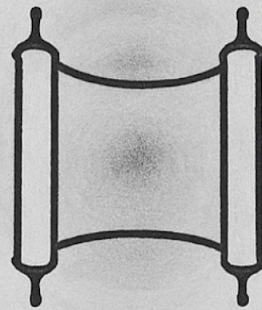


בס"ד

**כתר שם טוב**

**Kesser Shem Tov**

**Simanim ל-לט**



*Dedicated To:*

**Anonymous**

May Hashem pour Shefa upon you

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Siman #ל

**From the Baal Shem Tov: (I heard a parable from my master and) an explanation of the verse (Tehillim 126:6), “He who walks along weeping, carrying the measure of seed—shall return in joyous song, bearing his sheaves.”**

מהבבש"ט (ששמעתי משל בשם מורי ן] ביאור פסוק הלוח ׁלך ובכה ונשא משך הנרע בא יבוא ׁברנה,

(The explanation is): If one contemplates the going and weeps and is distressed over his departure from the service of Hashem—then in the end, he carries the measure of seed.

פירוש) שאם חושב להליכה ובוכה ומצטער על הליכתו מעבודת השם יתברך, אז סופו נושא משך הנרע.

But one who thinks only of the arrival—that is what it says, “he shall indeed come”—and from this comes singing and joy, in the end he carries sheaves without seed.

מה שאין כן מי שחושב לעצמו לביאה, וזהו שנאמר בא יבוא, ומפח זה הוא ברנה ושמה, לבסוף נושא אלומוותיו בלא נרע.

[And may the wise understand.]

[ודי להקים נצי דבור].

**[NOTE Summary:**

The Baal Shem Tov offers a profound interpretation of the verse *"He who walks along weeping, carrying the measure of seed—shall return in joyous song, bearing his sheaves"* (Tehillim 126:6). He explains that there are two kinds of spiritual travelers: one who mourns his distance from G-d and weeps as he journeys away from previous spiritual heights, and one who focuses solely on the end goal—his arrival and joy. The Baal Shem Tov teaches that the one who weeps over his current distance and genuinely longs for connection, even amidst descent, is ultimately the one who will carry lasting spiritual fruit ("the measure of seed"). In contrast, one who skips the process and focuses only on the joy of arrival will arrive empty—"bearing sheaves without seed"—experiencing external excitement without inner transformation.

**Practical Takeaway:**

In moments of spiritual dryness or distance, don't rush past the pain. Feel it. Let yourself yearn. That brokenheartedness is fertile ground for deep, eternal growth. The one who embraces the “weeping” of the journey ends up harvesting the true fruits of divine connection.

**Chassidic Story:**

The Baal Shem Tov once noticed a disciple praying with visible enthusiasm. Afterward, he asked the man how he was able to reach such ecstasy in prayer. The man replied, “I simply focus on the joy of closeness to Hashem.” The Baal Shem Tov gently responded, “True closeness is born not only from joy, but from yearning.

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The soul's cry in distance is what draws the deepest light." Years later, that same student went through a period of inner dryness and remembered the Rebbe's words. Rather than hiding from the pain, he began to weep over his lack. It was then that he experienced a depth of prayer he had never known before. (Source: *Shivchei HaBesht*, cited in *Meir Einei Yisrael*, vol. 1) **END NOTE]**

**[FOOT NOTE:** In *Sefer HaSichot*, Summer 5709 (1949), page 93 in the name of the Alter Rebbe: Our teacher, the Baal Shem Tov, explained the verse "*He who goes weeping*"—that when a person walks with bitterness after prayer, "*he bears the seed for sowing*", meaning that the prayer results in a spiritual planting. However, what happens when "*he will surely come with joy*"—when a person feels content and expansive after their personal prayer, as if they are completely satisfied with their service? Such a person is compared to someone who is "*carrying his sheaves*"—carrying bundles of empty straw.

It is also worth noting what is brought in *Or Torah*, Siman 142: "*He who goes weeping, bearing the seed for sowing.*" This means A person who constantly strives to move from one spiritual level to the next, desiring to achieve even more, is comparable to the Infinite (Ein Sof), which has no end. Such a person has the capacity to receive the "seed" that is influenced and bestowed by the Infinite. However, one who says, "I am satisfied with what I have accomplished, and I can study enough as I am" does not truly attain anything but "straw and chaff," which are the outer shells (klipot).

This is the explanation of the verse: "He who goes weeping"—referring to one who desires to ascend from level to level. Whatever they have already achieved feels insufficient to them. Such a person "bears the seed" drawn from the Infinite, which bestows upon them.

But one who says, "He will surely come"—thinking they have already reached all possible levels, always rejoicing and saying, "It is well with my soul, for I have studied much Torah and need no more"—such a person "carries his sheaves," meaning they carry only straw and chaff. **END FN]**

### ל"א # Siman

**“And now, Yisrael, what does Hashem your God ask of you, but only to fear” (Devarim 10:12).**

**וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שֹׂאֵל מֵעַמְּךָ כִּי אִם  
 לְיִרְאָה**

(The explanation:) That he should be humble and attain the level of “mah” (what), and through this, fear will become something small—just like it was for Moshe Rabbeinu.

פירושו: שְׂיִהְיֶה עֲנִיו וּמְדַרְגַת מָה, וְעַל-יְדֵי-זֶה יִרְאָה)  
 (תְּהִיֶה מִלְתָּא זֹטְרַתָּא כְּמוֹ לְמִשָּׁה רַבִּינוּ

And this is what it says: “but only (כִּי אִם) to fear”—meaning the trait of humility which was in Moshe, as it is said, “And we are mah (what)” (Shemos 16:7).

וְזֶהוּ שְׂאֵמֵר כִּי אִם לְיִרְאָה [ר"ל מִדַּת עֲנָוָה שְׂיִהְיֶה  
 ], [בְּמִשָּׁה שְׂנֵאֵמֵר וְנִתְּנוּ מָה

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This is the trait that He asks of you. And then, when they merit this trait, which is the trait of humility, then the fear of Hashem becomes a minor matter even for Yisrael—just as it was for Moshe.

מדה זו היתה שואל מעמך, ואז כשיזכו למדה זו שיהיה  
מדת ענוה, אז יראת ה' זוטרתא היא לגבי ישראל  
גם-כן כמו במשה,

As it is said (Mishlei 22:4), “The result of humility is fear of Hashem,” and thus the verse is precise in saying, “but only to fear,” and understand this well.

שנאמר עקב ענוה יראת ה', ושפיר קאמר הפסוק כי  
[אם ליראה והבן].

And with this, we can understand “and his concubine,” referring to a flawed humility, and her name was Ra’umah—meaning “see, mah (what).”

ובנה יובן ופילגשו, דהיינו ענוה פסולה, ושמה  
ראומה, קלומר ראו מה

And his intention is: “See, that I have within me the quality of ‘mah,’” which is the trait of humility.

וכונתו ראו שיש בי בחינת מה, שיהיה מדת ענוה

And she gave birth to Tavech (slaughter), for through this, the evil inclination slaughters him—

ותולד את טבת, שעל-ידי זה היצר הרע טובח אותו

similar to what my master, of blessed memory, explained concerning Reuven, Shimon, Levi, Yehudah. Just as there are names of the tribes in holiness, so too there are in the side of impurity:

על-דרך שביאר [מורי זכרונו לברכה] ראוהו שמעון  
לוי יהודה, כמו שיש שמות השבטים בקדושה כן יש  
בקליפה

“Reuven” — “See, I am a son.” “Shimon” — one who does good so that his name will be heard throughout the world. “Levi” — to attach himself to men of action.

והוא, ראוהו ראו שאני בן, שמעון שעושה הטוב כדי  
שיהיה שמעו בכל העולם, לוי שיתחבר לאנשי  
מעשה

(As for Yehudah:) in order that they will praise and thank him.  
[And may the wise understand.]

כדי יהודה, פירוש) כדי שיודו וישבחו אותו [ודי)  
[לקיים חצי דבור

**[NOTE Summary:**

This teaching explains the verse “*And now, Yisrael, what does Hashem ask of you—only to fear Him*” (Devarim 10:12) by linking true fear of Heaven to the trait of humility. The Baal Shem Tov teaches that “mah” (what)—a term for nullification and selflessness—is the key to Yirah. Just as Moshe said, “*And we are mah,*” so too every Jew can access this humility. Once one internalizes true *bitul* (self-nullification), fear of Hashem becomes natural and effortless, “a small thing,” even for the average Jew.

The maamar then contrasts genuine humility with counterfeit humility, using the metaphor of a concubine named “Raumah” (“See—I am mah”). This false humility is performative: a person advertises their modesty,

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saying “look how humble I am.” This spiritual posturing gives birth to “Tavech” (slaughter), representing the ego being consumed by the very evil inclination it sought to manage. The Baal Shem Tov warns that when humility is used to gain honor or praise (like Reuven—“See, I am a son”; Shimon—“Let my name be heard”), it becomes a tool for self-destruction, not divine service.

**Practical Takeaway:**

Authentic fear of Hashem emerges from deep humility—not the kind that seeks attention, but the kind that truly nullifies ego. Don't seek to be seen as humble. Seek to *be* humble. Only then does fear of Heaven become a natural state, not a forced discipline. **END NOTE]**

**[FOOT NOTE:** The interpretation of "*Rauma*" refers to humility with the intention of boasting about that very humility. The verse states: "And now, Israel, what does Hashem your God ask of you but to fear Hashem your God..." (Deuteronomy 10:12). The Gemara (Berachot 33b) raises a question: "Is fear of Heaven such a small matter?" And it answers: "Yes, for Moshe, it is a small matter," since the verse was spoken by Moshe himself. However, a well-known difficulty arises: the verse is directed to the Israelites, not to Moshe. How, then, can the Gemara justify that it is a "small matter" when fear of Heaven is not simple or easy for most people? It can be explained that the sages' intent goes beyond the surface level. They are not minimizing the challenge of attaining fear of Heaven but rather pointing out that Moshe's perspective, shaped by his unique closeness to Hashem, rendered this lofty goal attainable. Moshe's intention in addressing the Israelites was to elevate them to his perspective, emphasizing that awe and reverence for Hashem are fundamental and within reach when approached with proper guidance and effort.

