

## The Baal Shem Tov - Kesser Shem Tov

### Siman 30-39

#### Siman #30

From the Baal Shem Tov: An explanation of the verse ***"He who goes weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, will come back with songs of joy, carrying his sheaves"***(Psalm 126:6):

If one reflects on their spiritual journey (halicha) and is pained over their distance from the service of Hashem, blessed be He, then ultimately, they will "bear the sheaves," meaning they will gather the fruit of their efforts. In contrast, one who views themselves as having already "arrived" (bia), as if they have achieved their goal, lacks this sense of striving and yearning. This is reflected in the verse "he will surely come" (bo yavo), and because of this complacency, their end will be one of joy and song, but without truly bearing the "seed" (spiritual growth or accomplishments).

**[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 NOTE]**

#### Siman #31

***"And now, Israel, what (Ma) does Hashem your God ask of you?"***(Deuteronomy 10:12) The interpretation is that one should be humble and reach

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the level of "*Ma*" (nothingness). Through this, fear (awe of God) becomes a minor matter, as it was for Moshe Rabbeinu, peace be upon him. This is what is written: "*but to fear*".

With this, we can understand the concept of "*and his concubine*". This refers to flawed humility, whose name is *Rauma*, meaning "*they saw Ma*". The intent is that they claim to have the quality of *Ma*, which represents humility. However, this false humility results in "*she gave birth to Tevach*" (The phrase "*she gave birth to Tevach*" is from **Genesis 22:24**, where it mentions the children of Nahor, Abraham's brother, and his concubine Reumah. The verse states: "*And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore children: Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.*")—indicating that through this, the evil inclination slaughters them, as Reuven explained in connection to the names of the tribes. Just as there are the names of the tribes in holiness, so too are there corresponding names in the realm of impurity (*kelipah*):

- *Reuven* means "*See, I am a son*"—implying arrogance in one's own greatness.
- *Shimon* means "*he hears*"—indicating one who performs good deeds so that their fame will spread throughout the world.
- *Levi* means "*attachment*"—seeking to attach oneself to people of action for personal gain.
- *Yehudah* means "*to be praised*", referring to the desire for others to acknowledge and praise them.

This false humility and desire for recognition allow the evil inclination to take control, much like the *kelipah* imitates and distorts the holy names of the tribes.

**[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.

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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 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

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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'Azriyah, 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 NOTE]**

### Siman #32a

From the Baal Shem Tov: From the verse **"And I came today to the well"** (Genesis 24:42), the concept of *kefitzat ha'aretz* (the miraculous "contracting of the land") is derived.

**[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.

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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 NOTE]**

### Siman #32b

Also, the Mishnah explains: ***"They saw her speaking with one in the marketplace,"*** (Mishnah, Tractate Sotah 1:1) referring to the verse *"There is no comparison between one who reviews their learning 100 times and one who reviews it 101 times."* (Chagigah 9b) The interpretation is *"with the One" (Echad)*—connecting one's efforts in Torah study with Hashem, the ultimate One. With this, we can understand the phrase *"they saw her with one in the marketplace."* This means that even in the marketplace, representing engagement in worldly matters, one's speech remains connected to the One through spiritual unifications. Even while occupied with the mundane, the person maintains a deep connection to Hashem by speaking and acting with intentionality and divine focus, ensuring that even the mundane becomes part of holiness.

**[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

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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 NOTE]**

### Siman #33

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 illustrated by the story of Rabbi Akiva. Similarly, the Talmud in *Ta'anit* speaks of Nachum Ish Gam Zu, who would say, *"This too is for the good."* It is necessary to understand the difference in expression between the two.

*I have written an explanation:* The process of sweetening judgments at their root occurs when one identifies within the root of the judgment a trace of kindness. When this is revealed, the judgment is nullified at its root and transformed entirely into kindness. Therefore, Nachum Ish Gam Zu, who could discern the kindness hidden within the root of the judgment, would immediately say, "This too is for the good," because for him, the judgment was already sweetened and turned into kindness. In contrast, ordinary individuals, who are unable to identify the root of kindness within a judgment, should nonetheless accustom themselves to saying, "All that Heaven does is for the good," even without fully understanding or perceiving how it is so. This habitual declaration reflects trust in Divine providence, even when the kindness remains concealed.

