



*The*  
*Garden*  
*of*  
*Tanya*

SUMMARIZED & ILLUSTRATED

*Dedicated to the Rebbe's emissary  
Dr. Yitzchak Block, of blessed memory,  
who first introduced me to Tanya  
and its divine paths of kindness.*

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# Introduction

## THE ORIGIN OF CHASSIDUT

In the wake of devastating pogroms and the disillusionment from false messianic movements, Eastern European Jewry faced deep spiritual and emotional challenges. Amid this turmoil, **Rabbi Yisroel Baal Shem Tov** (1698–1760) founded the Chassidic movement, offering a message of hope, joy, and divine connection. Chassidut emphasized that G-d is accessible to every Jew, promoting heartfelt prayer, joy in mitzvot, and the sanctity of everyday life.

Among the Baal Shem Tov's most prominent spiritual heirs was **Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi** (1745–1812), known as the Alter Rebbe. As the founder of the Chassidut of Chabad—an acronym for *chochmah* (wisdom), *binah* (understanding), and *daat* (knowledge)—he introduced a systematic approach that emphasized employing the mind to elicit G-dly feelings in the heart. His groundbreaking work, *Tanya*, became the foundational text of Chabad philosophy, bringing the lofty teachings of Chassidut into a structured, accessible framework, and offering a roadmap for spiritual growth that is both profound and practical.

## THE BOOK OF BEINONIM

*Tanya* explores the complexities of the soul, the struggle between good and evil, and the path to serving G-d with both heart and mind. It defines three spiritual archetypes: the *tzaddik* (righteous), the *beinoni* (intermediate), and the *rasha* (wicked). The *tzaddik* achieves total mastery over the self, eradicating any trace of evil or selfish desire—a rare level representing complete spiritual transformation. The *rasha*, by contrast, succumbs to lower impulses, allowing negative thoughts and actions to dominate.

The primary focus of *Tanya*, however, is the *beinoni*, earning the book its subtitle, *Sefer Shel Beinonim, The Book of Beinonim*. Unlike the *tzaddik*, the *beinoni* does not eliminate inner struggles but maintains absolute control over thought, speech, and action. While facing temptations like the *rasha*, the *beinoni* never acts on them, embodying the daily struggle to “turn away from evil and do good.” Crucially, *Tanya* teaches that the level of *beinoni* is universally attainable: “Every person can, at any time or moment, be a *beinoni*” (*Tanya*, Chapter 14).

## THE BOOK OF THE RIGHTEOUS

In addition to writing *The Book of Beinonim*, the Alter Rebbe also authored *The Book of the Righteous, Sefer Shel Tzaddikim*. This esoteric manuscript was intended to guide those on the highest spiritual levels. According to tradition, the Shpoler Zeide, a contemporary of the Alter Rebbe, conveyed a heavenly directive that the manuscript should not be shared, foretelling its destruction.

In 1812, during Napoleon's invasion of Russia, Rabbi Shneur Zalman fled his hometown of Liadi. During this flight, he ordered his residence to be burned to prevent Napoleon from seizing any of his possessions, and it is believed that *The Book of the Righteous* was destroyed in this fire. Remarkably, the Shpoler Zeide passed away on the very same day that the manuscript was consumed by the flames, a coincidence viewed by many as the fulfillment of his earlier prophecy.

## THE WRITTEN TORAH OF CHABAD CHASSIDUT

In Chabad, *Tanya* is cherished and revered beyond all other works:

*Tanya is the Written Torah of Chabad Chassidut. Not only is every concept precise and deliberate, but so is every single word, to the last letter. Our holy Rebbes and the first Chassidim, as well as the elder Chassidim in each generation, treated a Tanya with the same reverence that is reserved for a Chumash (The Bible). (Igrot Kodesh of the Rebbe Rayatz, Vol. 3, p. 261)*

Now, the Torah, as received by Moses on Mount Sinai, is unchanging and immutable:

*This Torah will never be replaced, and there will never be another Torah ... It is clear and explicit in the Torah that it is an eternal commandment; it is not subject to change, nor subtraction, nor addition. (Maimonides' Introduction to Mishneh Torah).*

With this understanding, we can appreciate the unique status attributed to *Tanya* when referred to as the “Written Torah of Chassidut.” Like the precise and unchanging letters of the Written Torah, the teachings of *Tanya* are eternal.

### HOW CAN WE FULFILL THE OATH 'BE RIGHTEOUS'?

Tanya begins with the oath administered to every soul before birth: "Be righteous and do not be wicked." While avoiding wickedness is attainable through scrupulous self-discipline—since "every person can, at any time or hour, be a beinoni (i.e., one who never sins)—but how can one fulfill the oath to "Be righteous" when it is beyond the reach of most of us to become a tzaddik (who is righteous to the core and has completely subdued their evil inclination)? Indeed, "Not everyone is privileged to become a tzaddik, nor does a person have complete freedom of choice in experiencing true delight in G-d or in genuinely and truly abhorring evil" (Tanya, Ch 14).

However, in 1991, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, **Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson**, introduced a transformative perspective. Since we now stand on the very threshold of the Messianic era, the spiritual refinement accumulated over the generations has opened unprecedented opportunities for every Jew:

*After all that has been done throughout history until now, in refining and purifying the world, etc., now every Jew can surely attain the highest levels, even outwardly reaching "Be a tzaddik" ... as will be fully revealed in the true and complete redemption. (Sefer HaSichos 5751, Vol. 2, p. 533)*

This statement constitutes a seismic shift in our potential. But how can that be, if Tanya, the unchanging Written Torah of Chassidut, clearly states "Not everyone is privileged to become a tzaddik"?

The simple fact is that Tanya itself describes the advent of the promised era as being dependent upon us: "The fulfillment of the Messianic era and the Resurrection of the Dead depends on our actions now" (Ch. 37). Our efforts refine the world, dispelling concealment, until G-d's unity is fully revealed. The Messianic Era is thus a time of abundant clarity when the impurities of the body and material world will be cleansed, allowing divine light to penetrate and shine openly. This fulfills G-d's

desire for "a dwelling place in the lower realms" and marks the goal of Creation, as "darkness itself will be transformed into the brightest light" (Ch. 36).

In this context, the Rebbe's statements in 1991 and 1992 reveal a profound, divinely inspired insight. He asserts—something only a prophet could declare with certainty—that thousands of years of refining the world have finally reached their culmination. The world, he teaches, has fundamentally changed, and a new spiritual reality has emerged: "We have already completed the final rectifications" (Sefer HaSichos 5752, Vol. 2, p. 436). And this is no secret; this message is meant for the entire world:

*We must publicize in every single place that we are presently at the end and completion of our deeds and our service ... and the beginning of the era of receiving reward, "the reward of the righteous" ... when "He will fill our mouths with laughter" ... in the present tense. (Sefer HaSichos 5751, Vol. 2, p. 808)*

With the final rectifications complete, every Jew can now attain perfect joy in G-d. "All Your people are tzaddikim" is no longer a distant ideal but a present reality waiting to be experienced:

*There will be joy in G-d ... without any wants (the level of tzaddikim). For then there will be (with regard to every Jew) ... the ultimate state of perfection ... joy in G-dliness. (Sefer HaSichos 5752, Vol. 1, p. 317, FN 109, quoting Ohr HaTorah, Parshat B'Shalach, p. 367 ff.)*

In light of the Rebbe's teachings, the notion that becoming a tzaddik is out of reach has been recontextualized. Tanya's teachings remain eternally true, but the spiritual landscape has shifted. The Rebbe reveals that we are living in a time when the potential for every Jew to achieve the highest spiritual levels is now fully accessible. As the Rebbe said repeatedly, all that remains is to "open our eyes."