The deeper teaching here is that what seems insurmountable at first becomes accessible when one recognizes that Hashem provides assistance and clarity to those who sincerely strive for it. This reflects Moshe's role as a teacher who bridges the gap between the Infinite and human experience, encouraging Israel to rise to the challenge of living a life infused with reverence and love for Hashem.

The specific quality of Moshe that is required from every Jew is hinted at in the verse itself:

*"And now, Israel, what does Hashem your God ask of you..."* (Deuteronomy 10:12). The explanation is that Hashem demands from every Jew to be humble and to reach the level of "*Ma*" (what), as Moshe was. Moshe, in his humility, described himself as "*and we are Ma*" (nothingness). This is the meaning of the phrase "*what does Hashem your God ask*"—that Hashem asks each Jew to cultivate humility like Moshe's. Through this, awe of Hashem indeed becomes "*a small matter*" (*miltah zutrati*), just as it was for Moshe Rabbeinu, peace be upon him. This is reflected in the continuation of the verse: "*but to fear Hashem.*"

In this context, where "*Ma*" symbolizes humility, we can also understand the deeper meaning of the verse: "*And his concubine, whose name was Rauma, bore Tavach...*" (Judges 8:31). Here, "*his concubine*" refers to a lower and inferior quality within a person, specifically *false humility* (*anavah pesulah*). This is hinted at by the name *Rauma*, which can be read as "*Ra'u Ma*" (they saw humility). It represents a humility that is outwardly displayed but fundamentally flawed, as it is motivated by pride rather than genuine self-effacement. Such false humility leads to spiritual failure, as symbolized by "*she bore Tavach*", implying that this state

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enables the evil inclination to "slaughter" the individual spiritually. True humility, as embodied by Moshe, is the path to authentic awe and closeness to Hashem.

The name "*and her name was Rauma*" is interpreted as "*Re'u Ma*"—meaning, "*See what.*" This phrase refers to a person who says, "*See that I possess the attribute of 'Ma' (humility),*" which represents humility. However, this is a form of false humility, where one boasts about their humility and desires to demonstrate that they are humble.

The verse continues, "*and she bore Tavach*"—indicating that through this flawed humility, the evil inclination (*yetzer hara*) "slaughters" the individual. This means that when arrogance and self-centeredness exist, even subtly (arising from the very humility itself), it creates an opening for the presence of ego and complete evil. The *yetzer hara* can then dominate and entirely remove the person from their level of holiness.

This idea, where the name "*Ra'u Ma*" reflects someone boasting of their spiritual status, is parallel to the interpretation offered by the Rebbe regarding the names of Reuven, Shimon, Levi, and Yehuda. Just as these names in holiness represent stages and levels in spiritual growth, there are corresponding negative manifestations within the realm of *kelipah* (impurity), where these traits are tainted by ego and pride. (See above) These negative qualities in *kelipah* are distortions of the holiness represented by these names, where genuine service of Hashem is replaced by self-serving pride and arrogance. True humility, by contrast, seeks no recognition and aligns with the attribute of *Ma*—complete self-nullification before Hashem.

(See in the Chiddushei Aggadot of the Maharsha on Berachot (33b): "For 'but to fear' implies that He is not asking anything from you other than a small thing, which is fear." This is the Gemara's question: since, as the Gemara proves there, the verse is not referring to natural fear—fear of punishment and retribution (which indeed is a minor thing)—but rather to intellectual fear, reverence for the great and awesome One. This is a complete and elevated fear (*yirah sheleimah*), which is far from being a small matter. See also later in Siman 38(b) for further discussion on this concept.)

(The Rebbe's language later in that source provides an analogy to clarify this concept. See also in the Maamarei Admor Hazaken, Et'halech Le'Azniyah, p. 9, where it is explained: "When one's self-nullification (*bitul*) is visible and noticeable—when one feels their own self-nullification—this is referred to as 'Re'u Ma,' where the 'Ma' (aspect of *bitul*) is visible and felt. In contrast, true *bitul* occurs when a person is utterly humble before a great and awe-inspiring king, feeling as though they have no existence whatsoever. The essence of true *bitul* is that the person does not feel their own nullification at all during the moment of surrender. If someone were to ask them, 'What has changed so greatly about your essence?' they would respond, 'I do not know at all.' However, when there is a sense of awareness of one's nullification, it introduces an element of self-consciousness and subtle arrogance, even within the *bitul* itself." See also *Maamarei Admor Hazaken, Ketuvim*, p. 96, for a similar discussion.) **END FN]**

**Siman #לבא**

**From the Baal Shem Tov: I heard in the name of my master,  
of blessed memory,**

]מהבש"ט דשמעתי בשם מורי זכרונו לברכה,

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that from the verse "*And I came today to the well*" (Bereishis 24:42),

דַּמְפְּסוּק [זַה] וְאָבּוּא הַיּוֹם אֶל הַעֵיִן

emerged the concept of "Kefitzas HaDerech" (miraculous contraction of the earth).

יֵצֵא שֵׁם שְׁל קְפִיצַת הָאָרֶץ

[And may the wise understand.]

[וְדִי לְחָכִים תִּצֵּי דְבוּר].

**[NOTE Summary:**

The Baal Shem Tov, quoting his master, reveals a hidden allusion in the verse "*And I came today to the well*" (Bereishis 24:42). He explains that from this phrase, the concept of *Kefitzas HaDerech*—the miraculous "jumping of the road," or supernatural compression of space—can be derived. Eliezer, Avraham's servant, recounts how he left and arrived on the same day, hinting that time and space were transcended through Divine assistance. The Baal Shem Tov shows how a simple verse conceals profound mystical realities, accessible to those attuned to inner Torah.

**Practical Takeaway:**

A person may feel that their spiritual journey is long, slow, or filled with obstacles. But when one's mission is pure and aligned with Divine will—as Eliezer's was—Hashem can collapse barriers, bending time and space to help you arrive *today*. Don't be afraid of the distance. With emunah and purpose, the path itself will shift beneath your feet. **END NOTE]**

**[FOOT NOTE:** The secret of Eliezer's *Kefitzat HaDerech* (miraculous shortening of the journey):

From the Baal Shem Tov: In the words of Eliezer, Abraham's servant, to Lavan and Betuel, "*And I came today to the well*" (Genesis 24:42), our sages deduced that "*the land contracted for him,*" and on the same day he left the land of Canaan, he arrived in Aram Naharaim. Our Rebbe taught that from the verse "*And I came today to the well,*" the holy name through which the miracle of *Kefitzat HaDerech* occurs can be derived. The arrangement of the sacred letters within this verse reveals the spiritual force that enabled the miraculous shortening of the journey.

In *Ohev Yisrael* (additions), it asks: "*How does Rashi deduce that the land contracted for him? Where is this proven in the verse? Perhaps Eliezer left several days earlier?*" The answer is based on Kabbalistic sources (see *Brit Menucha*, Ma'amar 45, Ged, Jerusalem 1959 edition), which state that the name associated with *Kefitzat HaDerech* is *Ahavah* (אהבה), an acronym for "*Et Hashamayim Ve'et Ha'aretz*" ("the heavens and the earth") as explained in the Zohar (Part 1, 251a). The same acronym is derived from the phrase "*And I came today to the well.*" However, there is a deeper distinction: the typical name *Ahavah* is formed in its proper order (sequentially), representing the natural flow. Here, in "*And I came today to the well,*" the name appears in reverse order (*Ve-ha*), symbolizing the reversal of natural processes, proving that the land itself contracted for him, as implied by the initial letters of "*And the land*". Thus, Rashi deduces that the miracle occurred through the land moving toward Eliezer rather than Eliezer moving faster. **END FN]**

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Siman #בלב

Also, he explained (and behold, I have written elsewhere an explanation of) the Mishnah: “*They saw her speaking with a man in the marketplace*”—

גם ביאר [והגה כתבתי במקום אחר ביאר] ,  
[‘משנה: ראוה מדברת עם אהד בשוק ]וכו

according to the explanation of my master, of blessed memory, on the Gemara:

(על-פי (ביאר מורי זכרונו לברכה ש"ס

“One who reviews his learning one hundred times is not comparable to one who reviews it one hundred and one times.”

אין דומה שונה פרקו מאה פעמים לשונה פרקו מאה  
[‘פעמים ואחד ]וכו

(Meaning: with the “one.”)

(פירוש: עם האחד).

And with this, we can understand the phrase: “*They saw her speaking with one in the marketplace,*” meaning:

(ובזה יבן ראוה מדברת עם אהד בשוק, לפי ש

that even in the marketplace, where he is engaged in worldly affairs, nevertheless, his speech is with “the One” through unifications (yichudim).

כי גם בשוק שעוסק בעסקי עולם הזה, מכל-מקום  
[‘דיבורו עם אהד על-ידי יחודים ]וכו

**[NOTE Summary:**

The Baal Shem Tov offers a penetrating explanation of the Mishnah that says, “*They saw her speaking with a man in the marketplace.*” On the surface, this appears to describe suspicious behavior, but the Baal Shem Tov, based on his master’s interpretation of the Gemara “*One who learns his lesson 100 times is not comparable to one who learns it 101 times,*” reveals a deeper mystical meaning.