**[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.

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,



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"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 NOTE]**

#### **Siman #34**

In the Talmud, Tractate *Menachot*, Reish Lakish teaches: "*Sometimes the suspension (bitul) of Torah study is its foundation,*" as it is written: "*Which you shattered,*" and the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moshe, "*Well done for shattering the Tablets.*" This raises a question: How can the *bitul* (suspension) of Torah study be its foundation? The Baal Shem Tov explained this with the concept of "*the living creatures ran and returned*" (Ezekiel 1:14). All things naturally yearn to return to their source. Because of this, when a person is engaged in activities like eating, drinking, or worldly matters such as business, they may seem to be "suspended" from Torah study or service of Hashem. However, during these moments, the soul finds rest from its spiritual fervor (hitlahavut),

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allowing it to strengthen itself and ascend to an even higher level of attachment to the Divine.

This is the deeper meaning of the teaching: *"Sometimes the suspension of Torah study is its foundation."* It reflects the secret of "ran and returned." Periods of bitul are not truly interruptions; they are moments of renewal that enable one to ascend to even greater spiritual heights. Reflect on this concept deeply.

**[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 NOTE]**

#### Siman #35

In the Midrash (*Bereishit Rabbah*, Parashah 78, 7.), there is a parable: Once, the king of animals called a meeting about the animals. They deliberated who should approach the king. The fox said, "I will go because I have three hundred parables." However, in the end, the fox admitted he had forgotten everything, and each animal approached the king according to its own ability. The intention was for them to humble themselves before the king. That is why the fox initially claimed to have knowledge—to encourage them to go forward.

This idea aligns with what the Baal Shem Tov taught through a parable regarding prayer leaders during the Days of Awe (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur): that the people of the world should not rely solely on the prayer leaders but rather should each make an effort to pray for themselves. He illustrated this with another parable: Once, two kings were at war. One of the kings was mighty and powerful, with valiant warriors clothed in armor and chain mail. The other king sought similar mighty warriors to oppose him but could not find them. In the end, the second king instructed his army not to rely on such warriors but to fight with whatever strength they had.

#### **[NOTE:**

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



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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."

#### **Context and Message:**

1. **The Rebbe's Letter:** The Rebbe is responding to someone who feels a lack of enthusiasm or vitality in their study of Torah and Chassidus. This person feels disconnected and struggles with motivation, and they're turning to the Rebbe for guidance.
2. **The Rebbe's Response:** The Rebbe draws on two key sources:
  - A teaching of the Rebbe Rashab (Rabbi Sholom Dovber of Lubavitch).
  - A parable from the Baal Shem Tov.

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#### **Rebbe Rashab's Teaching:**

The Rebbe Rashab's response to a chassid (follower) who expressed a similar frustration was straightforward:

*"What are you demanding of me? Demand it of yourself."*

At first glance, this might seem harsh or dismissive, but it's not. The Rebbe Rashab wasn't rejecting the chassid or minimizing their struggles. Instead, he was teaching a profound lesson:

- Growth, change, and vitality in your spiritual life cannot be given to you by someone else.
- Each person has inner resources, powers, and capabilities that they may not yet have tapped into.
- The role of a Rebbe or mentor is not to do the work for you but to empower and encourage you to discover those hidden strengths within yourself.

This isn't about leaving someone to struggle on their own—it's about teaching them to take ownership of their spiritual journey. By turning inward, they'll find far greater strength and clarity.

#### **Baal Shem Tov's Parable:**

The Baal Shem Tov's parable adds another layer of explanation:

- **The Parable:** In a certain town, the people relied on a great warrior to protect them. However, when they later realized they couldn't depend on him, they were forced to summon their own courage and strength. This awakening revealed extraordinary inner powers they didn't know they had.
- **The Lesson:** Sometimes, people lean on external sources (leaders, teachers, or even their own past achievements) to carry them spiritually. But when they recognize that no one else can fight their battle or do their work, it pushes them to uncover their true potential. In moments of struggle, when outside help feels unavailable, they find within themselves incredible, even "miraculous" abilities to grow and connect to G-d.

#### **The Takeaway:**

The Rebbe explains that the point of the Rebbe Rashab's response—and the Baal Shem Tov's parable—isn't to dismiss someone's struggles but to awaken their inner strength. When the Rebbe Rashab said, *"What are you demanding of me? Demand it of yourself,"* he wasn't saying, "I won't help you." He was saying, "You already have the tools and power within you—believe in yourself, and you'll see it."

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In this context:

- **Empowerment:** The struggle you face is an opportunity to awaken deeper powers within yourself.
- **Responsibility:** Spiritual growth can't rely solely on someone else's efforts (like a teacher, a prayer leader, or even a Rebbe). It requires personal initiative.
- **Encouragement:** Even when you feel distant, disconnected, or uninspired, that's the moment to dig deep. You're capable of finding the strength to reconnect and grow.