# 1: Souls

*Before a soul enters the physical world, it is administered an oath: "Be righteous and do not be wicked; and even if the whole world tells you that you are righteous, consider yourself as wicked." (Niddah 30b)*

This Talmudic teaching introduces the duality of the human soul, a central concept that explains how each Jew possesses two **souls**: one **divine** and the other—the **animal** soul—rooted in the created, physical world.

The **animal** soul, or vitalizing soul, animates and sustains the body. This soul originates from a mixture of good and evil called *kelipat nogah* (literally, the shining husk), which contains redeemable spiritual energy. Infused in the blood, the animal soul is the source of impulses and emotions, corresponding to the four fundamental elements:

- **fire**, giving rise to anger and arrogance;
- **water**, the source for indulgence and pleasure-seeking;
- **air**, associated with frivolity and boasting; and
- **earth**, related to laziness and melancholy.

Despite these negative tendencies, the animal soul also contains goodness, such as compassion and kindness.

In terms of behavior, individuals are classified as **tzaddik** (righteous), **rasha** (wicked), and **beinoni** (intermediate). While the tzaddik achieves complete righteousness and the rasha succumbs to sin, the beinoni occupies a unique position. Rather than balancing merit and sin, the beinoni never allows sin to manifest outwardly, maintaining control over actions, speech, and thought despite inner struggles. This distinction underscores the beinoni's spiritual discipline: "The beinoni is not even guilty of the sin of neglecting Torah study ... How could someone like this consider themselves 'intermediate' unless it means total control over behavior rather than describing an intermediary status?" (As we will see in Chapters 12 and 13, the beinoni is considered intermediate because they stand between two opposing forces—the G-dly soul, which urges them toward righteousness, and the animal soul, which inclines them toward self-indulgence.)

It is important to note that these three classifications are not fixed identities but reflect a person's current spiritual standing. There is a **fluid** nature of spiritual states, whereby even minor transgressions can render someone a rasha, yet repentance immediately restores righteousness: "In the moment that one sins, they are considered completely wicked. If they repent, they are considered completely righteous."

This opening discussion establishes the foundation for understanding the soul's duality and the challenges of spiritual growth. True righteousness is not merely defined by outward actions but by the continuous effort to align one's inner self with divine purpose.



## 2: Part (of the Divine)

Chapter 1 introduces the duality of the soul, distinguishing between the animal soul, rooted in material drives, and the divine soul, whose sacred origin is the focus of Chapter 2. While the animal soul governs physical and emotional impulses, the **divine** soul is described as “literally a **part** of G-d above,” reflecting its uniquely spiritual existence.

This sacred connection is illuminated by the verse, “And He blew into his nostrils a soul of life” (Genesis 2:7). The Zohar elaborates, “He who blows, blows from within,” emphasizing that blowing, unlike speech, emanates from one’s innermost being. Similarly, the divine soul’s journey through the spiritual realms is likened to conception. Just as a **child** originates in the father’s innermost essence and develops into a seminal drop, the divine soul descends through the spiritual worlds while retaining its connection to G-d. As Rambam writes, “He is the Knowledge, the Knower, and the Known” (Foundations of the Torah 2:10), illustrating the unity of G-d and His wisdom.

Though the divine soul undergoes descent and transformation, it remains inherently bound to its source. This connection applies to all souls—whether those of the greatest leaders or the most humble individuals—due to their shared divine origin. Each generation also embodies a profound **unity** among the souls of the time. The spiritual sustenance of all souls of the generation flows through the *tzaddikim* (righteous leaders), consistent with their role in guiding and uplifting others, as in the Talmudic teaching, “He who cleaves to a Torah scholar is as if he cleaves to the Divine presence.”

The chapter concludes by emphasizing the parents’ role in **sanctifying** themselves during conception, enabling the birth of spiritually elevated souls. It also acknowledges the mysterious workings of divine providence, as lofty souls may sometimes be born to parents of lower spiritual stature.

The divine soul, despite its descent into the physical world, remains inseparably bound to its divine source, reflecting an intrinsic holiness shared by all Jews.



### 3: Ten (attributes)

Having introduced the divine soul's origin, Chapter 3 delves into its inner structure, composed of **ten** spiritual attributes that mirror the ten divine emanations, known as *sefirot*.

These attributes are divided into two primary categories: **intellect** and **emotions**. The intellectual attributes—wisdom (*chochmah*), understanding (*binah*), and knowledge (*daat*)—serve as the foundation for the emotional attributes: love of G-d (*chesed*), awe and reverence (*gevurah*), harmony or beauty (*tiferet*), perseverance (*netzach*), humility (*hod*), connection (*yesod*), and sovereignty (*malchut*). Together, they form the framework through which the soul interacts with the world.

The **intellect** is the source of emotions, as “the intellect of the rational soul ... gives birth to the emotions.” Wisdom (*chochmah*) sparks an idea, understanding (*binah*) develops it into full comprehension, and knowledge (*daat*) fosters the deep connection necessary to internalize it. When one contemplates G-d's infinite greatness, this intellectual process naturally gives rise to emotions such as awe for His majesty and love for the Divine, expressed as an intense yearning to cleave to the Infinite.

Knowledge (*daat*) plays a critical role in transforming intellectual insight into genuine emotional experience. Without focused and sustained engagement of *daat*, even profound wisdom and understanding fail to produce lasting **emotions**: “Unless one binds his knowledge and fixes his thought with firmness and perseverance, true love and fear will not emerge in his soul.” This binding of *daat* creates a living connection between the intellect and the heart, allowing for authentic spiritual transformation.

The interplay between intellect and emotion is central to the soul's spiritual growth. Intellect ignites and nurtures the emotional attributes, shaping them into a balanced and profound relationship with G-d: “When the intellect deeply **contemplates** the greatness of G-d ... the emotion of awe for His majesty is born, and the heart is inflamed with a strong love like burning flames.”

Chapter 3 presents a detailed framework for the divine soul's ten attributes, emphasizing how intellect shapes emotions to foster a profound and dynamic relationship with the Divine.



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# 4: Garments (of the soul)

While the ten attributes form the internal structure of the soul, they alone are not sufficient for it to interact with the world. For this, the soul requires "**garments**"—thought, speech, and action—that allow its intellect and emotions to be expressed and realized in tangible ways.

These garments enable the soul to engage with the 613 **commandments** of the Torah. When a person uses their thought to understand Torah, their speech to articulate its teachings, and their actions to perform *mitzvot* (commandments), the divine soul becomes fully clothed in these garments: "When a person fulfills all the precepts requiring action, uses his speech to study the Torah, and directs his thought toward comprehending the four dimensions of Torah (i.e., literal, allegorical, homiletic/midrashic teachings, esoteric), the totality of his soul's 'organs' are clothed in the 613 commandments."

There is a distinct transformative power of these garments. Through them, the divine soul achieves a connection to the Divine that surpasses its inherent nature. This is because the Torah and mitzvot are expressions of G-d's **will and wisdom**, which are entirely united with Him: "For the Holy One, blessed be He, has compressed His will and wisdom within the 613 commandments of the Torah."

Unlike the soul itself, which remains bound by its nature, the garments enable the soul to **bridge** the infinite gap between G-d and the physical world. Through thought, speech, and action aligned with Torah, the soul draws divine light into even the most mundane aspects of life, sanctifying them and creating a profound unity between the material and the spiritual.