The “marketplace” represents worldly affairs and distractions. The “one” (אהד) she speaks with is not just a man—it is *the One*, Hashem. Even in the noisy, physical world of the marketplace, a true servant of Hashem can remain in constant communion with the Divine, engaging in acts of *yichudim* (unifications) through thought, speech, and action. Thus, the Mishnah becomes a praise rather than a critique: even in the most mundane places, her focus is on Hashem.

**Practical Takeaway:**

No matter where you are—even in the “marketplace” of daily life—you can still be connected to Hashem. Speak with *the One* in your heart. Let your ordinary conversations, work, and moments become opportunities for Divine unity. The goal is not to escape the world but to sanctify it.

**Chassidic Story:**

A wealthy merchant once came to Mezhibuzh to ask the Baal Shem Tov for guidance. “Rebbe,” he said, “I spend most of my days in markets, surrounded by noise, numbers, and distractions. How can I possibly grow close to Hashem in such a life?” The Baal Shem Tov smiled and replied, “If a woman can speak to *the One* even

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in the marketplace, why can't you?" The merchant looked puzzled, so the Baal Shem explained, "When your heart is with Hashem, your counting becomes prayer, your dealings become mitzvos, and every word you speak is with *Echad*—the One and Only." That merchant later became one of the greatest hidden tzaddikim of his generation, sanctifying every coin he earned and every word he uttered.

(Source: *Shivchei HaBesht*, anecdote #73) **END NOTE]**

**[FOOT NOTE: "Medaberet im Echad"**—"Speaking with the One" refers to the connection of speech, even about worldly matters, with Hashem, the One. This signifies that even conversations or discussions about material or mundane topics can be sanctified and aligned with the divine when they are intentionally connected to Hashem. It emphasizes the possibility of elevating everyday speech by recognizing and attaching it to its source in holiness, *Ha'Echad* (the One).

Our Rebbe also explained the deeper meaning hinted at in the words of the Mishnah: "*They saw her speaking with one in the marketplace.*" This is based on the teaching of our Sages: "*There is no comparison between one who reviews their studies 100 times and one who reviews them 101 times*" (Chagigah 9b). It is explained there that only the one who studies 101 times is called '*oved Elokim*' (a servant of God), whereas one who studies only 100 times is called '*one who has not served Him.*' The meaning of "and one" (ve'echad) is interpreted as referring to the One, the Master of the Universe. The one who includes Hashem, the "Echad," in their study transforms their efforts into divine service. With this, we can also understand the inner meaning of the phrase: "They saw her speaking with one in the marketplace." Even in the marketplace—representing engagement in the material world and conversations of a mundane nature—her speech is still "with the One." That is, her words remain connected to Hashem, the One, through unifications. This connection is achieved by revealing the spark of holiness within mundane conversations, elevating and uniting them with their higher, divine source in Hashem, the Echad. This teaches that even worldly engagement can become an act of divine service when infused with awareness and intentionality. **END FN]**

**Siman #לג**

**(From the Baal Shem Tov)**

**(מהבש"ט)**

An explanation of the Gemara: "A person should always be accustomed to say: All that is done from Heaven is for the good,"

ביאור ש"ס: לעולם יהא אדם רגיל לומר: כל מה  
 דעבדין מן שמיא לטב עבדין

and like that story of Rabbi Akiva [etc.], and in the Gemara Taanis, that Nachum said: "Also this is for the good."

ובההיא מעשה דרבי עקיבא [וכו'], ובש"ס דתענית  
 דנחום אמר: גם זו לטובה

And one needs to understand the difference in wording between this and that.

.ויש להבין שנוי לשון בין זה לזה

And I wrote an explanation: to sweeten judgments at their root—

,וכתבתי ביאור, למתק דיניו בשרשן

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**ל-לט סימנים**

(I heard from my master, of blessed memory)

[שמעתי מזמורי זכרונו לברכה]

that through finding, in the root of the judgment, some aspect of kindness—

על-ידי שימצא בשרש הדין איזה חסד,

then the judgment is sweetened at the root of this kindness, and everything becomes kindness.

אז נמתק הדין בשרש חסד זה, ונעשה הכל חסד.

And therefore, Nachum Ish Gam Zu found the kindness within the root of the judgment, and it immediately became kindness.

ולכן נחום איש גם זו מצא בחסד בשרש הדין,  
 ונעשה מיד חסד,

Whereas for ordinary people, who do not know the root of the kindness, nevertheless, he should be accustomed to say:

מה שאין פו בסתם בני אדם שאינו יודע שרש:  
 החסד, מכל-מקום יהיה רגיל לומר

“All that is done from Heaven is for the good,” even though he doesn’t know [etc.].

כל דעבדיו מן שמיא לטב עבדיו, מן הסתם גם שאינו  
 [יודע] וכו

**[NOTE Summary:**

The Baal Shem Tov, expanding on teachings from his master, reflects on the Talmudic phrases: “*All that is done from Heaven is for the good*” (as said by Rabbi Akiva) and “*Gam zu l'tovah – this too is for the good*” (as said by Nachum Ish Gam Zu). He notes the difference in language and explains its deeper meaning.

Nachum Ish Gam Zu could identify the spark of chesed (kindness) hidden within the judgment itself. Because he recognized the root kindness embedded in what appeared to be harshness, he was able to immediately transform the experience into revealed good. This is called *sweetening the din at its root*. In contrast, most people are not able to perceive the inner kindness within a challenge. Still, the Baal Shem Tov teaches that one should always *train themselves* to say “All that is done from Heaven is for the good,” trusting in Hashem’s kindness even without understanding it.

**Practical Takeaway:**

You may not always see the good in your hardships—but train your soul to respond with faith: “*This too is for the good.*” Even when you don’t perceive the kindness, trust that it’s there at the root. Eventually, with enough emunah, the hidden chesed may blossom into revealed blessing. **END NOTE]**

**[FOOT NOTE: Sweetening Judgments and Transforming Them to Good by Finding the Root of Kindness Within the Judgment:**

*From the Baal Shem Tov:* An explanation of the Talmudic teaching: "A person should always be accustomed to saying, 'All that Heaven does is for the good'" (Berachot 60b), as exemplified by the story of Rabbi Akiva. Similarly, the Talmud in Ta’anit relates that Nachum Ish Gam Zu would always say, "This too is for the good," regarding everything that happened to him.

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The difference in language between these two expressions requires clarification. It is clear that the standard approach for any person is to accustom themselves to saying, "All that Hashem does is for the good," whereas Nachum specifically said, "This too is for the good."

The explanation begins with a foundational principle: the solution to any harsh decree (*dinim*) lies in sweetening judgments at their root. This means connecting the undesirable occurrences (*dinim*) to their higher, divine source. By doing so, the desirable aspect hidden within them is revealed, and the judgments are sweetened and transformed into good.

The way to connect the judgments to their source is to uncover within the root of the judgment an element of *chesed* (revealed goodness). When the kindness within the judgment is identified, the judgment is sweetened in its root of *chesed* above, and this sweetness manifests as complete goodness even in this world.

For this reason, Nachum Ish Gam Zu would say, "*This too is for the good.*" He was able to explicitly identify the goodness hidden within the root of the judgment and thereby transform it immediately into revealed kindness, even in this world. However, this is not the case for most people, who cannot discern the root of kindness within a judgment or recognize the desirable aspect within it. Therefore, they should adopt a general and habitual declaration: "*All that Heaven does is for the good.*" Even though they may not understand or perceive the goodness in the matter, their statement reflects trust in Hashem's providence, which ensures that everything is ultimately for the best.

Additionally, in *Likutei Sichot*, Vol. 2, Parashat Tavo, Sections 4–7, it explains that in the story of Rabbi Akiva, the situation itself remained bad, but it became clear that it was for a greater good. In contrast, in the story of Nachum Ish Gam Zu, the bad itself was revealed to be good. This highlights the distinction between the two teachings: Rabbi Akiva said, "*All that the Merciful One does is for the good,*" meaning that the ultimate purpose of all events is good, but the goodness of a specific event may not be apparent. Nachum Ish Gam Zu, however, perceived how the specific event itself ("*this*") contained inherent goodness. **END NF]**

**לד# Siman**

**In the Talmud, tractate Menachos, Reish Lakish said: "At times, the *bitul* (cessation) of Torah is its foundation,"**

**בש"ס דמנחות, אמר ריש לקיש: פעמים  
שבטולה של תורה זהו יסודה**

as it is written, "Which you have broken"—teaching that the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moshe: "Yasher koach (well done) for breaking them."

דכתיב: אשר שברת, מלמד שאמר לו הקב"ה: יישר  
[כחך ששברת] וכו'

And this is puzzling—how is it possible that the *bitul* (cessation) of Torah is its foundation?

והוא תמוה: איך אפשר שבטולה של תורה זהו  
יסודה?

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(And the explanation of the Baal Shem Tov is as follows:)

(ופירוש הבעש"ט: פי)

(And it appears, as I have written elsewhere, that I heard from my master, of blessed memory:)

(וּנְרָאָה שְׁכִתְבְּתִי בְּמָקוֹם אַחֵר שֶׁשָּׁמַעְתִּי מִמּוֹרֵי)  
(זְכוֹרוֹנוֹ לְבָרְכָה)

“And the Chayos run and return” (Yechezkel 1:14)—because everything is inflamed with a desire to return to its Source.