#### **Relevance to Prayer and Study:**

The Rebbe also applies this to prayer during the Days of Awe (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur). While communities often rely on the *shaliach tzibbur* (prayer leader) to lead meaningful prayers, the Baal Shem Tov teaches that this isn't enough. Each person must actively engage in prayer themselves.

- Relying entirely on others (like a prayer leader or teacher) isn't the ideal path.
- Every individual has the capacity to stand before the "King of Kings" and form a direct connection through their own efforts.

#### **Practical Insight:**

1. **Don't Underestimate Yourself:** When you feel stuck, spiritually or otherwise, remember that you have untapped reserves of strength and ability. Struggles are an invitation to discover and awaken them.
2. **Take Ownership:** Your spiritual growth isn't dependent on anyone else. Teachers and mentors can guide, but the effort and connection ultimately rest in your hands.
3. **Use Struggles as Catalysts:** Challenges and moments of frustration are opportunities to uncover your deeper potential. Instead of retreating, lean into the struggle and ask yourself, "What strength is this trying to awaken within me?"

**END NOTE]**

#### **Siman #36**

From the Baal Shem Tov: A person should always enter a synagogue by way of *two doorways* (Berachot 8a:). This is explained in the *Zohar* as referring to the attributes of awe (*yirah*) and love (*ahavah*). According to the Ramban (Nachmanides), it is impossible for these two attributes to exist together except in the service of the Creator, blessed be He.

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**[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 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,

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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 NOTE]**

#### Siman #37

English	Hebrew
From the Baal Shem Tov.	מהבעש"ט
The concept of a word of humor before study,	שְׂגִינָן מִלֵּתָא דְּבִרְיֹחִיתָא קֹדָם הַלְמוּד
for the vitality flows in a motion of "running and returning,"	כִּי הַחַיּוּת רְצוּא וְשׁוּב
and a person experiences states of spiritual smallness and greatness.	וְהָאָדָם בְּסוּד קְטָנוּת וְגִדְלוּת
And through joy and a word of humor,	וְעַל יְדֵי הַשִּׂמְחָה וּמִלֵּתָא דְּבִרְיֹחִיתָא
one moves from smallness to greatness	יּוֹצֵא מִקְטָנוּת לְגִדְלוּת
to learn and to cleave to Him, blessed be He.	לְלַמֵּד וּלְדַבֵּק בּוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ
And this is what was said about those two jesters,	וְזֶהוּ שֶׁאָמְרוּ וְהִי תִרִי בְּדַחִי
who would alleviate people's distress	שֶׁהֵיוּ מִפְקָחִין צַעַר הָאָדָם
through humor,	עַל יְדֵי מִלֵּתָא דְּבִדְיֹחִיתָא
and thereby bring them closer and uplift them.	וְאֵז יוֹכְלוּ לְקַרְבוֹ וּלְהַעֲלוֹתוֹ
And this is what is written:	וְזֶהוּ שְׁכָתוֹב
"And he took his two lads with him and Yitzchak his son,"	וַיִּקַּח אֶת שְׁנֵי נַעֲרָיו עִמּוֹ וְאֶת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ
for through laughter for the sake of Heaven,	כִּי עַל יְדֵי הַצְחָק לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם
one can elevate even the years of youth with him.	יָכוֹל לְהַעֲלוֹת הַשָּׁנִים שֶׁל נַעֲרוֹת גַּם כֵּן עִמּוֹ

**[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):

## **The Baal Shem Tov - Kesser Shem Tov**

### **Siman 30-39**

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—"miltá 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 "miltá 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 NOTE]



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### Siman 30-39

#### Siman #38א

From the Baal Shem Tov.	מהבעש"ט
External fear that comes upon a person	יִרְאָה חִיצוֹנִית הִבָּא לְאָדָם
is actually His blessed right hand extended,	הוא יד ימינו יתברך פשוטה
so that the person will be awakened	שִׁיתַּעֲוִר הָאָדָם
from this to an inner fear.	מִזֶּה לִּירְאָה פְּנִימִית
And when a person realizes	וְכַאֲשֶׁר יֵדַע הָאָדָם
that this is His blessed kindness to awaken him,	יִשְׁזֶה חֶסֶדוֹ יתברך לעוררו כו
then fear transforms into love,	נִעֲשֶׂה מִירְאָה אֲהֶבָה
as he receives it with love	שֶׁמִּקְבְּלוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה
and is thus freed from external fear.	וְיִנָּפֵט מִירְאָה חִיצוֹנִית וכו

