Torah tells us to *choose life*, yet the true definition of life is Divine connection—far above the pleasures of this world. The “Lower Waters,” representing physical indulgences, are called “death” or even “evil” when a person makes them into an independent “somethingness.” In contrast, “life” is what flows from above the partition (*parsa*), and “good” is even higher than life—it is when man serves God with true submission and *mesirus nefesh*.

Alter Rebbe
Likkutei Torah
Parshas Va'eschanan
 שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד וְאַהֲבָה כו'

To achieve *Ve'ahavta*, one must go through *Baruch Shem*, which represents accepting the yoke of Heaven and surrendering personal will—even in things that are permitted. This is symbolized by the decay of a seed before it grows: one's self must dissolve in Divine service before spiritual growth can flourish. There is also an elevation through small acts of going beyond habit—such as studying Torah or giving charity one step beyond one's norm. These are expressions of *Bechol Me'odecha*—loving God “with all your might,” which transcends reason and measure.

The discourse also draws parallels between bodily processes (heart to brain to speech) and the flow of spiritual life from God's essence through the “upper waters” (delight and wisdom) down to the “lower waters.” Through *bittul* and the acceptance of Divine kingship, the lower is transformed into a vessel for the higher. Ultimately, the goal is for the wellspring to emerge from the House of God and water the Valley of Shittim—the elevation and refinement of even the lowest aspects of the world.

Practical Takeaway

True Divine love (*Ve'ahavta*) is not reached by intellect alone, but through **inner surrender**, **breaking habitual patterns**, and accepting the yoke of Heaven even in mundane matters. Start small: do one act of kindness or Torah beyond your comfort zone. Push just once past your usual measure—and you've touched *Bechol Me'odecha*. Accept God's kingship not only in lofty moments, but especially when it's hard or uncomfortable. That's where the “seed decays” and true growth begins.

Chassidic Story

[The Alter Rebbe's Selfless Discipline – Source: *Beis Rebbe*, vol. 1]

Once, the Alter Rebbe was engrossed in learning late at night. His infant grandchild—who would become the Tzemach Tzedek—was crying in his crib. The Alter Rebbe, though immersed in Divine thought, noticed the child. But instead of interrupting his learning, he knocked gently on the ceiling with his cane. His son, the Mittlerer Rebbe, who was studying in the attic above, immediately came down and calmed the child.

Later, the Mittlerer Rebbe asked his father why he didn't attend to the child himself. The Alter Rebbe explained: “*My role is to train you in the avodah of bittul—selflessness. If you are to serve as a Rebbe, you must always hear the cry of a child, even when you're high in the heavens.*”

This story reflects the central theme of the maamar: **true love and Divine service are born not in spiritual comfort, but in breaking oneself, hearing the cry of the world, and acting with *mesirus nefesh*.**

Alter Rebbe
Likkutei Torah
Parshas Va'eschanan
 שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד וְאַהֲבַת כו'

TPX (Therapeutic-Psychological Integration)

Based on the Alter Rebbe's discourse on "Shema Yisrael... Ve'ahavta"

This profound discourse by the Alter Rebbe doesn't just explore theology—it maps the inner terrain of the human soul, offering a therapeutic blueprint for genuine transformation. At its core lies the human struggle to *feel* connection—to authentically love, to transcend self, and to live with higher purpose.

Many people recite *Shema Yisrael* daily, sincerely wanting to reach that next line: *Ve'ahavta*—"And you shall love." But often, they don't feel that love. Why? The Alter Rebbe identifies something deeply psychological: **our inner resistance to surrender**. Love—real love of the Divine—requires a breakdown of self. It demands not just understanding, but a *letting go* of ego, habit, and control.

The Torah says "*choose life*," but the Alter Rebbe reframes what *life* really is. Most of us equate "life" with pleasure, productivity, or success. But the Rebbe teaches that true life is **connection to something higher than the self**. This requires us to go through our own "decay"—letting parts of the ego dissolve like a seed in the soil so that real growth can begin.

In modern psychological terms, this resembles **radical acceptance** and **ego disidentification**. We're invited to stop deriving identity from our pleasures, our opinions, even our spiritual performances—and instead engage in actions of *kabbalas ol* (acceptance of Divine responsibility), even when we don't feel immediate payoff. These moments—when we stretch just beyond our comfort zone—are where deep transformation happens.

Whether it's pushing ourselves to give a little more charity than usual, to study one extra page, or to say no to something permissible but ego-driven—these are the acts that rewire the soul and reshape the psyche. The Alter Rebbe calls this *Bechol Me'odecha*—loving God "with all your might," meaning **beyond your norms, beyond your ego's narrative**.

The metaphor of the seed is vital: only when the seed rots can it grow. This reflects a truth known in trauma therapy, addiction recovery, and spiritual awakening alike: **sometimes the breaking point is the turning point**. When the part of us that clings to control or self-importance dies, something more alive can emerge.

Story

Psychological Parallel: Viktor Frankl in the Camps

Alter Rebbe
Likkutei Torah
Parshas Va'eschanan
 שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד וְאַהֲבָתָה כו'

Viktor Frankl, a Jewish psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, once described how some prisoners in Auschwitz managed to survive spiritually. One day, while enduring horrific labor, a prisoner nudged Frankl and whispered, “Look! The sunset—how beautiful.”

That moment was a turning point. In the midst of death, oppression, and total loss of control, this man still chose to see beauty. He exercised *choice* not in external freedom, but in **inner alignment** with meaning. Frankl later wrote: “*Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances.*”

This reflects the Alter Rebbe’s teaching: **even in exile, even after the destruction of the Temple, a Jew can choose life**. Not superficial life, but the life of *Bechol Me’odecha*—of stretching just one step beyond the self. That’s where real love of God—and real transformation—takes root. **END NOTE]**