וְהַחַיּוֹת רְצוּא וְשׁוּב" לְפִי נִשְׁכַּל דְּבַר מְתֻלָּהּ לְשׁוּב",  
לְשִׁרְשׁוֹ

And therefore, through eating and drinking and engaging in business—which cause a person to momentarily cease from Torah and service of Hashem—

וְלִכְהָ עַל-יְדֵי אֲכִילָה וְשִׁתְיָה וְעִסְקַ מַשְׂא וּמְתָן [מַעֲט  
'שְׁמִיבִטְל'] >מְתַבְטֵל) הָאָדָם מִלְּמִוּד תּוֹרָה וְעַבְדוּת הַ

then the soul rests from its fiery yearning and becomes strengthened to return to a higher level of *deveikus* (attachment).

אִז נִחָה הַנְּשָׁמָה מִהַתְּלַהּבוּתָהּ וְנִתְחַזְקָה לְשׁוּב",  
(לְדַבְּקוֹת יוֹתֵר עֲלִיוֹן)

And with this, we can understand the saying of Reish Lakish: “At times, the *bitul* of Torah is its foundation,”

וּבִנְיָה [יִבְנוֹ] >אָמַר רִישׁ לָקִישׁ<: פְּעָמִים שְׁבִטוּלָה  
שָׁל תּוֹרָה זֶה יְסוּדָהּ

in the secret of “the Chayos run and return.” And understand this well.

בְּסוּד "וְהַחַיּוֹת רְצוּא וְשׁוּב", וְהִבְנוּ

**[NOTE Summary:**

In this teaching, the Baal Shem Tov explains a puzzling statement from the Talmud (Menachos 99b), where Reish Lakish says: “*Sometimes the cessation of Torah is its foundation.*” How can the interruption (*bitul*) of Torah study be its very root and strength? The Baal Shem Tov, quoting his master, uses the mystical verse from Yechezkel—“*And the Chayos run and return*”—to explain.

All spiritual life operates in cycles of *ratzo v'shov*—running and returning. The soul, in its yearning for G-d, experiences intense moments of longing and ascent (*ratzo*), but it cannot remain in that state indefinitely. It must pause (*shov*)—eat, work, rest—only to be reignited anew with deeper yearning. These moments of *bitul* (pause) are not spiritual failures, but necessary contractions that strengthen the next expansion. When one ceases Torah for a moment—through physical needs or mundane work—that interruption can allow the soul to rest and return with greater intensity. Thus, the cessation becomes foundational to the growth.

**Practical Takeaway:**

Don’t fear moments when you must step away from learning or prayer. If done with the right awareness, those pauses are part of the Divine rhythm. Like breath or heartbeat, the pullback is what powers the next surge. Trust the ebb as part of the flow.

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**Chassidic Story:**

One of the Baal Shem Tov’s students once asked, “Rebbe, I feel guilty when I must tend to my shop and step away from Torah.” The Baal Shem Tov brought him to a forest and said, “Watch the flame on this candle.” As the wind blew, the flame would lean and flicker—but never extinguish. “That flicker,” the Baal Shem said, “is the soul’s *shov*. It bends but is never lost. And when the air stills, the flame rises straighter and stronger.” The student wept, understanding that his interruptions—when held with faith—could fuel even greater light.

(Source: *Toldos Yaakov Yosef*, citing oral teachings of the Baal Shem Tov) **END NOTE]**

**[FOOT NOTE:** See Likutei Sichot, Vol. 26, Parashat Ki Tisa 3, for an explanation of the concept "The suspension of Torah is its foundation" in connection to the breaking of the Tablets. The breaking of the Tablets before the eyes of all Israel instilled in them a sense of humility and broken-heartedness (following the great elevation and self-importance they experienced at the Giving of the Torah). It was through this humbling experience that they became fitting vessels to receive the additional and expanded dimensions of Torah that were given only with the second Tablets—"Halachot, Midrash, and Aggadot, etc., doubled in wisdom" (Shemot Rabbah 46:1).

**END FN]**

**לה # Siman**

**In the Midrash (Parshas Vayishlach, Perach HaChaim), a parable: Once there was a people of the king, who ruled over the beasts,**

**במדרש (פרשת וישלח פע"ח) משל: פעם אחת, הנה עם המלך שבחיות על החיות,**

and they consulted: “Who shall go to appease the king?” The fox said, “I will go with you to appease the king,”

וינצו: מי ילך לפייס המלך? אמר השועל: אני אלה (עמכם לפייס... המלך),

“for I possess three hundred parables,” etc.

.שיש לי שלוש מאות משלים כן

But in the end, the fox said that he forgot them all, and each one should appease the king according to his own strength.

ובסוף אמר השועל ששכח הכל, וכל אחד יפייס [את] המלך כפי כחו

And the intention was that they should all submit before the king and go to appease him...

...וכוננתו היתה שיפגעו למלך וילכו לפייסו

(and therefore he began first, claiming he knew, in order that they would go),

.>ועל כן אמר תחלה שיודע, כדי שילכו<

[And then, through this submission, each one will strive on his own to appease the king.] And this is correct.

ואז על-ידי הכנעה הזאת ישתדל כל אחד בעצמו לפייס המלך, והוא הנכון

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The Baal Shem Tov said (as I heard from my master, of blessed memory) a parable regarding prayer leaders during the Days of Awe—

אמר הבעש"ט (פאָשר שמעתי ממורי זכרוננו  
 :לברכה) מִשָּׁל עַל בְּעָלֵי תְּפִלוֹת בְּיָמֵי הַנּוֹרָאִים

that the people of the world should not rely on them, but each person should strive to pray for himself.

וְשָׂא יִסְמְכוּ עָלֵיהֶם בְּנֵי עוֹלָם, רַק יִשְׁתַּדֵּל כָּל אֶחָד  
 לְהִתְפַּלֵּל עַל עֲצָמוֹ

He gave a parable to this: Once, there were two kings warring with each other.

אמר מִשָּׁל לְזֶה: פֶּעַם אַחַת הָיוּ שְׁנֵי מְלָכִים נִלְחָמִים  
 יַחַד,

One king was mighty and powerful, and he had warriors clothed in armor and scales, etc.

וּמֶלֶךְ אֶחָד הָיָה אֲדִיר וְתַקִּיף, שֶׁהָיָה לוֹ גְּבוּרֵי חֵזֶק  
 מְלֻבָּשִׁים בְּשָׂרְיוֹן וְקַשְׁקָשִׁים וְכוּ

And the opposing king sought to find such warriors and was unsuccessful, etc.,

וְזֶה הַמֶּלֶךְ שֶׁנִּגְדָּדוּ הַלֵּךְ לְמַצָּא אֲנָשִׁים גְּבוּרִים כְּאֵלוֹ,  
 וְלֹא עָלְתָה לוֹ, וְכוּ

until he told his army not to rely on the warriors, etc.

עַד שֶׁאָמַר לְחֵילוֹ שֶׁלֹּא יִסְמְכוּ עַל הַגְּבוּרִים, וְכוּ

[And may the wise understand.]

[וְיֵדִי לַחֲכִים תִּצֵּי דְבוּר]

**[NOTE Summary:**

The Baal Shem Tov teaches, through a pair of parables, a powerful message for the Days of Awe: no one should rely solely on a chazzan (prayer leader) or tzaddik to do their spiritual work for them. The first parable from the Midrash tells of the fox who claimed to have 300 parables to appease the king. But when the moment came, he confessed he forgot them all—forcing each animal to approach the king on their own, according to their strength. His intention was pure: to awaken in each creature the resolve to act for themselves.

The Baal Shem Tov echoes this with his own parable: two kings go to war. One commands elite, armored warriors. The other king tries to recruit similar champions but fails. In the end, he turns to his regular soldiers and tells them not to depend on heroic figures—they must fight themselves.

These stories underscore that during the Yamim Nora'im, each person must personally engage in tefillah and teshuvah. Even if there are great leaders among us, the ultimate responsibility lies within the individual.

**Practical Takeaway:**

Don't delegate your soul's work. No tzaddik, chazzan, or "fox with many parables" can stand before the King of Kings on your behalf. Your heartfelt prayer—even if simple—is the most powerful offering you can bring. Come as you are, and speak to Hashem directly. **END NOTE]**

**[FOOT NOTE:**

In the Midrash there: "He walked a little and stood still. They asked him, 'What is this?' He replied, 'I forgot one

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hundred parables.' They said to him, 'There are enough with the two hundred left.' He walked a little further and stood still. They asked him, 'What is this?' He replied, 'I forgot another hundred.' They said to him, 'Even with the hundred left, it is enough.' When he reached the place of the lion, he said, 'I forgot all of them. Instead, let each and every one plead for himself.' ...

The fox's intention was to ensure that they would humble themselves before the king and appease him on their own. However, to achieve this, he first had to persuade them to agree to approach the king. That is why he initially claimed to know three hundred parables—so they would rely on him, believing the appeasement would be handled by the fox alone. Once he succeeded in drawing them to the king, he prevented them from relying on him and compelled them to find the strength within themselves to appease the king.