The chapter also highlights the **hierarchy** within these garments. Thought connects the intellect of the soul to Torah study, while speech externalizes this connection. Action, although the most physical of the three, has a unique power to actualize the divine will in the tangible world, allowing G-d's presence to be revealed even materially.

The garments of the soul serve as the interface for its engagement with the world and its connection to G-d. These garments enable the soul to transcend its own limitations, linking it to the Infinite One through the fulfillment of His Torah and mitzvot.



# 5: Sustenance (of the soul)

While the garments of thought, speech, and action connect the soul to the Divine externally, Torah study nourishes it internally, fostering an intimate and lasting bond. The garments encompass and surround the soul, but Torah's **sustenance** penetrates it, becoming one with the soul and nourishing it—much like food sustains the body.

Just as physical food is digested and becomes part of the body, giving it life and strength, so too, when a person studies Torah, divine wisdom is **internalized**, becoming part of the soul, as expressed in the verse, "Your Torah is within my innards" (Psalms 49:9). Torah thus becomes integrated into the soul, providing it with life and vitality.

This transformative power is fully realized only when Torah is studied *lishmah*—**for its own sake**—with the pure intention of connecting to G-d and understanding His will, as stated: "Torah is the nourishment for the souls that engaged in it lishmah in this world, while the mitzvot serve as their garments in Gan Eden. And 'lishmah' means to connect one's soul to G-d through the comprehension of Torah, each person according to his intellect."

Moreover, Torah study is unparalleled in its ability to create a "wondrous **unity**," where human intellect and divine wisdom become "truly one and unified from every angle and aspect." This unity arises from the dynamic nature of Torah study, where the intellect both grasps and is enveloped by divine wisdom:

*To further explain the term "grasp" as used in Elijah's statement, "No thought can grasp You": When a person perceives and comprehends an intellectual concept, their mind "grasps" the idea, encompassing it within their intellect. At the same time, the concept itself is "grasped," surrounded, and enclosed within the intellect that understands it. Likewise, the intellect itself becomes clothed within the concept as it engages in comprehending and internalizing it. For example, when a person fully understands a particular halacha in the Mishnah or Gemara—clearly and thoroughly—their intellect surrounds and grasps the concept. Simultaneously, their intellect is immersed within it, fully engaged in the understanding.*

This complete unity—where the mind and divine wisdom become inseparable—illustrates how Torah study fuses human intellect with G-d's infinite truth.

Torah study is the ultimate means of spiritual nourishment and connection. It nourishes the soul from within, much like food sustains the body, and achieves a unique bond of unity—between the soul and divine wisdom.



## 6: *Opposite (of holy)*

After outlining the divine soul's structure—its ten attributes (Chapter 3), its "garments" of thought, speech, and action (Chapter 4), and Torah as its sustenance (Chapter 5)—Chapter 6 introduces its **opposite**: the soul from the "other side," known as *sitra achara*, associated with impurity and kelipa. Just as holiness exists, so does its counterpart, as it is written: "G-d has made one thing opposite the other" (Ecclesiastes 7:14).

This opposing soul, residing in human blood, mirrors the structure of the divine soul but channels **impure**, unholy qualities. Like the divine soul, it consists of ten spiritual attributes: ten "crowns of impurity" that parallel the ten sefirot. These include seven negative emotional traits rooted in the four "evil elements"—fire (anger, arrogance), water (pleasure-seeking, indulgence), air (frivolity, boasting), and earth (laziness, melancholy)—as well as an intellect composed of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. Here, too, the intellect shapes the emotional attributes.

While the divine soul expresses itself through thought, speech, and action aligned with G-d, the *sitra achara* soul manifests through its own "impure garments." These garments are formed when a person engages in harmful thoughts, words, or deeds, drawing their divine soul into impurity. Indeed, any act, speech, or thought **not directed** toward G-d and His will is rooted in *sitra achara*. In contrast, holiness is defined by devotion to G-d, creating a space where His presence can dwell.

The physical world is described as being dominated by kelipot and *sitra achara*, where mundane and self-serving interests prevail. However, kelipot exist in two degrees. The first, **kelipat nogah**, is a neutral force containing sparks of holiness. It can be directed toward holiness or impurity, depending on its use and intent. These sparks can be elevated when physicality is used for holiness—such as eating with the proper intention or engaging in mitzvot—which channels the infinite light of G-d into the lowest realms. In contrast, the three entirely **impure kelipot\*** are intrinsically unholy, devoid of goodness, and cannot be elevated to holiness. They are the source of all that is forbidden, including non-kosher animals and prohibited acts, trapping divine energy in a state of spiritual concealment.

Chapter 6 reveals the ongoing struggle between holiness and impurity. Every thought, word, and action either elevates divine energy or draws it into concealment.

\*NOTE: The three entirely impure kelipot represent the fundamental forces of impurity—arrogance, spiritual obscurity, and uncontrolled desire—corresponding to the vision in Ezekiel (1:4) of a stormy wind, a great cloud, and a blazing fire. Unlike *kelipat nogah*, which can be elevated, these kelipot are the root of absolute evil—idolatry, forbidden relationships, and murder—and remain irredeemable unless transformed through profound repentance out of love for G-d, or in the Messianic era.



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## 7: Kelipat nogah

Having introduced the concepts of klipot and sitra achara, this chapter focuses on **kelipat nogah**, the intermediary realm between holiness and impurity. Unlike the three impure klipot, which are irredeemable, kelipat nogah can ascend to holiness or fall into impurity, depending on one's actions and intent. It serves as the life force of the Jewish animal soul, as well as kosher animals, permissible foods, neutral speech, and all non-prohibited worldly actions.

A Jew's animal soul resides in the blood, and like kelipat nogah itself, it can be elevated through holiness or descend into impurity. The key lies in **intent**. When food is consumed for indulgence, its vitality remains trapped in kelipat nogah. But when someone eats to serve G-d, its energy ascends: "Such is the case, for example, of one who eats fatty meats and drinks spiced wine in order to broaden his mind for the service of G-d and His Torah ... this consumption ascends to G-d like a sacrificial offering." Even humor can be sanctified when used to uplift the spirit for Torah and divine service. This reflects the practice of Rava, who would begin his Torah lectures with a humorous remark, bringing joy to his students before delving into learning.

However, indulging in **permissible** pleasures purely for self-gratification temporarily drags kelipat nogah into the realm of the three completely impure klipot. The energy from such food and drink becomes absorbed in impurity, and the person's body serves as a vehicle for these klipot, just as a carriage follows its driver's will. Yet this state is only temporary, as Tanya states: "Until the person repents and returns to the service of G d and His Torah." Through teshuva, one ceases to be a vessel for impurity, and the trapped energy is released, returning to holiness. This is why permissible things are *mutar* (untied) and capable of elevation, whereas prohibited objects are *asur* (bound) in impurity and cannot be elevated through ordinary repentance. Nevertheless, indulgence in even permissible activities leaves a spiritual imprint, requiring purification (*chibut hakever*) after death.

Although wasteful emissions are serious, they differ from forbidden relationships, where spiritual energy becomes permanently trapped in impurity. In the case of wasted seed, the energy can still be reclaimed through repentance, especially by reciting Shema at night before going to sleep. By contrast, **forbidden** food and illicit relationships fully bind their vitality, requiring deep, love-driven repentance to elevate them. The most irreversible consequence is fathering a *mamzer* (a child from an illicit union), whose status remains fixed. Unlike other sins, where spiritual energy can be reclaimed through repentance, a mamzer remains bound to impurity in this world, illustrating the lasting impact of misdirected divine energy.