**[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.

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

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### Siman 30-39

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 Vayeitzei." 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 NOTE]**

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For the aspect of fear spreads throughout all creations and all worlds,	כִּי בַחֲנִיַּת הַיִּרְאָה הוּא מִתְפַּשֵּׁט בְּכָל הַנִּבְרָאִים וּבְכָל הָעוֹלָמוֹת,
and the root of all is an inner fear, the fear of the Creator, blessed be He.	וְשֹׁרֶשׁ כָּלֵם הִיא יִרְאָה פְּנִימִית, יִרְאֵת הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ,
However, even external fear that comes upon a person	אֲמָנָם גַּם יִרְאָה חִיצוֹנִית הַבָּאָה עַל הָאָדָם
is in order to awaken him to the inner fear,	הוּא כְּדִי לְעוֹרֵר אוֹתוֹ אֶל הַיִּרְאָה הַפְּנִימִית
and it is the kindness of Hashem, His right hand extended,	וְהוּא חֶסֶד ה' יָד יְמִינוֹ פְּשׁוּטָה
asking and requesting from the person to awaken from this to the fear of Hashem.	יִשְׁוֹאֵל וּמִבְקֵשׁ מֵהָאָדָם שִׁיתְעוֹרֵר מִזֶּה אֶל יִרְאֵת ה'
And this is what is written: "What does Hashem ask of you, but to fear Him",	וְזֶהוּ שֶׁכָּתוּב: "מָה ה' שׁוֹאֵל מֵעַמֶּךָ כִּי אִם לִירְאָה אֶת ה'",
which refers to inner fear.	שֶׁהוּא יִרְאָה פְּנִימִית
And behold, if a person recognizes this kindness	וְהִנֵּה אִם יָדַע הָאָדָם זֶה הַחֶסֶד
and the love of the Creator, blessed be He, upon him,	וְאַהֲבַת הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ עָלָיו
in His compassion for sending him external fear	בְּחַמְלָתוֹ שֶׁשָּׁלַח לוֹ יִרְאָה חִיצוֹנִית
in order to awaken him to inner fear,	כְּדִי לְעוֹרְרוֹ אֶל יִרְאָה פְּנִימִית
then fear transforms into love,	אֲזַ נַעֲשֶׂה מִיִּרְאָה אֲהֲבָה
as he accepts external fear with complete love,	שֶׁמִּקְבֵּל הַיִּרְאָה חִיצוֹנִית בְּאַהֲבָה גְּמוּרָה
and then he is freed from external fear.	וְאֲז נִפְטָר מִיִּרְאָה חִיצוֹנִית
However, if his intent in this is merely to rid himself of external fear,	אָךְ אִם כּוֹנֵנוֹ בְּזֶה כְּדִי לִפְטֹר מִיִּרְאָה חִיצוֹנִית
it will not be effective at all.	לֹא מֵהֵנִי כְּלוּם

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And in this, it is explained what was said: "For Moshe, it is a small matter",	"וּבְזָה בָּאֵר "אֵין לְגִבִּי מִשָּׁה זֹטְרָתִי הִיא
because through fearing Torah scholars,	כִּי מִירָאָת תַּלְמִידֵי חֲכָמִים
it is easy to attain the fear of Hashem.	'.הוּא בְּנִקָּל לְבוֹא לִירָאָה אֶת ה'

**[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 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

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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 NOTE]**

#### Siman #39

Based on this, the Gemara in Bechorot 8b explains: "A crushed chick in its shell—where did its spirit depart from?"	ועל פי זה באר ש"ס דבכורות דף ח ע"ב "רצוצא דמית (ופרש רש"י: אפרוח שמת בקלפתה) מהיכן נפק רוחיה?"
And the Gemara answers: "From the place it entered, it departs."	"ומשני: "מהיכא דעייל נפק
This requires explanation, and it is based on the Gemara in Berachot, Chapter HaRo'eh, which states:	וש"ס זה צריך באור, ואמר על פי ש"ס דברכות פרק הרואה:
"One who sees eggs in a dream... if they are broken, his prayers will be fulfilled."	"הרואה ביצים בחלום וכו' נשתברו נעשית בקשתו"
This means that the concept of an egg relates to prayer.	הרי כי בחינת ביצה רומזת לבחינת התפלה.
The idea is that no thought exists without completeness,	והענין שאין לה מחשבה שאין בה קומה שלמה,
even an improper or foreign thought.	אף מחשבה רעה וזרה.
When a foreign thought enters a person's mind,	כשבאה אל האדם מחשבה זרה,
it comes in order for him to rectify and elevate it, as explained before.	היא באה כדי לתקנה ולהעלותה כנ"ל.
If a person pushes away the thought,	ואם האדם דוחה המחשבה ממנו,
it is as if he rejects and destroys an entire spiritual structure.	אז כאלו דוחה ומשמיד קומה שלמה.
However, some thoughts indeed must be rejected.	אמנם יש מחשבות שצריך לדחותן.