This is the correct and desirable approach: each person must find the strength within themselves to stand before the King—the King of Kings—and not rely on the strength of others. As the Baal Shem Tov explained in a parable regarding prayer leaders (*shlichei tzibbur*) during the Days of Awe, the community should not rely on the leaders, assuming their prayers will achieve their effect solely through the effort and intentions of those standing at the pulpit. Rather, each individual should make an effort to pray for themselves

(In *Igrot Kodesh* of the Rebbe, of blessed memory, vol. 16, letter 5,818:

"Regarding what you wrote that you lack vitality both in revealed Torah study and in Chassidus... It is known what is brought in the talk of Simchat Torah 5690 (1929), section 21 (*Sefer HaSichot 5690*, pp. 92, 104)—the response of the Rebbe Rashab to a chassid who complained that he did not want to engage in study and service because he did not understand: *'What are you demanding of me? Demand it of yourself.'*

It is understood that this response was not meant to reject the request, Heaven forbid, nor to imply 'I've done my part and saved myself.' Rather, it is a source of empowerment. As is also known, the parable of the Baal Shem Tov regarding the townspeople who relied on the mighty warrior, and how, when they later realized they could not depend on him, extraordinary and wondrous powers were awakened within them. The same applies in his case." **END FN]**

**Siman #ל**

**(From the Baal Shem Tov): A person should always enter (a synagogue) the measure of two doorways [and only afterward should he pray, etc.],**

for (he explained) based on the Zohar that they represent the traits of awe and love—

(and they are the measure of two doorways),

**מהבש"ט**

**: לעולם יבנס אדם (לבית הכנסת) שיעור שני  
[פתחים] ואחר כך יתפלל וכו'**

(לפי) [ויבאר] בזהר שהם מדות היראה והאהבה

(והם שיעור שני פתחים)

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and I heard from my master, of blessed memory (it seems), in the name of the Ramban,

וְשָׁמַעְתִּי מִזְמוּרֵי זְכוֹרֹנוּ לְבִרְכָה, כְּמִדּוּמָה, בְּשֵׁם  
הַרְמַב"ן

that it is impossible for these two traits to be present together—except in the service of the Creator, blessed is He.

שָׂאֵי אֶפְשֶׁר שְׂיִהְיוּ אֵלּוּ שְׁתֵּי מִדּוֹת יַחַד אֲלֵא בְּעִבּוֹדַת  
הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ.

**[NOTE Summary:**

The Baal Shem Tov interprets the Talmudic directive "*A person should always enter the synagogue the distance of two doorways before praying*" as a spiritual teaching, not just a physical instruction. Drawing on the Zohar, he explains that these "two doorways" symbolize the two essential emotional states in serving Hashem: *Yirah* (awe) and *Ahavah* (love). One must "enter" both—prepare their heart with reverence and love—before they can truly stand in prayer.

He further cites (as heard from his master in the name of the Ramban) that awe and love are not naturally compatible emotions in any human context. They typically cannot coexist. However, when directed toward Hashem, they not only coexist—they are required together. Only in divine service can a person simultaneously tremble before the Infinite and yearn to draw close with love.

**Practical Takeaway:**

Before you pray, pause. Enter inwardly through two gates: awe and love. Feel how small you are—and how loved. Only then are you truly standing before Hashem. Don't just recite words—prepare your heart with both trembling and longing. **END NOTE]**

**[FOOT NOTE:** Explanation by Rashi: This refers to the idea that one should not stand near the entrance but should enter and move further inward, at a distance equivalent to two doorways. The reasoning is that standing too close to the entrance might make it appear as though staying in the synagogue is burdensome, and they are ready to leave at any moment.

Zohar (Chelek 3, 78b): Explains that the concept of entering two doors relates to two spiritual gates—symbolic paths leading to divine service. And note the words of Chazal in *Sifrei*, Va'etchanan 6:5: "There are people who, when they fear another, they leave when the other troubles them... but there is no love where there is fear, and no fear where there is love, except in the attribute of the Holy One, blessed be He."

See also *Olelot Ephraim*, Maamar 297, and the sources cited there.

In *Or HaTorah*, Siman 27: "Every entity is composed of the four elements: fire, wind, water, and earth. Fire and water are opposites—how can they be included together? One must understand that there is a unifying force that prevents fire from being extinguished by water or vice versa. This unifying force ensures that neither element is nullified—this is the power of the Creator, who harmonizes opposites because He transcends them all.

Similarly, in divine service, love and awe are opposites. How can love and awe coexist? For example, a person's fear of a snake involves no love, and a person's love for something good contains no fear "For in physical matters, when a person loves something, they do not fear it at that moment, and when they fear it, they do not

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love it"—see there, Siman 28. But if it is love of the Creator or awe of the Creator, both can exist together." See also *Maggid Devarav LeYaakov*, Siman 110, where it explains that when a person diminishes their sense of self and becomes like "nothingness," love and awe can dwell together within them.

See there for further explanation.

In *Or HaTorah*, Nevi'im-Ketuvim, p. 133, it is explained that the reason it is possible for opposing attributes to merge in holiness is because "everything is of one kind—self-nullification and submission to the Blessed Creator." That is, the inner essence of both attributes is the same: service of G-d.

See also *Likkutei Sichot*, vol. 7, *Acharai 1*, at the end of section 11, which states that as long as a person's sense of self and individuality remains dominant, it is impossible for them to hold opposing desires and emotions. However, when their selfhood and personal desires are nullified, and they feel only the presence of G-d—meaning their sole desire is to fulfill the Divine will—then they can embody even opposing attributes, because G-d Himself is the unifier of opposites.

Note the language of the Zohar (Chelek 3, 75a): "Weeping is embedded in my heart on one side, and joy is embedded in my heart on the other side." This is brought in Tanya, at the end of chapter 34.

See also *Likkutei Sichot*, vol. 20, Toldot 1, section 6, which explains that even this duality is possible due to the Creator's power as the nosei hafachim (bearer of opposites). **END FN]**

**Siman #זז**

**(From the Baal Shem Tov) (as I heard from my master): the concept of a humorous remark (*milsa d'bedichusa*) before learning—**

**מהבעש"ט**

**(ש'שמעתי ממורי): ענינו מילתא דבדוחותא קדם הקלימוד,**

for the *Chayos* run and return, and a person exists in a cycle of smallness and greatness,

כי החיות רצוא ושוב, והאדם [הוא] בסוד קטנות וגדולות,

and through joy and a humorous remark, one exits from *katnus* (constriction) to *gadlus* (expanded consciousness) in order to learn and cleave to Him, may He be blessed [etc.].

ועל-ידי השמחה ומילתא דבדוחותא יוצא מקטנות לגדולות ללמוד ולהדבק בו יתברך [וכו', ודי להקים תצוי דבור].

(And thus it is stated.) [And so I heard in his name]: those two jokers, who would lighten a person's suffering through a humorous word,

וזהו שאמר. [וכו שמעתי בשמו]: והני תרי בדחי, שיהיו מפקחין צער האדם על-ידי מילתא דבדוחותא,

and then they could draw him close and elevate him [etc.].

ואז יכולו לקרבו ולהעלותו [וכו', ודי להקים תצוי דבור].

And this is what it says: "And he took his two young men with him and Yitzchak his son"—

וזהו שאמר: ויקח את שני נעריו עמו ואת יצחק בנו,

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that through laughter for the sake of Heaven, he is able to elevate the “years of youth” as well, along with him.

כי על-ידי הצחוק לשם שמים יכול להעלות שני שני (הנעורים גם כן עמו).

And on this topic I heard: “And bring up Yitzchak as an offering,”

[ובצענו זה שמעתי: את יצחק והעלהו לעולה]

for through laughter for the sake of Heaven, one elevates all the days of youthful laughter as well, and understand this.

כי על-ידי הצחוק לשם שמים מעלה כל ימי הצחוק של בחורות גם כן למעלה, והבן.

And likewise: “And he took his two young men with him,” meaning, to elevate the “two years” of youth along with him. [And may the wise understand.]

וכן: ויקח את שני נעריו עמו, רצון לומר להעלות שני שני הנעורים גם כן עמו, ודי להקים חצי דבור.

**[NOTE Summary:**

The Baal Shem Tov, quoting his master, offers a profound mystical explanation for the custom of telling a *milsa d’bedichusa*—a light or humorous remark—before learning Torah. He explains that a person naturally fluctuates between *katnus* (constricted consciousness) and *gadlus* (expanded awareness), just as the angels described in Yechezkel’s vision move in a pattern of *ratzo v’shov*—running and returning. A moment of joy, even humor, can shift a person out of inner smallness and awaken a more expansive, joyous state of mind, which is ideal for Torah study and attachment to Hashem.

He connects this to the Talmudic story of two jesters who would cheer up the downtrodden. Their humor wasn’t trivial—it was a sacred tool to lift people from despair, bringing them closer to G-d. Similarly, the verse “*And he took his two young men with him, and Yitzchak his son*” is understood homiletically: Avraham brought not only his son but also the years of youthful levity—elevated through sacred laughter. Even laughter from one’s youth, if redirected *leshem shamayim* (for the sake of Heaven), can be uplifted and transformed into spiritual offering.

**Practical Takeaway:**

Don’t dismiss joy—or even light humor—as unspiritual. When directed toward holiness, it can be a sacred ladder lifting you out of constriction and into connection. A smile, a joke, or a warm moment can prepare your soul for true *deveikus* (cleaving to G-d).

**Chassidic Story:**

The Baal Shem Tov once visited a small town where the atmosphere before Yom Kippur was heavy with dread. The people were too fearful to pray with joy. Before Kol Nidrei, the Baal Shem Tov stood and told a humorous story that had everyone laughing through tears. A student whispered, “Rebbe, is this fitting before the Day of Judgment?” The Baal Shem Tov replied, “When a child cries with joy in his father’s arms, the father forgives everything. Hashem wants our hearts open—not crushed.” That night, the entire town prayed with

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uplifted hearts—and many miracles followed that year.

(Source: *Shivchei HaBesht*, early chapters, and oral tradition) **END NOTE]**

[**NOTE:** Laughter and "a word of humor" as an aid in the service of Hashem, to ascend and draw closer to holiness.

