

בס"ד

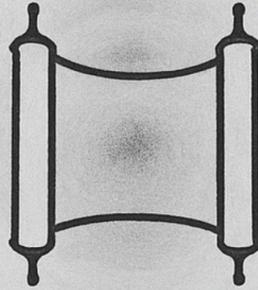
Alter Rebbe

Torah Ohr

Shemos

לְבַרְךָ יְהוָה אֵימָה אֵימָה סוֹפֵר אֵימָה

שׁוֹקֵל וְגוֹ



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

לע"נ

רבי שניאור זלמן בן רבי ברוך

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**Alter Rebbe
Torah Ohr
Parshas Shemos**

לְבַד יִהְיֶה אֵימָה אֵיךְ סוֹפֵר אֵיךְ שׁוֹקֵל וְגו'.

Introduction

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (the Alter Rebbe, Hebrew year five thousand five hundred forty five to Hebrew year five thousand five hundred seventy three [1745 to 1812]) in this maamar explores the profound relationship between Divine transcendence and Divine measurement, explaining how even Torah and mitzvot belong to the system of tzimtzum and measure, while their true source remains rooted in the infinite Essence of the Ein Sof. This teaching continues the discussion of “אֵיךְ סוֹפֵר אֵיךְ שׁוֹקֵל” and shows how authentic yirah, awe of Heaven, is born specifically from contemplating how the Infinite chooses to limit and measure Himself in order to give life to all worlds.

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| <p>Your heart will contemplate terror: Where is the scribe, where is the weigher, etc. (Isaiah 33:18) It is stated in the Zohar, in the Book of Concealment: “balanced in the balance.”</p> | <p>לְבַד יִהְיֶה אֵימָה אֵיךְ סוֹפֵר אֵיךְ שׁוֹקֵל וְגו'. אֵימָה בְּזֶהֱרָה סִפְרָא דְצָנִיעוּתָא תְּקִיל בְּמִתְקָלָא.</p> |
| <p>This refers to the concept of the measuring line, which measures and weighs all the ten sefirot of Atzilut with precise measure and limit.</p> | <p>וְהוּא עֲנֵנָן קוֹ הַמִּדָּה שֶׁהוּא הַמוֹדֵד וְשׁוֹקֵל כָּל הָעֵשֶׂר וְהַסְּפִירוֹת דְאֶצְלִיּוֹת בְּשִׁעוּר וּמִדָּה.</p> |
| <p>How much the drawing down and extension of the attribute of kindness will be, and how much the drawing down of the attribute of severity will be.</p> | <p>כַּמָּה יִהְיֶה הַמְּשֻׁכָּת וְהַתְּפִשְׁטוּת מִדַּת הַחֶסֶד וְכַמָּה יִהְיֶה הַמְּשֻׁכָּת מִדַּת הַגְּבוּרָה.</p> |
| <p>And how they will be divided into the aspect of right and left lines, into the four directions, and the six extremities, which are the six attributes of Zeir Anpin, etc.</p> | <p>וְאֵיךְ שִׁיתְחַלְקוּ בְּבְחִינַת קוּיִן יְמִיִן וְשְׂמָאל בְּאַרְבַּע וְרוּחוֹת וּמַעְלָה וּמַטָּה שֶׁהֵם וְזוֹצוֹת דְּזוּעִיר אֲנָפִין וְכו'.</p> |
| <p>And therefore the sefirot are called “measures,” because they were measured, as explained elsewhere.</p> | <p>וְלִפְיֶכָּה נִקְרָאוּ הַסְּפִירוֹת לְשׁוֹן מִדּוֹת עַל שֵׁם שֶׁנִּמְדְּדוּ כִּמוֹ שֶׁנִּתְבָּאֵר בְּמָקוֹם אַחֵר.</p> |
| <p>This measure is the aspect of severity and contraction, to contract so that the flow will be in measure and limit.</p> | <p>וּמִדָּה זֹאת הִיא בְּחִינַת גְּבוּרָה וְצִמְצוּם לְצִמְצוּם שֶׁתִּהְיֶה הַמְּשֻׁכָּה בְּשִׁעוּר וּמִדָּה וְכו'.</p> |
| <p>All of this is done through the aspect of the measuring line, which is called in the Zohar “the flashing lamp,” that pierces, etc.</p> | <p>וְכָל זֶה נַעֲשֶׂה עַל-יְדֵי בְּחִינַת קוֹ הַמִּדָּה שֶׁהוּא הַנִּקְרָא 'בְּזֶהֱרָה בּוֹצִינָא דְקָרְדוּנִיטָא דְנִקִּיב וְכו'.</p> |
| <p>This is the concept of severity, which through it clothes itself in the concealed mind.</p> | <p>שֶׁהוּא עֲנֵנָן גְּבוּרָה שֶׁעַל-יְדֵי מִתְלַבְּשֵׁת בְּמוֹחָא סְתִימָאָה.</p> |
| <p>About this the verse says: Where is the scribe, where is the weigher.</p> | <p>וְעַל זֶה אָמַר הַכָּתוּב אֵיךְ סוֹפֵר אֵיךְ שׁוֹקֵל. (ישעיהו (ל"ג:י"ח)</p> |