Kelipat nogah embodies the potential within the physical world. The same action can lead to sanctification or descent, depending on intention. However, even when drawn toward impurity, repentance can redeem and elevate it, offering a path back to holiness.



# 8: Prohibited

Following the discussion of kelipat nogah and its capacity for elevation or degradation, Chapter 8 explores the spiritual consequences of engaging with **prohibited** foods, actions, and speech. Unlike neutral items associated with kelipat nogah, which can potentially ascend to holiness, prohibited items are tethered to impurity, their vitality trapped within the three entirely impure klipot, unable to be uplifted even when used with good intentions.

Prohibited foods, referred to as *asur* (meaning tied down or tethered), are rooted in the three **impure klipot**, and their vitality cannot ascend through Torah or prayer: “The vitality contained therein does not ascend and become clothed in the words of the Torah or prayer, as is the case with permitted foods, by reason of its being held captive in the power of the sitra achara of the three unclean klipot.”

The **evil inclination** and desires for forbidden things likewise draw their energy from the three impure klipot. These desires are likened to “non-Jewish demons,” in contrast to cravings for permissible things, which remain tied to kelipat nogah. However, unlike the utterly impure klipot, permissible desires can be elevated to holiness through proper intention, as explained in Chapter 7.

**Purification** is required after engaging with impurity or even mundane indulgences. Most people undergo purgation in the grave to cleanse the body of uncleanness resulting from physical enjoyment. Exceptions, such as Rabbi Judah the Prince—who derived no physical pleasure from this world—demonstrate the possibility of avoiding this purification process entirely.

**Speech**, too, is governed by laws of what is permitted and forbidden. Even idle chatter, while seemingly innocuous, requires purification for the soul. Forbidden speech, such as gossip or slander, brings graver consequences, often necessitating a descent into Gehinom (Purgatory) for atonement. Likewise, neglecting Torah study for trivial pursuits or engaging in secular studies without a holy intent carries profound spiritual repercussions.

Chapter 8 discusses the spiritual consequences of engaging with forbidden foods, actions, and speech, emphasizing that their impurity cannot be elevated, even with good intentions. These prohibitions bind the soul to impurity, blocking spiritual ascent and requiring significant purification—such as purgation in the grave or Gehinom—to cleanse the resulting spiritual blemishes.



# 9: War

The previous chapters outline the structure of the divine and animal souls, their faculties, and their opposing natures. Chapter 9 discusses the internal **war** between them, each vying for dominance over the body and its actions. The body is likened to a small city, where each soul struggles for control—the divine soul striving to direct all faculties toward G-dliness, while the animal soul fights for self-gratification and worldly desires.

The animal soul, rooted in kelipat nogah, resides in the left ventricle of the **heart**, which is filled with blood, as the Torah states, “For the blood is the soul.” From there, it generates desires, arrogance, and anger, which spread to one’s thoughts and influence behavior. These emotions rise to the mind, shaping one’s perspective and decisions.

In contrast, the divine soul dwells in the **brain** and extends into the right ventricle of the heart, where there is no blood, inspiring love and awe of G-d. The divine soul seeks to reverse this flow, uplifting the heart’s emotions toward holiness and directing one’s thoughts and actions in service of G-d.

This struggle is likened to two kings battling for control of a city—each seeks not just partial rule but total governance: “Just as two kings wage war over a city, each desiring to conquer it and rule over its inhabitants, so too do the divine and animal souls battle over the **body** and its limbs, each striving for complete dominion.” The divine soul’s strategy is to fill the heart with fiery love for G-d, transforming even the passions of the animal soul into divine service. This is the deeper goal: not just suppression of material desires but their elevation, turning the very force of worldly pleasure into a yearning for holiness.

Spiritual life is a constant battle, with each soul striving for control. True victory is won when the divine soul not only subdues but transforms the animal soul, turning its energy toward holiness.



# 10: Tzaddik (righteous)

Given the struggle between the divine and animal souls for control over the “small city” of the body, Chapter 10 explores those who have achieved mastery over this conflict. The **tzaddik**, a fully righteous individual who has subdued or transformed all inner evil, embodies this spiritual triumph. There are two distinct levels of tzaddik, reflecting varying degrees of spiritual mastery and transformation over sitra achara.

The **incompletely righteous**, or the “**righteous** man who **suffers**” (*tzaddik v’ra lo*), is a tzaddik who has subdued the evil in the left side of the heart, ensuring that it no longer influences their thought, speech, or action. However, deep inside this righteous person, traces of evil still remain (*v’ra lo*): “There still lingers in him a fragment of wickedness in the left side, except that it is subjugated and nullified to the good.”

In contrast, the **completely righteous** person, the “**righteous** man who **prosper**s” (*tzaddik v’tov lo*), has utterly transformed any trace of evil into goodness. They have no attraction to material pleasures and are entirely devoted to serving G-d, to the point that they despise anything outside of holiness:

*The complete tzaddik utterly hates anything that stems from the sitra achara and kelipa, for his immense love of G-d and holiness—a “ove of delights”—renders them completely antithetical. As it is written: “I hate them with utmost hatred; they have become enemies to me. Search me, O G-d, and know my heart”*

This stands in contrast to the incomplete tzaddik, whose aversion to evil is less absolute.

The completely righteous has attained the rare ability to transform and convert all residual negativity into sanctity. This transformation elevates them to a unique spiritual stature, as Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai observed, “I have seen superior men, *b’nei aliyah*, and they are but few,” for there are few tzaddikim that can fully transform and **uplift** evil to sanctity.

They are also called “*b’nei aliyah*” because their service is entirely selfless, driven not by personal fulfillment but by the mission to unite G-d’s presence with the world. Rather than seeking closeness to G-d for themselves, they draw divine light downward into the physical realm, as stated in Tikkunei Zohar: “Who is pious? One who acts with kindness toward his Creator (*kono*)—with His nest (*im kan dilei*).” That is, the completely righteous labor to unite the Holy One with His Shechinah, revealing G-dliness even in the **lowest realms**. (The two meanings of “*b’nei aliyah*” are interconnected: by uplifting the divine sparks within kelipat nogah, they elicit a divine response, drawing down G-d’s holiness and benevolence into the world.)

The distinction between the two levels of tzaddik highlights the depth of spiritual refinement and the rarity of those who achieve total transformation. While the incomplete tzaddik subdues evil, the complete tzaddik eradicates it entirely, embodying a selfless devotion that brings divine light into the lowest realms.



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# 11: Rasha (wicked)

Having explored the two levels of the tzaddik, the righteous person, and their mastery over *sitra achara*, this chapter turns to their counterpart—the **rasha**, the wicked person—whose inner struggle is marked by the dominance of the animal soul. Like the tzaddik, the rasha is also divided into two categories.

The “**wicked** man who **prosper**s” (*rasha v'tov lo*) is one whose divine soul still retains influence but is subjugated beneath the animal soul. Tanya describes this as the good within him being suppressed and overpowered by the evil in his heart. Since the divine soul continues to struggle for control, there are countless gradations within this category, depending on the extent and frequency of the good being overpowered by evil.