From the Baal Shem Tov-An explanation of the concept of "milta d'bedichuta" (a word of humor) before study, as mentioned in the words of our Sages (Shabbos 30b):

For behold, "the living creatures run and return"—meaning that the heavenly angels ("holy creatures") are constantly in a cyclical movement of drawing close and ascending ("run"), followed by descent and withdrawal ("return"), and so forth. Similarly, man, too, is subject throughout his life to a cyclical movement, in the mystery of "smallness" and "greatness"—his spiritual state fluctuates with constant ascents and descents.

There is a time of "days of greatness," a period of spiritual elevation and a sense of closeness to God, during which he serves the Holy One, blessed be He, with enthusiasm and inner vitality. But after some time, the illumination disappears, and the person finds himself in a state of distance from God—"days of smallness," in which his heart is not open to serving Hashem with vitality and enthusiasm. Then, after effort to return and draw close to Hashem, another period of "greatness" arrives. And through joy and "a word of humor," a person moves from "smallness" to "greatness," and his heart opens to study and to cleave to Him, blessed be He.

And this is what was said in the Gemara: Among those who are "sons of the World to Come" are "these two jesters"—who merited this because they engaged in bringing joy and uplifting those who were in a state of sadness. The deeper meaning of this, is by alleviating a person's distress—meaning, by releasing and untying the constriction of his heart through a word of humor—they would lift him from "smallness" to "greatness," as mentioned above. And then, they would be able to bring him closer and elevate him to holiness. These words teach about the virtue of humor and laughter—"milta d'bedichuta"—which has the power to bring a person closer to Hashem.

And this is the inner meaning of what is written about Avraham on his way to the Binding of Yitzchak: "And he took his two lads with him and Yitzchak his son." Through laughter for the sake of Heaven, which is the "Binding of Yitzchak" (offering Yitzchak to Hashem)—such as by using "milta d'bedichuta" as a prelude and aid to study, as mentioned above—the great virtue of laughter is revealed. Thus, a person can take "his lads" with him, meaning he can elevate the years of youth—the years of "laughter" and lightheartedness—along with him, by utilizing this very concept for holiness and the service of Hashem. **END FN]**

**Siman #לה**

(From the Baal Shem Tov) [as I heard from my master]:  
 external fear that comes upon a person is the outstretched  
 right hand of the Blessed One,

מהב'עש"ט) [ששמעתי ממורי]: [כי יראה)  
 חיצונית הבאה לאדם היא יד מינו יתברך  
 פשוטה

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extended to awaken the person from it toward inner fear.

שִׁיתְעוֹרֵר הָאֲדָם מִזֶּה לְיִרְאָה פְּנִימִית.

And when a person understands that this is His kindness—to awaken him—etc.,

וְיִכְשִׁידַע הָאֲדָם שֶׁזֶה חֶסֶדוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ לְעוֹרְרוֹ כּו

then the fear becomes love, as he receives it with love, and he is released from external fear.

נִעֲשִׂית מִיִּרְאָה אֶהְבָּה, שֶׁמִּקְבְּלוֹ בְּאֶהְבָּה, וְנִפְטָר מִיִּרְאָה חִיצוֹנִית.

(But if he intends... etc., see there.)

[אֲדָה אִם מְכוֹן] וְכו' [נִעֲוֵן שָׁם].

**[NOTE Summary:**

The Baal Shem Tov, quoting his master, reveals that when a person feels a sudden fear or anxiety—what he calls *yirah chitzonis* (external fear)—it is not necessarily a punishment or something to be avoided. Rather, it is *Hashem's outstretched right hand*, a subtle act of kindness designed to awaken the person to *inner awe* (*yirah penimis*). This fear is a divine signal, prompting introspection and a return to G-d.

When the person recognizes this fear as a message of love, a wake-up call from above, it transforms. The fear itself turns into love, because he receives it with understanding and gratitude. In that moment, the fear no longer controls him—it elevates him. However, if a person misinterprets the fear and responds with resistance or ego, he may remain stuck in external fear rather than transforming it.

**Practical Takeaway:**

The next time you feel fear or anxiety, pause and ask: *Is this G-d's way of waking me up?* Don't push the fear away. Welcome it, listen to it, and let it lead you inward—to deeper awe and ultimately to love. When you see even fear as an expression of Hashem's kindness, it can no longer frighten you. **END NOTE]**

**[FOOT NOTE:** From External Fear to Internal Fear – The awakening of fears from worldly matters is the hand of the Creator and His kindness to awaken a person to the fear of Hashem.

From the Baal Shem Tov. One must know that external fear—the fear of punishment from material troubles (which is an external level of fear of the Holy One, blessed be He)—that sometimes falls upon a person, when he experiences anxiety about physical dangers, is truly “His blessed right hand extended”—meaning, Hashem places these fears upon a person out of love and kindness, like a right hand that is extended [i.e., open] to receive and draw someone close. For the purpose of imposing this external fear is that the person should awaken from it to an internal fear—a deeper and loftier sense of awe and reverence that stems from the recognition of Hashem's greatness and exaltedness. And when a person understands well that this is His blessed kindness in order to help him and awaken him to internal fear, then fear transforms into love—the external fear is “sweetened” and turns into love. Because he accepts it [i.e., the fear] with love, realizing that it is nothing other than a revelation of Hashem's kindness and love, meant to make him reflect and awaken to internal fear. And through this intention and awareness, he is freed from external fear—he will be spared from the dangers and troubles that aroused his fear, etc.

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The external aspect of this fear exists in two ways: both from the perspective of the person, who fears only for his own loss and does not fear because of the greatness of the Blessed One, and from the perspective of divinity, where the punishment is only an external manifestation of divinity. (See Zohar, Part I, 11b, and the commentary Or Yakar there; Tikkunei Zohar, Introduction 5b, Tikkun 30, 73b, 72b, Tikkun 33, 77a. Also, see below Simanim 93 (b), 413, and the references in note 4. Ben Porat Yosef below, in the discourse beginning "And we will explain according to the secret of Parshat Vayetztei." Also, see Tosafot Yom Tov, Sotah, Chapter 9, Mishnah 15).

In Kohelet Moshe on the Torah, Parshat Eikev, discourse beginning "And now, Israel", it states: "And I have heard in the name of the pious Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov, that in the Zohar HaKadosh [Tikkunei Zohar there], it is written that there is 'Fear of Majesty' and 'Fear of Punishment.' One who fears Hashem because of punishment—this is 'Fear of Punishment,' as stated in Chovot HaLevavot, that one who serves for this reason [out of fear of punishment] is serving something other than Him [meaning, he is serving an external reality, the physical consequences of punishment]. However, the true fear is the Fear of Majesty, where one fears Hashem because 'He is great and rules' [i.e., due to His exaltedness and dominion]. This is the complete fear, and this fear is one where he fears only Heaven... Behold, one who is at the level of 'Fear of Punishment' is far from 'Fear of Majesty.'" Also, see Meor Einayim, Parshat Yitro, discourse beginning "And know", in the name of our master (and further explanation is found in Sefer HaMa'amarim, Bati LeGani, Part II, p. 576 and onward), as well as in Turei Zahav, Parshat Eikev, in the name of our master. Also, see the words of the Maggid of Mezeritch (Or Torah, Siman 160, and in Etz HaDa'at Tov, Part II, Shir HaShirim 22d, as well as the summary in the name of our master), where he explains: "Ordinary people's fear is the Fear of Punishment, and this is nothing... We can illustrate this with the example of a father who warns his child not to walk barefoot, lest a thorn pierce his foot. However, the small child, lacking understanding, ignores the warning, walks barefoot, and a thorn gets stuck in his foot. Even though the pain is not severe, the father is worried that the wound will become infected. What does the father do? He takes an awl, cuts the skin around the thorn, and removes it. Now, although removing the thorn causes the child great suffering, making him cry bitterly, the father, knowing that this pain is actually a cure, does not heed the child's cries and removes the thorn forcefully. Later, when the child again wants to walk barefoot, the father warns him strictly: 'Do you not remember the terrible pain and suffering you experienced when I had to remove the thorn? Be careful not to walk barefoot again, lest you endure such suffering again!' The father does not warn the child about the thorn itself—because the child is not afraid of that—but rather warns him about the pain of removing it, which he already knows and fears. The analogy is clear: a person's fear is of the punishment, not of the sin itself.

But in truth, the punishment itself... is an expression of His mercy and healing, for He punishes in order to cleanse a person from his sin." (And as is further explained later, that 'external fear' is actually for a person's own benefit.) **END FN]**

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Siman #להח

I heard from my master, of blessed memory, that the aspect of fear is spread throughout all created beings and all the worlds,

נשמעתי ממורי זכרונו לברכה, כי בחינת היראה היא מתפשטת בכל הנבראים ובכל העולמות

and the root of all of them is the *inner fear*—fear of the Creator, may He be blessed.

ושרש כלם היא יראה פנימית, יראת הבורא ותברך.

However, even *external fear* that comes upon a person is in order to awaken him to inner fear,

אבל גם יראה חיצונית הבאה על האדם היא כדי לעוררו אל היראה הפנימית

and it is a kindness from Hashem—His right hand outstretched—and He asks and requests from the person to awaken through it to the fear of Hashem.

והיא חסד ה', יד מינו פשוטה, ושואל ומבקש מ'האדם שיתעורר מזה אל יראת ה'

And this is what it says: “What does Hashem your G-d ask of you, except to fear Hashem”—which refers to inner fear.

וזהו שאמר: מה ה' שואל מעמך כי אם ליראה את ה', שהיא יראה פנימית [וכו]

And behold, if a person recognizes this kindness and love of the Creator, may He be blessed, upon him—in His compassion, that He sent him external fear to awaken him to inner fear—

והנה אם ידע האדם זה החסד ואהבת הבורא ותברך עליו בחמלתו ששלח לו יראה חיצונית כדי לעוררו אל יראה פנימית

then it becomes from fear into love, for he receives the external fear with complete love, and then he is released from external fear.