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| <p>The explanation is that one might have thought that since this measure and weighing is the aspect of severity and contraction.</p> | <p>פְּרוּשׁ דְּהִנּוּ סְלָקָא דְעֵתָא פִּינּוּן שְׁמַדָּה וּמְשַׁקֵּל זֶה הוּא בְּחֵינַת גְּבוּרָה וְצִמְצוּם.</p> |
| <p>Relative to the Essence of the Infinite Light, blessed be He, which is abstract from boundary and measure.</p> | <p>לְגַבֵּי עֲצָמוֹת אוֹר אֵין־סוֹף בְּרוּךְ הוּא הַמְּפָשֵׁט מִגְדָּר גְּבוּל וּמִדָּה.</p> |
| <p>And from the category of division into lines and sefirot, etc., rather He encompasses everything in one encompassing glance.</p> | <p>וּמִגְדָּר הַתְּחַלְקוֹת קוּיִן וּסְפִירוֹת וְכוּ', אֶלָּא סוֹבֵב הַכֹּל בְּסִקְרִיהָ אַחַת.</p> |
| <p>Before Him, darkness and light are equal, as is known.</p> | <p>וְקַמֵּיהָ פְּחֻשִׁיקָה פְּאוּרָה שְׁוִיִן פְּנוּדָע.</p> |
| <p>One might therefore have thought that this aspect of the measuring line is an independent entity.</p> | <p>אִם־כֵּן הִנּוּ סְלָקָא דְעֵתָא דְבְּחֵינָה זֶה דְקוּ הַמְּדָה הִיא מֵהוּת נִפְרָד וְכוּ.</p> |
| <p>Therefore it says: Where is the scribe, where is the weigher.</p> | <p>'עַל כֵּן אָמַר אֵימָה סוֹפֵר אֵימָה שׁוֹקֵל וְכוּ.</p> |
| <p>The explanation is that “Where” refers to the aspect of the great circle, the encompassing aspect.</p> | <p>פְּרוּשׁ אֵימָה הוּא בְּחֵינַת הָעִגּוּל הַגָּדוֹל בְּחֵינַת סוֹבֵב.</p> |
| <p>Before Him darkness and light are equal; behold, He Himself is truly the scribe and the weigher in measured balance.</p> | <p>דְּקַמֵּיהָ פְּחֻשִׁיקָה פְּאוּרָה שְׁוִיִן הִנּוּ הוּא עֲצָמוֹ מְמֹשׁ הוּא הַסּוֹפֵר וְהַשׁוֹקֵל בְּבְּחֵינַת מִתְקַלָּא.</p> |
| <p>And the measuring line mentioned above is not an independent entity, Heaven forbid.</p> | <p>וְאֵין זֶה מֵהוּת בְּפִנֵּי עֲצָמוֹ חַס וְשָׁלוֹם.</p> |
| <p>As it is written: From You is everything; He is all-powerful to humble Himself so greatly.</p> | <p>כִּי מִמֶּדָּה הַכֹּל פְּתִיב וְהוּא כָּל־יְכוֹל לְהַשְׁפִּיל עֲצָמוֹ כִּי.</p> |
| <p>To measure the sefirot with contraction and division.</p> | <p>'לְמַדּוֹד הַסְּפִירוֹת בְּצִמְצוּם וְהַתְּחַלְקוֹת וְכוּ.</p> |
| <p>This measure and contraction specifically derive from the encompassing, the great circle, which is called “Ehyeh.”</p> | <p>שְׁמַדָּה וְצִמְצוּם זֶה נִמְשָׁךְ דְּוָקָא מִן הַסּוֹבֵב הָעִגּוּל הַגָּדוֹל שְׁנִקְרָא אֵהְיֶה.</p> |
| <p>Because since He is exalted to sit, therefore He is able to humble Himself so greatly.</p> | <p>שְׁלֵהִיּוֹתוֹ מִגְּבִיּהָ לְשַׁבֵּת לָכֵן יְכוֹל לְהַשְׁפִּיל עֲצָמוֹ כִּי.</p> |
| <p>To measure all the individual details of the aspects within the worlds.</p> | <p>'לְמַדּוֹד כָּל פְּרֻטֵי הַבְּחֵינּוֹת שְׁבַע־עוֹלָמוֹת וְכוּ.</p> |
| <p>As it is written: “For the L-rd is exalted, yet He sees the lowly.”</p> | <p>וּכְמוֹ שְׁנִצְאָמַר כִּי רַם ה' וְשָׁפֵל יִרְאֶה. (תהלים קל"ח:ו')</p> |
| <p>And similar to what is written: “I will pass through the land of Egypt, I and not an angel.”</p> | <p>וּכְעֵין מַה שְׁנִצְאָמַר וְעַבְרַתִּי בְּאַרְצֵי מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי וְלֹא (מלאך. שמות י"ב:י"ב)</p> |