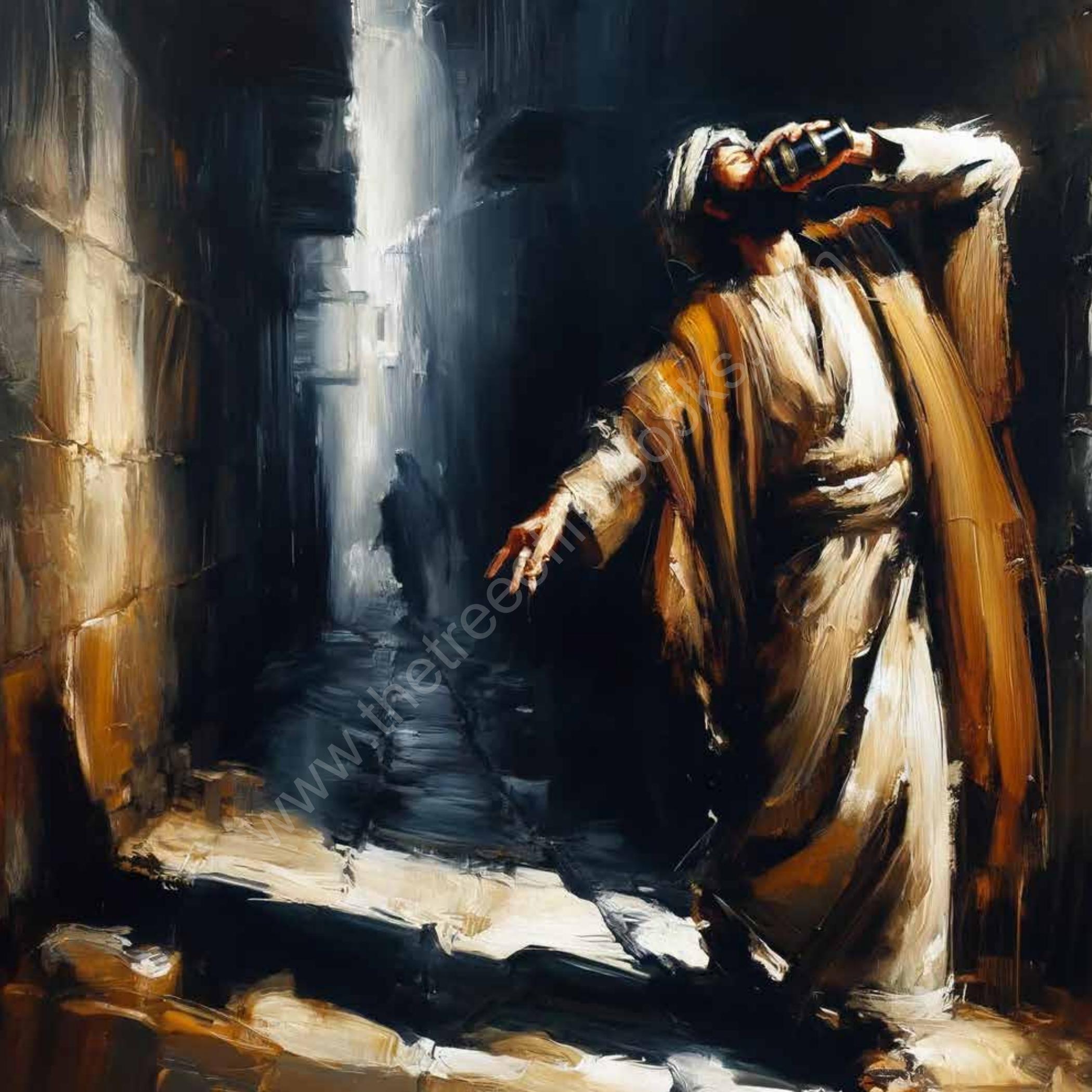
Some within this category experience only occasional **lapses**, in which the evil inclination asserts itself, overshadowing the divine soul and leading to minor transgressions. These may take the form of sinful action, speech, or thought, such as engaging in light gossip, frivolous talk, or impure thoughts. At such times, “he is called wicked at that moment, when the evil in his soul prevails over him, clothing itself in his body.”

However, the wicked man who prospers is not entirely dominated by evil. The divine soul reasserts itself at times, bringing moments of remorse and thoughts of repentance. These individuals still have good within them—hence, “*v'tov lo*” (literally, “he has **good**”)—but it is weak, unable to fully break free from the control of the evil inclination. Tanya describes this category as comprising “the majority of the wicked, in whose soul still lingers some good.”

The other, more severe classification of rasha is the “**wicked** man who **suffers**” (*rasha v'ra lo*). In this person, the evil (*ra*) has fully overtaken good. Unlike the wicked man who prospers, who still experiences regret, the wicked man who suffers never feels remorse or entertains thoughts of repentance: “The evil in his soul is the sole force remaining within him, for it has so completely overpowered the good. Goodness has departed from within him and now exists only in a subconscious state.” The divine soul no longer exerts influence from within, leaving the person entirely controlled by their animal soul.\*

Chapter 11 categorizes the rasha based on the dominance of evil over good and their capacity for remorse. These distinctions illustrate varying spiritual struggles, emphasizing that as long as one still experiences regret, their divine soul remains accessible, and repentance is possible.

\*NOTE: Although this state appears irreversible and insurmountable, Tanya offers a ray of hope. In Chapter 25, it states: “If he forces the moment and repents, nothing stands in the way of teshuvah.” While the wicked person may lack any inner drive to return, repentance remains possible through sheer determination and effort.



## 12: Beinoni (intermediate)

Between the extremes of righteousness and wickedness is the **beinoni**, the focus of Chapters 12-17, whose spiritual identity is defined by continuous inner struggle. Neither fully righteous nor dominated by evil, the beinoni ensures that the divine soul governs their outward behavior, never succumbing to sin—unlike the rasha, whose animal soul sometimes prevails.

The beinoni is someone who steadfastly ensures that the “small city”—the body—is never overtaken by the animal soul’s garments of thought, speech, and action. Instead, their behavior is consistently governed by the divine soul, expressed through the 613 commandments. Tanya emphasizes the purity of the beinoni’s **unwavering devotion**: “He has never committed, nor ever will commit, any transgression. The name ‘wicked’ cannot be applied to him even temporarily, or even for a moment, throughout his life.”

However, this exemplary discipline does not mean the beinoni has eradicated the evil within. The animal soul remains active in the beinoni, generating desires and **temptations**. During moments of spiritual engagement, such as prayer, the divine soul gains temporary dominance, subduing the animal soul. But after these elevated states subside, the animal soul reasserts itself, reviving cravings for material gratification.

Even when confronted with countless temptations, the beinoni demonstrates remarkable self-control. Harnessing the innate **power of the mind to rule over the heart**, they are able to restrain their desires and redirect their thoughts and actions toward holiness: “For man is created with the innate ability to summon the mind’s willpower to restrain and control the lustful impulses of the heart.”

Despite their impeccable behavior, the beinoni differs fundamentally from the tzaddik. While the tzaddik achieves complete transformation, subduing and converting the nature of the animal soul into holiness, the beinoni ensures that the **garments** of the divine soul—thought, speech, and action—always remain in control.

The beinoni achieves remarkable self-control despite ongoing inner struggles. The beinoni’s life is marked by constant vigilance and effort, demonstrating the potential for spiritual triumph even amidst unrelenting challenges.



# 13: Judges

The beinoni lives in constant struggle, as the divine and animal souls both act as **judges** vying for control over the body. Yet, the divine soul always governs the beinoni's behavior, ensuring righteousness and leaving no room for sin.

The beinoni never lets evil overpower the divine soul enough to cause sin in thought, speech, or action. While the evil inclination does exist within the beinoni, it **never dominates** or finds expression in the body: "The three 'garments' of the animal soul—namely, thought, speech, and act, originating in the kelipah—do not prevail within him over the divine soul to the extent of clothing themselves in the body."