אז נעשית מיראה אהבה, שמקבל היראה החיצונית באהבה גמורה, ואז נפטור מן היראה החיצונית

But if his intention in this is only in order to be exempt from external fear—it does not help at all [etc.].

אבל אם פונתו בזה כדי לפטור מן היראה [החיצונית]—לא מהגני פלום [וכו]

And with this is explained the phrase: “For Moshe, it is a small matter,”

ובזה ביאר: אין, לגבי משה מלתא זוטרתה היא

for from fear of a Torah scholar it is easy to arrive at fear of Hashem [and may the wise understand].

כי מיראת תלמיד חכם הוא בנקלות לבוא ליראת ה' [ודי לתכים חצי דבור]

[NOTE Summary:

The Baal Shem Tov, quoting his master, teaches that *yirah chitzonis*—external fear or anxiety—is not a punishment or a mere emotional state. It is actually Hashem’s *right hand outstretched in kindness*, a divine wake-up call designed to stir a person toward *yirah penimis*—inner awe and reverence for G-d. All fear in the

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universe, in every world and creature, ultimately stems from this inner spiritual awe, and even the fears we experience in our daily life are rooted in that higher source.

When a person recognizes that this fear is an expression of Hashem's love and compassion—that He is reaching out and asking us to return—then the fear itself transforms into love. He receives the external fear with love and understanding, and in doing so, transcends it. However, if one only seeks to “get rid of the fear” without seeing its divine origin or purpose, it does not help; the fear remains unresolved.

This idea also explains the Talmudic statement, “*For Moshe, it was a small thing*”—since Moshe was able to recognize fear of a tzaddik or a Torah sage as a direct pathway to fearing Hashem. For him, outer fear led effortlessly to inner awe.

**Practical Takeaway:**

When you feel fear, pause and ask: *Is this G-d calling me closer?* Don't run from the fear—receive it with love. If you understand that even fear is a form of divine compassion, it will uplift you instead of paralyze you. That's when fear turns into love. **END NOTE]**

**[FOOT NOTE: From External Fear to Internal Fear –Fear Turns into Love, and the Fears Disappear**

Our master said: The aspect of higher fear—the awe of Hashem's immense power and greatness—extends throughout all creations and all worlds. From this supreme fear, the reality of fear and awe descends into all levels of creation, where every entity in creation possesses awe towards the level above it. And the root of all is inner fear, the fear of the Creator, blessed be He, from which external fear—fear and concern over physical matters—branches out.

However, even external fear, which comes upon a person due to physical matters, is meant to awaken him to the inner fear that is hidden and "clothed" within the external fear. And this is Hashem's kindness, "His right hand extended"—coming to assist a person, asking and urging him to awaken from this fear to the inner fear of Hashem.

And this is what is written: "What does Hashem ask of you, but to fear Him"—meaning, inner fear, which is what Hashem "asks" and demands from a person by imposing upon him fear of physical matters. And behold, if a person recognizes and acknowledges this kindness and the love of the Creator, blessed be He, upon him, in His compassion—that He sent him external fear in order to assist him and awaken him to inner fear—then fear transforms into love.

The external fear is "sweetened" and turns into love, because he accepts the external fear with complete love, knowing that this is Hashem's kindness done for his benefit. If so, this reveals Hashem's love and closeness, and through this recognition and understanding, he is freed from external fear—he will indeed be relieved from the dangers and troubles that aroused his fear.

However, even though this recognition does help a person to be saved from fear of harsh decrees, if his sole intent is merely to free himself from external fear, it will not be effective at all, and in practice, he will not be relieved from these matters. And with this, our master explained the words of our Sages regarding the above

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verse: "And now, Israel, what does Hashem your God ask of you, but to fear Him..."

They asked: "Is fear of Heaven such a small matter?!"

And they answered: "Yes, for Moshe, it is a small matter."

It is well known that there is a difficulty with this explanation—after all, the verse was addressed to the Jewish people, not to Moshe! However, based on the above—that the commandment here is to attain inner fear—we can interpret the explanation as follows:

When a Jew has fear 'towards Moshe', meaning reverence towards Torah scholars, then indeed fear becomes a small matter, because if even external fear can awaken a person to inner fear of Hashem, as explained earlier, then certainly fear of Torah scholars makes it much easier to attain fear of Hashem, since reverence for a Torah scholar is much closer in essence to inner fear of Hashem. **END FN]**

Siman #לט

**(From the Baal Shem Tov) [that I heard in the name of my master, of blessed memory]: an explanation of the Gemara in Berachos (33b): Rabbi Zeira said: "Whoever says 'Shema, Shema'—we silence him."**

מהבעש"ט דשמעתי בשם מורי זכרונו לברכה: ביאור ש"ס דברכות [דל"ג ע"ב]: אומר רבי זיירא: כל האומר שמע שמע—משתיקין אותו.

Rav Pappa said to Abaye: "Perhaps initially he did not have proper intent..."

אמר ליה רב פפא לאביי: דלמא מעיקרא לא איפון דעתיה...

He replied: "Is there such a thing as *chavrusah* (a learning partner) for Heaven?! If he didn't have intent the first time, we hit him with a blacksmith's hammer until he has proper intent."

אמר ליה: חברותא קלפי שמיא מי איכא?! אי לא פוין דעתיה מעיקרא—מחינו ליה במרזפתא דנפחא עד דמכוין דעתיה.

And my master, of blessed memory, questioned: The difficulty still stands—perhaps indeed he didn't have proper intent initially and now seeks to fulfill his obligation with intent [etc.].

והקשה (זכרונו לברכה): דאכתי הקושיא במקומה עומדת—מכל-מקום דלמא מעיקרא לא איפון, [ועכשו פא לצאת ידי שמים ולכון וכו].

He also asked: Why did Rabbi Zeira specify the one who says "Shema" twice, and not some other verse from Krias Shema, or something similar?

ועוד קשה: למה נקט רבי זיירא דוקא האומר שמע שמע שתי פעמים [וכו], ולא פסוק אחר בקריאת שמע או פיוצא.

He explained the concept of accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven:

וביאר מהו ענגן קבלת עול מלכות שמים

A person is obligated to believe that the entire world is filled with His glory, may He be blessed—"There is no place empty of Him."

והענגן: פי האדם מחויב להאמין פי מלא כל הארץ כבודו ותפארתו—לית אחר פגוי מיניה

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All thoughts of a person contain His presence, and every thought is a complete form (*kamah shleimah*).

וכל המחשבות של האדם יש בהן מציאותו ותבונה, וכל מחשבה היא קומה שלימה.

When a foreign or improper thought arises during prayer, it comes in order to be elevated and rectified.

וכשעולה במחשבתו של אדם בעת עסק התפילה איזו מחשבה רעה וזרה—היא באה אל האדם לתקנה ולהעלותה.

If one does not believe this, it is not true acceptance of the yoke of Heaven, because he is limiting G-d's presence, G-d forbid.

ואם אינו מאמין בזה—אין זו קבלת עול מלכות שמים שלימה, כי מקצר חס ושלום במציאותו ותבונה.

And with this, we understand the one who says “Shema, Shema”—why is it a problem to say it twice?

[’ובנה יובן האומר שמע שמע [וכו]

The question is: why say it a second time? The answer must be that the first time, he didn't have proper intent—because he had a foreign thought.

וקשה: למה אמר שתי פעמים? וצריך לומר: די מעיקרא לא איפנו דעתיה, דהינו שהיתה לו איזו מחשבה זרה.

But if he had known that even there—the Divine Presence dwells—he would not have needed to say “Shema” a second time.

אבל אם הנה יודע שישם גם-כן היא מציאות השם ותבונה—לא הנה צריך לומר שתי פעמים שמע.

This is the elegant language of the Gemara: “We strike him with the blacksmith's hammer.”

וזהו צחות לשון הש"ס: מחיננו ליה במרוזפתא ודנפחא.

The meaning is: the improper thought itself strikes the person—like a hammer—so that he should rectify it and elevate it.

הכונה: כי המחשבה עצמה היא מכה את האדם כמו במרוזפתא כדי לתקנה ולהעלותה.

So why does he say “Shema” again—as if, G-d forbid, the first time was lacking the Divine Presence?

ולמה הוא חוזר פעם שניה לומר שמע—כאלו חס ושלום בפעם הראשונה לא היתה שם מציאות השם?! ותבונה?

It turns out he is diminishing G-d's presence and the acceptance of the yoke of Heaven. That's why it says: we silence him.

ונמצא שהוא מקצר במציאותו ותבונה וקבלת עול מלכות שמים. ולכן אמר: משתיקין אותו.

With this, we can also explain the Gemara in Bechoros 8b: *Retzutsa d'meis* (a crushed chick that died in its shell)—Rashi explains: “A chick that died within its shell.”

ונועל פי זה ביאר ש"ס דבכורות ד"ח ע"ב: רצוצא—(דמית) ופירש רש"י: אפרוח שמת בקלפתו.

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The Gemara asks: "From where does its soul depart?" It answers: "From where it entered, it departs." This needs explanation.

מהיכן נפיק רוחיה? ומשני: מהיכן דעאל נפיק. וזה צריך ביאור.

He explained it based on the Gemara in Berachos (perek *HaRo'eh*): One who sees eggs in a dream... if they are broken, his request will be fulfilled.

ואמר על פי ש"ס דברכות, פרק הרואה: הרואה ביצים בתלום... נשתברו—נעשית בקשתו.