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If one wonders how to distinguish which thoughts should be elevated and which rejected,	ואם נפֿשֿך לומר: "במה אדע איזה מחשבה לדחותה ואיזה לקרבה ולהעלותה?"
a person should reflect:	יִתְבּוֹנֵן הָאָדָם:
If when the foreign thought arose, he immediately thought of how to rectify and elevate it,	אם בְּשָׁעָה שֶׁבָּאָה הַמַּחֲשָׁבָה הָרָעָה, מִיָּד עָלָה בְּמַחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ בְּמָה לְתַקְנָהּ וּלְהַעֲלוֹתָהּ,
then he should indeed elevate it.	אָז יִרְאֶה לְקַרְבָּהּ וּלְהַעֲלוֹתָהּ.
However, if no such thought arises,	וְאִם לֹא יַעֲלֶה בְּמַחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ דְּרֹךְ לְתַקְנָהּ
then the thought likely came to distract him from prayer,	אָז מִסְתַּמָּא בָּאָה לְבַטֵּל אֶת הָאָדָם מִתְפִּלָּתוֹ
and he has permission to reject it, as it says:	"וְרָשׁוּת לּוֹ לְדַחוּתָהּ, כִּי "הִבָּא לְהַרְנִיקָהּ, הַשָּׁנִים וְהָרָגוֹ
With this, we understand the phrase "A crushed chick—where did its spirit depart from?"	"וּבָזָה יוֹכֵן "רְצוּצָא דְּמִית—מֵהֵיכָן נָפֵק רוּחִיהָ
Meaning, the thought that arises during prayer, which is called an egg,	כְּלוּמַר, הַמַּחֲשָׁבָה הַבָּאָה בְּשַׁעַת תְּפִלָּה שְׁנִקְרָאת בֵּיצָה
if it is dead, meaning one rejects and nullifies it,	דְּמִית, וְהֵינּוּ, שְׁדוּחָהּ אוֹתָהּ וּמִמִּית אוֹתָהּ
where did its soul depart?	"מֵהֵיכָן נָפֵק רוּחִיהָ?"
The answer: "From where it entered, it departed."	"מֵהֵיכָא דְּעָל, נָפֵק"
Just as the thought entered to disturb, so too, it may be removed.	כְּמוֹ שֶׁעָלְתָה הַמַּחֲשָׁבָה לְבַלְבֵּל אֶת הָאָדָם, כֵּן נִפֵּק.
Thus, a person has the right to reject a thought and remove it.	רָשׁוּת לְאָדָם לְדַחוּת הַמַּחֲשָׁבָה וּלְהוֹצִיאָהּ.
And this is what the Gemara means: "From where it entered, it departed."	"וְזֶהוּ "מֵהֵיכָא דְּעָל, נָפֵק
One time, a student asked my teacher,	יְפָעַם אַחַת שָׂאֵל הַשּׁוֹאֵל לְמוֹרֵי זֵלָה"ה



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### Siman 30-39

"If one said words of Shema or prayer without intent, may he repeat them?"	אם אמר כמה תבות בקריאת שמע ובתפלה בלא "כונה, האם ראוי לחזור ולאומרו בכונה
My teacher responded: "It is well known that nothing exists outside of Hashem's presence. Even a stray thought contains sparks of holiness.	ואמר: "הלא ידוע ומפורסם שאין דבר שאין בו מציאות השם. אפילו מחשבה חיצונית יש בה ניצוצות קדושים."
Thus, if one recited Shema or prayer without intent, he should not repeat it,	ואם כן, אם אמר תבות בקריאת שמע ובתפלה בלא "כונה, לא יאמרם פעם שנית
but rather meditate with intent on the words he already said."	רק יהרר במחשבה ובכונה את התבות שאמר בלא "כונה."
This teaching is from my teacher, the Baal Shem Tov.	כל זה ממורי הבעל שם טוב זלה"ה.

**[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.
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.

## The Baal Shem Tov - Kesser Shem Tov

### Siman 30-39

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 NOTE]**