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For in the aspect of Egypt no angel was able to descend, except the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself, as it were.

שְׁבַחְחֵינֵת מְצַרִּים לֹא הָיָה יָכוֹל לִירֵד שׁוֹם מִלְאָךְ זֹלַת הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּכֹבוֹדוֹ וּבְעֶצְמוֹ כְּבִיכּוֹל.

As explained elsewhere.

כְּמוֹ שְׁנַתְבְּאָר בְּמָקוֹם אַחֵר.

Behold, the Torah as well is included within the aspect of contraction of the measuring line, for the Torah did not precede the world except by two thousand years, meaning two “alefs”: “I will teach you wisdom, I will teach you understanding.”

וְהִנֵּה גַם הַתּוֹרָה הִיא בְּכֻלָּל בְּחֵינֵת הַצְּמִצּוּם דְּקוֹן הַמְּדָה, שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה לֹא קִדְמָה לְעוֹלָם רַק אֶלְפִים שָׁנָה, הֵינּוּ בֵּית אֶלְפִין: אֶאֱלֶפֶד חֲכָמָה, אֶאֱלֶפֶד בִּינָה.

But the Infinite One, blessed be He, Himself is exalted and uplifted alone, abstracted from the category of contraction and division.

אָבֵל אֵי־סוֹף בְּרוּךְ הוּא עֶצְמוֹ רַם וְנִשְׂא לְבָדוֹ, מִפְּשֵׁט מְגֻדָּר צְמִצּוּם וְהִתְחַלְקוֹת.

He has no beginning and no end; therefore the Torah, which preceded the world only by two thousand years, is within the category of the contractions of the measuring line.

אֵין לוֹ תְּחִלָּה וְתַכְלָה, וְלָכֵן הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁלֹּא קִדְמָה לְעוֹלָם רַק אֶלְפִים שָׁנָה הִיא מְכַלֵּל בְּחֵינֵת הַצְּמִצּוּמִים דְּקוֹן הַמְּדָה.

As is known, all the commandments are aspects of measure and contraction, for example: a sukkah only up to twenty cubits, and tefillin must be square, etc., and similarly with all the commandments.

וְכֵמוֹ שְׁנוֹדָע שְׁכָל הַמְּצוֹת הֵן בְּחֵינֵת שְׁעוֹר וְצְמִצּוּם, סִפָּה רַק עַד עֶשְׂרִים אַמָּה (סוּכָה א:א), וְתַפְלִין מְרַבְּעוֹת דְּנִקְוָא (מִנְחוֹת ל"ה א), וְכֵהֵנָּה גְּוֹנָא בְּכָל הַמְּצוֹת.

However, in truth, “Where” itself is the scribe and the weigher.

אֵלֶּא שְׁבַחְאֵמַת אֵיךָ עֶצְמוֹ הוּא הַסּוֹפֵר וְהַשׁוֹקֵל וְכוּ'.

And it is stated here three times “Where,” corresponding to the three times “Holy,” for “holy” has the numerical value of four hundred ten, which are the four hundred ten hairs of Arich.

וְנִאֲמַר כָּאֵן ג' פְּעָמִים אֵיךָ, כְּנִגְדֵי ג' פְּעָמִים קְדוּשׁ (ישעיהו ו:ג), שֶׁקְדוּשׁ גִּימַטְרִיָּא ת"י, שֶׁהֵם ת"י נִימִין דְּאֲרִיךְ.

Therefore the angels say: “Where is the place of His glory,” for it is not grasped.