However, the beinoni's struggle is continuous, as the evil inclination is constantly present, voicing its opinion but not gaining control. The beinoni's victory over this inclination is not due to their own strength and effort alone but because of the divine assistance they receive. Tanya explains this with the analogy of a judicial process, where two judges—representing the good and evil inclinations—offer their opinions, and the final verdict rests with an **arbitrator**, symbolizing divine assistance.

The beinoni experiences **moments of spiritual elevation**, particularly during prayer, where their love for G-d is tangibly felt. During these times, the evil inclination is subdued but not eradicated, lying dormant like a sleeping person who will surely awaken. This contrasts with the tzaddik, in whom evil is permanently subdued or entirely eradicated. After prayer, the beinoni's evil inclination reawakens, and desires for worldly pleasures resurface. However, the beinoni maintains control over these impulses.

Chapter 13 highlights the constant battle the beinoni faces, where the divine and animal souls act as judges vying for influence. While the animal soul voices its inclinations, it never gains dominance over the beinoni's actions, thanks to the critical role of divine assistance.



# 14: Attainable

The spiritual mastery attained by the beinoni is universally **attainable**, within everyone's reach. Unlike the tzaddik, who is rare because they completely transform their animal soul, the beinoni achieves greatness by staying in control of their actions, even while facing inner struggles.

The beinoni does not eliminate inner evil but instead strives to "Turn away from evil and do good." By maintaining outward discipline: "**Every person can** at any time or hour **be a beinoni**, because the beinoni does not revile evil—for that is a feeling entrusted to the heart, and not all times are alike." There are moments, such as during prayer, when the heart is open and receptive, evoking a revulsion toward evil. At other times, when the heart feels blocked, this feeling is absent. Their defining trait is thus self-control, not an emotional rejection of evil.

The oath administered to the soul before birth—"Be righteous and do not be wicked"—may seem perplexing. While avoiding wickedness is within everyone's grasp through self-discipline and control over one's desires, **how can one** fulfill the command to "**Be righteous**" when the level of tzaddik is beyond reach for most?

Although full transformation may remain elusive, elements of righteousness can be **cultivated** through contemplation and habit. By reflecting on the fleeting nature of material pleasures and setting aside time for self-reflection, one can weaken the pull of material desires and foster a genuine disdain for evil. In fact, consistent effort creates a second nature, allowing a person to develop a genuine aversion for evil and joy in G-d:

*When one accustoms themselves to despise evil, it will become somewhat despised in truth. Similarly, by habituating themselves to rejoice in G-d through contemplation of His greatness, with initiative shown from below, from the person, there will be an awakening from On High ... granting them a spirit from the spiritual root of some tzaddik to inhabit them, enabling them to serve G-d with true joy, as it is written, "Rejoice in the L-rd, O you righteous," and thus truly fulfill the oath, "Be a tzaddik."*

Although true attainment of the level of tzaddik may be out of reach for most people, Tanya offers hope: "One should do his part to fulfill the oath, and G-d will do what is good in His eyes."\*

Thus, the beinoni represents an accessible ideal. While the ecstatic love of G-d and total aversion to evil may be reserved for tzaddikim, everyone can direct their actions toward divine service and strive for spiritual growth.

\*NOTE: In 1991, the Lubavitcher Rebbe stated that now, as we stand on the threshold of Moshiach's arrival, every Jew can indeed fulfill the oath, "Be a tzaddik":

*After all that has been done throughout history until now, in refining and purifying the world, etc., now every Jew can surely attain the highest levels, even openly reaching "Be a tzaddik" ... as it will be fully revealed in the true and complete redemption. (Sefer HaSichos 5751, Vol. 2, pg. 533)*



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# 15: *Oved* (one who serves)

The beinoni must remain constantly vigilant in resisting the temptations of the evil inclination. However, not all beinonim face the same intensity in their struggle, in their efforts to become a true **oved**, one who toils to surpass their natural inclinations in serving G-d. Those with fiery temperaments or strong desires must battle constantly to avoid sin, while those with more moderate dispositions encounter fewer temptations and may require less effort.

In contrast to the beinoni, the tzaddik is someone who has already completed this struggle and is referred to as an **eved**, a fully transformed servant of G-d. Having expelled evil from within, the tzaddik achieves a state where their heart is “void within him,” entirely free of inner conflict. Their service to G-d stems from a state of inner peace rather than active struggle.

The oved, in contrast, remains engaged in a **continuous, active struggle** to overcome the evil inclination. This process demands constant effort, described as waging war: “Much effort and toil is required to wage constant war with the evil inclination—that is the beinoni.”

There are thus two types of beinonim: one who actively serves G-d and one who does not. The beinoni who “**does not serve G-d**,” while not considered wicked, fulfills all the commandments and engages in sufficient Torah study without confronting significant inner conflict: “The reason he is referred to as one who does not serve G-d is because he does not wage any battle against his evil inclination.”

The beinoni who “**serves G-d**” actively battles their evil inclination, pushing beyond habitual tendencies and natural limits. In Talmudic times, reviewing teachings 100 times was the norm, but the 101st review required extra effort to break past one’s natural boundaries. The Gemara teaches that only one who reviews a teaching 101 times is truly “serving G-d,” while one who stops at 100 is not. Overcoming natural inclinations requires awakening love for G-d, as the Alter Rebbe explains: “To change one’s habitual nature, one must awaken love for G-d by using the mind to contemplate His greatness.”

True service of G-d requires effort beyond one’s natural tendencies. The oved actively strives to overcome inner challenges, demonstrating the value of breaking habitual limits through deliberate struggle.



# 16: Meditation (*hisbonenut*)

Building on the importance of active divine service, Chapter 16 presents practical tools for spiritual growth.

**Meditation** (*hisbonenut*) and mindful awareness (*daat*) empower the beinoni to resist evil, cultivate a love for G-d, and align their thought, speech, and action with holiness.

Meditation offers the **transformative** power to govern one's natural impulses. By focusing on the greatness of the Infinite G-d, the soul becomes illuminated with divine light, subduing the animal soul's influence. This process cultivates mindfulness and reverence for G-d, empowering one to shun evil. It also deepens love for G-d, strengthening one's commitment to fulfilling the commandments and enhancing dedication to Torah study.

Even when meditation does not lead to a revealed love of G-d, the **hidden love** already present in one's soul still exerts influence. This hidden love is engaged through a contemplation of the greatness of the Infinite G-d and a deep yearning to cleave to Him: "The heart comprehends, with the spirit of wisdom and understanding in the brain, the greatness of the Infinite G-d, blessed be He, in relation to whom all else is absolutely nothing." However, this hidden love remains intellectual rather than emotional, understood and appreciated by the mind but not tangibly felt in the heart.

Despite this love being hidden and not actively felt in the heart, it can still **uplift** one's actions, speech, and thoughts toward G-d and His commandments:

*This intellectual awareness becomes clothed in the actions, speech, and thoughts involved in Torah and its commandments, serving as their mind and life-force, and as "wings" to elevate them On High, as if he were engaged in them with actual love and awe felt openly in his heart ... For it is this intellectual awareness in his mind and the concealed depths of his heart that brings him to engage in Torah and mitzvot.*

When one meditates on these concepts, their intellectual understanding influences their actions, speech, and thoughts in Torah and mitzvot, imbuing them with spiritual vitality, allowing them to ascend spiritually, as it is said: "The Holy One, blessed be He, unites a good thought to the deed."