This shows that the egg represents the aspect of prayer.

הרי שבחינת ביצה מראה על בחינת התפלה.

The idea is that there is no thought that does not contain a full spiritual form—even an improper or foreign thought, when it comes to a person, comes in order to be uplifted and rectified.

והענין: שאין לה מחשבה שלא יש בה קומה שלמה. אפלו מחשבה רעה וזרה, כשבאה אל האדם—היא באה כדי לתקנה ולהעלותה, כנ"ל.

And if a person pushes that thought away, it is as if he is rejecting and killing a complete spiritual form.

ואם האדם דוחה אותה המחשבה ממנו—אז כאלו דוחה והורג קומה שלמה.

However, there are times when a thought must be pushed away. If you ask: how can I know which thought to elevate and which to reject—

אבל לפעמים יש מחשבה שצריך לדחותה. ואם נפשך לומר: במה אדע איזו מחשבה לדחותה ואיזו לקרבה ולהעלותה—

let the person reflect: if, when the foreign thought comes, he immediately thinks of how to elevate and rectify it,

יתבונן האדם: אם בשעה שבאה המחשבה הזרה—מיד עלתה במחשבתו במה לתקנה ולהעלותה—

then he should indeed bring it close and elevate it. But if not—if no elevation comes to mind—

אז נראה לקרבה ולהעלותה. ואם לא עלתה במחשבתו במה לתקנה—

then clearly it came to distract him and confuse his prayer, and he is permitted to push it away: "*If one comes to kill you—rise early and kill him.*"

אז מסתמא באה לבטל את האדם בתפלתו ולבלבל מחשבתו—אז רשות לדחות אותה המחשבה, כי "הבא להרגך—השכם כו."

And with this, we understand the meaning of *Retzutza d'meis*—"from where does its soul depart?"

ובזה יובן: רצוצא דמית—מהיכן נפיק רוחיה

That is, the thought that comes during prayer, which is called an "egg," has "died"—meaning, he has rejected and nullified that thought.

כלומר: המחשבה שבאה בשעת התפלה, שנקראת ביצה, דמית—דהינו שדחה אותה המחשבה והמית אותה.

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So the question is: how can he kill and reject a full spiritual form?

היכי נפיק רוחיה? פלומר: איך הוא ממית ודוחה קומה שלמה?

The answer: *From where it entered, it departs*—

ומשני: מהיכן דעאל נפיק,

meaning: just as the thought arose in order to confuse and distract the person—so too, it may be sent out.

כמו שעלתה המחשבה לבלבל את האדם ולדחותו—כה נפיק, רשות לאדם לדחות אותה.

And this is the meaning of “From where it entered, it departs.” [And may the wise understand.]

ונהו שאמר: מהיכן דעאל נפיק. ודי להקים חצי דבור.

Once, a questioner asked my master, of blessed memory: If one recited several words of Krias Shema or prayer without proper intent—may he go back and repeat them with intent?

ופעם אחת שאל השואל למורי זכרונו לברכה: אם אמר כמה תבות בקריאת שמע ובתפלה בלא פגנה—אם רשאי לחזור פעם שנית ולומרם בפגנה?

And he replied in this wording: Is it not known and accepted that there is nothing in which the Divine Presence is absent?

ואמר בזה הלשון: הלא ידוע ומפורסם שאין לה שום דבר שלא יהיה בו מציאות השם,

Even a superficial thought contains sparks of holiness, as is known.

אפלו מחשבה חיצונית—שם יש גם כן ניצוצות קדושות, פנוע.

Therefore, if one said several words of Krias Shema or prayer without intent, he should not repeat them verbally. Rather, he should contemplate the words he already said—with proper intention.

ואם כן, אם אמר כמה תבות בקריאת שמע ובתפלה בלא פגנה—לא יאמרם פעם שנית, רק יהרהר במחשבה ובכונה את התבות שאמר בלא פגנה.

All this I heard in the name of my master, the Baal Shem Tov, of blessed memory. [And may the wise understand.]

כל זה שמעתי [בשם] מורי הבעל שם טוב זכרונו [לברכה]. [ודי להקים חצי דבור]

**[NOTE Summary:**

The Baal Shem Tov offers a deep and revolutionary interpretation of the halachah in Berachos: “*Whoever says Shema twice—silence him.*” On the surface, this seems like a legalistic concern, but the Baal Shem Tov explains that it reflects a profound issue of emunah. If a person repeats “Shema” because they were distracted the first time by a foreign thought, it may indicate a spiritual flaw: the belief that there was a moment where G-d wasn’t present.

But the truth is: “*Ein od milvado—there is no place void of Him.*” Even a stray thought during Shema carries Divine presence and purpose. Every thought, even a distracting or impure one, contains a “full spiritual form” (*komah shleimah*)—a spark meant to be elevated. If a person believes this and welcomes even these thoughts as messengers to be uplifted, then they fulfill true *kabbalas ol malchus shamayim* (acceptance of G-d’s kingship).

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But if they reject them entirely—by repeating Shema as if G-d wasn't present the first time—they are diminishing G-d's presence. Hence, “we silence him.”

He continues: Not all distracting thoughts are holy messengers. The key is introspection. If the person immediately has the clarity to elevate the thought—to turn it into teshuvah or awe or longing—it came from holiness. But if not, it came to derail him, and he may reject it. Even in this rejection, the Baal Shem Tov says, he must recognize it as a choice: when to redeem, when to guard.

Finally, the Baal Shem Tov cautioned against repeating parts of Shema or prayer out loud if said without intent. Better to review them silently with intention—because G-d was present the first time too. To erase that moment is to erase the spark He sent.

**Practical Takeaway:**

Every thought—even a foreign one—is part of your avodah. Don't panic when your mind wanders. Ask: *Is this thought here to be redeemed or rejected?* And know: Hashem is with you even in your distraction. True acceptance of His kingship means accepting that He fills every moment—even the ones that feel broken.

**Chassidic Story:**

A chassid once confessed to the Baal Shem Tov, “Rebbe, my mind drifts during Shema. I feel ashamed and repeat it.” The Baal Shem Tov responded, “When a child speaks to his father and stumbles over words, does the father love him less—or more?” The chassid began to cry. The Baal Shem continued, “Your thoughts—if you listen—are doors, not detours. Don't push them away. Ask why they came. Then your prayer becomes whole.”  
 (Source: *Tzavaas HaRivash* §10, Shivchei HaBesht) **END NOTE]**

**[FOOT NOTE:** see Degel Machaneh Ephraim, at the beginning of Parshat Eikev:

*"Even if a snake is wrapped around his heel, he should not interrupt" (Berachot 30, ...).*

The explanation is that a "snake" represents a foreign thought. Meaning, even if a foreign thought surrounds a person, he should not interrupt his prayer. For if he believes with complete faith that there is a Creator of all and that He is the King of the world, then surely the foreign thought has come for its rectification, so that it may be elevated to its root. It is similar to a person who stands before the king and speaks with him. It is certainly not proper conduct for the king's servants and attendants to call out to him and interrupt him with trivial matters. For surely, anyone who does so would deserve punishment from the king.

Rather, if someone does interrupt, it must certainly be by the king's decree—either:

1. To make the person understand that even the one interrupting him also needs the king. However, he cannot approach the king in a state of lowliness. Therefore, he asks that the one already speaking mention him before the king, so that his disgrace be removed and he be given proper garments, allowing him to enter the king's presence as well.

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2. To test the person, as this is the will of the king—to see if he will withstand the trial and reject the distraction entirely (as explained later, that sometimes the purpose of an intrusive thought is to test the person by requiring him to dismiss it completely).

And in truth, both reasons are one and the same—in both cases, the awakening of the thought has a divine intention, meant to bring about an increase in service of Hashem. For the one calling out is also fulfilling the king's will. And this is the meaning of one who truly believes with complete faith that there is a King who rules the world and that no one can lift a hand or foot without Him, and that all must fear Him. But one who does not have this belief in complete faith, then surely, the one who calls out separates him from the King and interrupts his speech with Him.

And this is sufficient for the one who understands:

It should be noted that this matter of rectifying and elevating foreign thoughts is not something applicable to everyone (as hinted by our master below in Siman 419. See also below: Simanim 207(b), 240(a); Toldot Yaakov Yosef, Eikev 172a [224]). A person of ordinary spiritual standing should not engage in this, but rather, in general, one should completely reject foreign thoughts and divert attention from them entirely (in accordance with the second approach given below in our master's words). As explained in Tanya, Chapter 28: "If thoughts of desire or other foreign thoughts fall upon a person while engaging in Torah or in prayer with intention, he should not focus on them but rather divert his mind from them immediately. And he should not be foolish by engaging in 'elevating the emotions' of the foreign thought (that is, the sparks within it whose root is in the supernal attributes, as is known). For these words were only said regarding the tzaddikim, who do not experience foreign thoughts of their own but only those of others. But one whose foreign thoughts come from his own—from the evil within his heart, in the left chamber—how can he elevate it to above when he himself is still bound below? Rather, on the contrary, he should strengthen himself even more and exert all his strength in focusing on his prayer..."

It is like a person praying with focus, and before him stands a wicked idol worshiper, speaking and distracting him in order to disturb him. The proper approach, certainly, is to ignore him completely—not to respond at all, neither positively nor negatively, but to act as if he does not hear... So too, one should not respond at all to a foreign thought, nor engage in arguments against it, for 'one who wrestles with a filthy person becomes filthy himself.' Instead, he should act as if he does not know and does not hear the thoughts that have entered his mind, dismiss them entirely, and strengthen himself with even greater intensity in his focus on prayer."

**END FN]**