וְלֹאֵת אֲוִמְרִים הַמְּלֶאכִים: אֵיךָ מָקוֹם כְּבוֹדוֹ ((קְדוּשָׁה).

This is the aspect of “holy,” meaning separated, for no thought can grasp Him.

שְׁזֵהוּ בְּחֵינֵת קְדוּשׁ שֶׁהוּא מְבַדֵּל, דְּלֵית מַחְשְׁבָה (תְּפִיסָא בֵּיה זוהר).

The explanation of “Where is the scribe of the towers” is explained elsewhere on the verse “and Shaddai as towers.”

וּפִירוּשׁ אֵיךָ סוֹפֵר אֵת הַמְּגֻדָּלִים נִתְבְּאָר בְּמָקוֹם אַחֵר עַל פִּי וְשִׁדִּי כְּמִגְדָּלוֹת.

This is the meaning of “Your heart will contemplate terror.”

(וְזֵהוּ עֲנִן לְבַד יִהְיֶה אֵימָה (ישעיהו ל"ג:י"ח).

That is, when the understanding person contemplates this matter, how “Where is the scribe, where is the weigher,” that the aspect of “Where” itself is the scribe and the weigher.

דְּהֵינּוּ כְּשִׁיתְבּוֹנֵן הַמְּשַׁכֵּיל כְּעֲנִן זֶה, אֵיךְ שֶׁאֵיךָ סוֹפֵר אֵיךָ שׁוֹקֵל וְכוּ', שְׁבַחְחֵינֵת אֵיךָ עֶצְמוֹ הוּא הַסּוֹפֵר וְהַשׁוֹקֵל.

And He measures the vitality and the extension in all the detailed particulars of all that exists.

וּמִוֹדֵד הַחַיּוֹת וְהַתְּפִשְׁטוֹת בְּכָל פְּרִטֵי פְּרִטוֹת הַנִּמְצָאִים.

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Then awe and fear will fall upon him, in the aspect of exceedingly great reverence.

אֲזִי תִפּוֹל עָלָיו אֵימָה וְפָחַד בְּבַחֲבִיבַת יִרְאָה גְדוֹלָה עַד מְאֹד.

And this is “Your heart will contemplate terror.”

וְזֶהוּ לְבַד יִהְיֶה אֵימָה.

Then there will not be upon him an external fear lest his bread be lacking, and the like.

וְאֲזִי לֹא תִהְיֶה עָלָיו יִרְאָה חִיצוֹנִית פֶּן יִחְסַר לֶחֶמוֹ וְכִהְיֶה גְּנוּבָא.

As it is written: “The end of the matter, everything having been heard: fear God,” etc.

וְכֹתוּב סוֹף דְּבַר הַכֹּל נִשְׁמָע אֶת הָאֱלֹקִים יִרָא וְגו' (קהלת י"ב:י"ג).

[NOTE Summary:

The Alter Rebbe explains that the Torah itself is included within the framework of tzimtzum and measured limitation, known as the kav ha-midah. The Torah preceded the world by two thousand years, understood as two alefs, representing chochmah and binah, wisdom and understanding. Anything that has a beginning, even something as exalted as Torah, already belongs to the realm of measured revelation. In contrast, the Ein Sof Himself is exalted alone, entirely beyond limitation, division, beginning, or end.

Because Torah and mitzvot operate through defined measures, such as the halachic limits of a sukkah or the precise shape of tefillin, they express Divine will as it descends into structured reality. Nevertheless, this measured system does not originate from an independent force. Rather, the level called “איה” itself, the transcendent Divine reality beyond comprehension, is the true scribe and the true weigher. The source of all measurement is specifically the One who transcends all measurement.

The text highlights that the word “איה” appears three times, corresponding to the threefold declaration of “קדוש” in the angelic proclamation. “קדוש” signifies separation and transcendence, a level that no thought can grasp. For this reason, the angels declare “איה מקום כבודו,” acknowledging that the place of Divine glory is beyond their comprehension. This reflects the paradox that the highest transcendence is precisely what enables the deepest contraction and detailed governance of all existence.

When a person contemplates this idea, that the infinite “איה” Himself measures, weighs, and distributes life into every detail of creation, a deep and authentic awe is awakened. This awe is not fear of material lack or external threats, but a profound reverence rooted in awareness of Divine greatness. Such yirah displaces superficial anxieties and fulfills the verse, “The end of the matter, all having been heard: fear God.”