Thus, meditation not only has the power to transform and improve our character, but it also channels the hidden love within the heart into active divine service. Even when emotions remain concealed, the effort itself refines the soul and elevates one's connection to G-d.



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# 17: Near

Continuing the theme of serving G-d through meditation, Chapter 17 teaches about the attainability of spiritual service, focusing on the meaning of the verse, "For this matter is very **near** to you, in your speech and in your heart, to do it" (Deuteronomy 30:14).

How can transforming one's heart to sincerely love G-d be described as "very near"? Such spiritual heights are often associated with **tzaddikim**, who have mastery over their hearts. Even the Talmud questions, "Is fear of Heaven a small thing?"—indicating that achieving this state is far from simple for most people.

Tanya addresses this apparent paradox by redefining "nearness" in the verse. Closeness does not require an intense, transformative love of G-d unique to tzaddikim but rather a practical, actionable love that motivates a person "**to do it**"—to observe the commandments, such as giving charity or refraining from speaking disparagingly of others. This accessible love, known as the "hidden desire of the heart," may not manifest as overt passion but can be awakened through intellectual contemplation: "If, then, he will contemplate with it on the greatness of the Infinite G-d, blessed be He, he will inevitably generate in his mind, at least, the love of G-d to cleave to Him through the performance of His commandments and Torah."

This love is within reach because the **mind** has a natural capacity to influence and control the heart. Even those who are not tzaddikim can develop sufficient love for G-d through focused meditation. This ability to consciously awaken enough love of G-d to inspire us to action makes divine service genuinely "very near" to everyone, as the verse asserts.

The chapter further contrasts the spiritual states of the wicked and the righteous. The wicked, dominated by their sins, are enslaved by their desires, while the righteous exercise complete mastery over their inclinations. For the wicked to approach divine service, they must **first repent**, breaking down the barriers (klipot) that obstruct their connection to holiness. This repentance enables them to reconnect with the "hidden desire of the heart" and align themselves with divine service.

Each Jew can develop a sufficient love to fulfill the commandments. Whether through repentance or steady spiritual effort, the hidden desire of the heart remains accessible. Through meditation and conscious effort, the verse's assurance that divine service is "very near" becomes a reality for everyone.



# 18: *Very (near)*

While the previous chapter explained how meditation and mindful awareness make divine service “near... to do it” (as in “For this matter is very near to you, in your speech and in your heart, to do it”), Chapter 18 introduces a deeper aspect—how it is “**very near**” even to “your heart.” From here through Chapter 25, Tanya explains how this accessibility applies even to one whose intellect is too limited to generate love of G-d through meditation.

Every Jew, regardless of their level of knowledge or observance, possesses a divine soul. Even its most basic level contains a spark of divine wisdom, illuminated by G-d’s infinite light. This spark transcends intellectual reasoning, embodying a **faith** and love for G-d that defies logical comprehension. In fact, “even one whose intellect is too limited to grasp G-d’s greatness, and who lacks the heart to comprehend and generate awe and love of G-d—even in their mind alone” still has access to this hidden love.

This love is innate to every Jew, stemming from our spiritual inheritance. Passed down from the Patriarchs, this hidden love does not need to be created—only **awakened**: “One does not need to labor over it, but merely to recall it and contemplate it briefly, and it will immediately be aroused and compel one to observe the mitzvot.” Because it requires no intellectual mastery, this love makes serving G-d “with your heart” truly “very near.”

This love has been demonstrated throughout history. Even Jews with little Torah knowledge or observance have displayed extraordinary devotion, **sacrificing** their lives rather than renouncing their faith. Such commitment does not arise from intellectual calculation but from the soul’s inseparable unity with G-d. Even if a Jew is unaware of this connection, it remains ever-present, surfacing when their bond with G-d is threatened.

The same hidden love that compels self-sacrifice in moments of crisis can also **guide** everyday life. Just as one would endure great suffering rather than be cut off from G-d, the realization that transgressing even a minor commandment momentarily severs that connection should awaken the same devotion. If one is prepared to endure death rather than betray G-d’s unity, how much more so should they be willing to withstand small challenges in observing Torah and mitzvot.

This hidden love, inherited from the Patriarchs, requires no intellectual effort—only recognition—to inspire unwavering devotion to G-d. Whether in moments of self-sacrifice or daily observance, it ensures that divine service remains deeply personal and always within reach.



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# 19: Candle

Having introduced the concept of the soul's "hidden love" of G-d, Chapter 19 explores the soul's inherent yearning for experiencing unity with the divine. Like the flame of a **candle**, which flickers and rises, the soul naturally strives to connect with its source, demonstrating that this longing exists in every Jew, regardless of their spiritual standing.

"The candle of G-d is the soul of man" (Proverbs 20:27). Just as a flame rises, seeking to unite with its source in the element of fire, even at the cost of extinguishing itself, the soul similarly longs to **transcend** the physical body and unite with G-d. That is, the soul naturally desires to depart from the physical body to unite with its origin and source in G-d, despite the fact that such a union would dissolve its own self-concept.

This suprarational desire is rooted in the soul's faculty of chochmah (wisdom), the first of the ten attributes, where the infinite light of G-d resides. Unlike kelipah and sitra achara, the forces of impurity, which crave separation and independence from G-d, the soul seeks **unity** with its Creator, reflecting its intrinsic connection to holiness.

Even Jews who have strayed retain this divine connection through their soul's attribute of chochmah. In such individuals, this divine spark may be overshadowed by worldly pursuits and pleasures. Yet, when their faith is **tested**, this divine spark is awakened, enabling them to overcome their previous inclinations and choose G-d, even to the point of martyrdom.

This awakening of the divine spark during moments of faith-testing is not driven by rational thought or understanding, but by an **innate** fear and love for G-d. This natural love, present in all Jews, recoils from anything that contradicts the belief in one G-d, even at the level of action or speech, without the need for any conscious acknowledgment in the heart.

The soul's inherent desire to affirm divine unity, even at the expense of its individuality, underscores the profound connection every Jewish soul has with G-d. This connection is revealed most powerfully during moments of faith-testing, transcending past actions or spiritual stature.



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## 20: One and only (*l'vado*)

The hidden love within the Jewish soul is rooted in an innate awareness of G-d's unity. Chapter 20 deepens this understanding by explaining that G-d is the "**one and only**" in the absolute sense—His existence is singular and unchanged, even after Creation. This principle not only defines the foundation of faith but also explains why the soul instinctively resists any separation from G-d, even at great personal cost.

The first two of the **Ten Commandments**—"I am the L-rd your G-d" and "You shall have no other gods before Me"—form the foundation of the entire Torah. The first, affirming G-d's existence, represents all positive mitzvot, while the second, prohibiting idolatry, includes all prohibitions. Together, they establish G-d's absolute oneness as the basis of all divine service.

This concept is echoed in the liturgy: "All believe that He is one and only" (*sh'hu l'vado hu*—Musaf, High Holidays). Even after Creation, **G-d remains unchanged**, as expressed in the verse: "For I, the L-rd, have not changed." Creation does not introduce division or alteration to His essence. Rather, all existence—physical and spiritual—is nullified before Him, manifesting solely as an expression of His will.

Tanya illustrates this with an analogy from human **speech**. Just as a spoken word is insignificant compared to a person's thoughts and emotions, so too, Creation—brought into existence through divine speech—does not diminish G-d's unity: "When a person speaks a single word, that word is as nothing, even compared to their faculty of speech, which can produce endless words." Even more so, a single spoken word is negligible relative to the vast depth of unspoken thought. Similarly, Creation is merely an external expression of G-d's will, sustaining existence without affecting His infinite and indivisible essence.