Practical Takeaway:

The Alter Rebbe teaches that true spiritual awe comes not from focusing on worldly insecurity, but from contemplating how the Infinite chooses to enter limitation for our sake. Regular reflection on this idea transforms fear into reverence, grounding a person emotionally and spiritually while freeing them from constant worry about material survival.

Alter Rebbe

Torah Ohr

Parshas Shemos

לְבַד יִהְיֶה אֵימָה אֵיךָ סוֹפֵר אֵיךָ שׁוֹקֵל וְגו'

Chassidic Story:

It is related that the Alter Rebbe once noticed a chassid who was visibly anxious about his livelihood. Instead of offering practical advice, the Alter Rebbe spoke with him about the precise measurements of mitzvot and the careful structure of halachah. The chassid was confused, not understanding how this addressed his worries. The Alter Rebbe then explained that the same G-d who set exact limits for a sukkah and exact dimensions for tefillin is the One who sustains every detail of a person's life. Those limits do not come from restriction, but from care.

The chassid later testified that this teaching shifted something deep within him. His anxiety about bread and income did not vanish overnight, but it lost its grip. He began to experience a quieter heart, rooted in yirah rather than fear. In time, he would say that learning to trust the measured kindness of the Infinite was more sustaining than any material assurance.

Therapeutic Reframing: When Limitation Is Not a Threat

A central emotional struggle in modern life is the experience of limitation as danger. Boundaries feel like loss, structure feels like confinement, and uncertainty quickly turns into anxiety. The Alter Rebbe reframes this entirely. Limitation is not the opposite of care. Limitation is how care becomes real.

The teaching explains that even Torah operates through defined measure. Two thousand years before creation, wisdom and understanding are already framed, counted, and structured. That fact alone can feel unsettling. If even Torah is limited, then what is truly infinite. The answer is precise and psychologically stabilizing. The Infinite does not disappear when structure appears. The Infinite chooses structure as its mode of relationship.

This matters emotionally because anxiety often comes from confusing unpredictability with depth. When a person believes that safety comes from boundlessness, they experience panic the moment rules, routines, or constraints appear. The Alter Rebbe teaches the opposite. Only that which transcends all need for control can afford to be exact, measured, and contained.

Psychological Integration: Awe Versus Anxiety

The text draws a sharp line between two emotional states. One is external fear. Will I have enough. Will something go wrong. Will I lose what I rely on. The other is yirah, a deep awe that quiets the nervous system instead of activating it.

External fear narrows perception. It focuses attention on scarcity and survival. Yirah expands perception. It places the self inside a much larger, ordered reality. When a person internalizes that the same Source that is beyond all comprehension is actively involved in measuring, weighing, and sustaining every detail, fear loses its urgency.

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This is not denial or spiritual bypassing. It is a shift from threat based vigilance to meaning based awareness. The heart stops scanning for danger and begins resting inside significance. That is why the verse describes the heart contemplating awe rather than reacting in panic.

Meaning Making: Why Structure Heals

From a therapeutic perspective, structure is one of the strongest regulators of emotional distress. Predictable limits, clear roles, and defined expectations reduce cognitive overload. What this teaching adds is that structure is not merely functional. It is sacred.

The angels ask, Where is the place of His glory, because even they cannot locate the Source within the structure. Yet that very inability is what allows structure to exist. The mind cannot grasp it, but the nervous system benefits from it. The Infinite does not compete with limitation. It empowers it.

When people learn to see boundaries as expressions of care rather than control, compliance turns into trust and discipline turns into dignity.

Contemporary Story: The ICU Protocol

During the COVID pandemic, a senior ICU nurse in New York described a moment that changed how she viewed her work. In the early weeks, chaos dominated. Every patient felt like an emergency without rules. Staff burnout skyrocketed. Fear governed every decision.

Eventually, the hospital enforced strict protocols. Exact timing. Exact measurements. Exact procedures, even when emotions were overwhelming. Many staff initially resisted, feeling that rigidity was inhumane.

The nurse later said that the opposite proved true. The structure restored their humanity. Knowing that every step was measured allowed them to show up fully without being consumed by fear. The protocols did not remove compassion. They protected it.

She reflected that only something deeply stable can afford to be precise under pressure.

Practical Takeaway

When life feels constricting, the instinct is to fight the limits. The Alter Rebbe teaches a different response. Ask what kind of care is being expressed through structure. Whether in halachah, routine, or emotional boundaries, measured systems are not signs of distance from the Infinite. They are signs that the Infinite is close enough to be specific.

True awe quiets fear. When the heart understands that the One beyond all measure is the One doing the measuring, anxiety no longer needs to manage the future.

END NOTE]