This perspective underscores the infinite gap between Creator and Creation, where all existence is nullified before G-d's unity. Recognizing His oneness aligns the soul with its purpose, reinforcing that resisting His will denies the fundamental truth of His unity.



# 21: Unity

While Chapter 20 emphasizes that all existence is nullified before G-d and that nothing truly exists outside of Him, Chapter 21 deepens this understanding by exploring how Creation—even as we perceive it—does not alter G-d’s **unity** or introduce separation; everything remains completely unified with Him, even amidst the apparent multiplicity of the created worlds.

Unlike human speech, which separates from the speaker and exists as independent words once spoken, **G-d’s speech** is fundamentally different. In the act of Creation, G-d’s speech does not produce a separate or independent reality. Instead, the term “speech” is used metaphorically to describe the process by which divine energy and potential, previously hidden like unspoken thoughts, are brought into revealed existence. The Ten Utterances, through which the world is created and continually sustained, remain fully unified with G-d, as Tanya explains: “His speech and thought are united with His essence and being in perfect unity, just as speech and thought are united within a person while still in the potential state in the heart or mind.”

Why then do created beings perceive themselves as separate from their divine origin? Divine light is concealed through a process called **tzimtzum** (contraction) to allow finite beings to exist. These contractions create the illusion of separateness, but from G-d’s perspective there is no independent existence: “Before Him, everything is as naught.” Even the veils of tzimtzum are not truly separate from G-d; they remain integrated within His unity, “like the turtle, whose garments are part of itself.” Just as a turtle’s shell is inseparable from its being, so too, the veils of tzimtzum—though they conceal—remain fully integrated within G-d’s unity, ensuring that Creation does not diminish His oneness.

Ultimately, from G-d’s perspective, Creation is entirely nullified within His all-encompassing unity. The worlds exist solely as an expression of His will, their apparent reality introducing no change or limitation to His essence.



## 22: Veil

The previous chapter established that G-d's speech remains united with Him and does not become separate or independent. Chapter 22 expands on this by explaining how tzimtzum, the contraction of divine revelation, acts as a **veil** that creates the illusion of separation. This concealment allows for the perception of independence in Creation and makes possible the emergence of impure forces like kelipot and sitra achara.

Kelipot and sitra achara are sustained by a veiled and diminished flow of divine life-force. Unlike the direct, intentional energy given to realms of holiness, the energy sustaining these dark forces is **bestowed reluctantly**, akin to a person throwing something over their shoulder to an adversary, avoiding direct engagement. As Tanya explains, "Like a man who throws something over his shoulder to his enemy without wanting to give it to him, for he turns his face away from him because of his hatred for him."

The concealed nature of the life-force within kelipot causes them to perceive themselves as independent and self-sufficient. This misperception fosters **arrogance** and a mindset of "me and nothing else." The Zohar calls such forces "mountains of separation," obscuring the oneness of G-d. This perception of independence is not merely a mistake but a form of idolatry, as it denies the fundamental truth of divine unity.

Furthermore, the divine light that sustains these forces is described as being in **exile**, trapped within realms of impurity. This exile intensifies the illusion of separation, making these forces appear as though they exist apart from G-d's will. However, in reality, all existence remains entirely dependent on and nullified before G-d, whose unity is unbroken despite the veils of tzimtzum.

Chapter 22 portrays Creation's impure forces as a veil obscuring divine unity. Though tzimtzum conceals G-d's light, all existence remains wholly dependent on Him, and His unity is never truly disrupted.



## 23: United

The illusion of an independently existing world arises through G-d's creation of a veil that conceals His unity. Chapter 23 explains how this illusion is dispelled by aligning with G-d's will and wisdom, which are inherently **united** with Him. Torah and mitzvot act as a bridge, connecting the finite world to the infinite and restoring the awareness of G-d's unity.

The commandments embody G-d's will, and are deeply intertwined with the ongoing creation and sustenance of all worlds: "The commandments constitute the innermost will of the Supreme One and His true desire, which are clothed in all the upper and lower worlds, thereby giving them **life**. The very life and sustenance of the worlds is dependent upon the performance of the commandments by those in the lower world."

The unity achieved through observing G-d's commandments is compared to the relationship between the soul and the body. The commandments are described as parts of the **King's body**:

*The organs of the human body are a garment for its soul and completely and utterly surrender to it. They obey its will immediately and without hesitation, as soon as a person desires to stretch out his hand or foot. Similarly, the life-force animating the performance of the commandments and their fulfillment is completely surrendered to the Supernal will, becoming in relation to it like a body to a soul.*

**Torah study** achieves an even higher level of unity with G-d than the performance of mitzvos. The articulation of Torah words during study holds a unique power, as it brings the wisdom of Torah into tangible expression, further bridging the gap between the infinite and the finite.

The Torah is described as the embodiment of G-d's wisdom and will, making its study a deeply transformative act of connection: "Torah is the wisdom and will of the Holy One, blessed be He. It is united with Him in a wondrous **unity**, a unity unlike any other in this world, incomparable to all other forms of unity." While mitzvos draw divine light into the physical realm and affirm G-d's unity in the tangible objects and actions they involve, Torah study reflects the inner vitality inherent to the mind, directly engaging with the source of divine wisdom.

Together, the unity achieved through mitzvos and Torah study completes the stature of the created worlds, uniting them entirely with their divine source: "This is what the Sages meant when they said that the Patriarchs are truly the **chariot of G-d**, for all their organs were completely holy and detached from mundane matters, serving as a vehicle throughout their lives solely for the Supernal will."

The observance of commandments and the study of Torah are pathways to uniting with G-d. These acts align one's being with the innermost divine will, lifting the veil of concealment and fostering a deep and profound connection with the Creator.



# 24: Fragmentation

Unity with G-d is achieved through observing His commandments and studying Torah. In contrast, violations of prohibitions disrupt this unity, creating spiritual **fragmentation**. Transgressions align an individual with forces of concealment and separation, distancing them from G-d's oneness and undermining the connection established through fulfilling His will.

Distance from G-d and fragmentation arise from **transgressing** His commandments, which directly oppose His will and wisdom:

*Transgressing the 365 prohibitions of the Torah, along with Rabbinic injunctions, oppose G-d's will and wisdom, blessed be He. Being their very opposite, they represent complete separation from His unity and oneness, akin to the sitra achara and kelipah, which are referred to as avodah zarah (idolatry) and 'other gods' due to the "hiding of the countenance" of the Supernal will.*

This opposition results in profound spiritual schism, where transgressions are likened to acts of idolatry because they obscure divine oneness and give rise to the illusion of separation.

Engaging in prohibited actions aligns a person with the forces of sitra achara and kelipah, which obscure divine light and perpetuate the illusion of independence from G-d. This alignment causes a person to descend spiritually, becoming "exceedingly **inferior** to and more debased than the sitra achara and kelipah ... and completely severed from His unity and oneness, to a degree surpassing even those dark forces themselves." This reflects a greater spiritual fall because, unlike kelipah—which inherently recognizes its Creator and operates only as permitted by G-d—a transgressor actively rebels, denying His unity. Even minor sins, though often dismissed as insignificant, carry profound consequences. They too reflect a breach of G-d's will and a willful denial of His unity, akin to idolatry.

Fragmentation manifests as an **exile** of the divine soul. Through sin, the soul is dragged into the realm of kelipah, akin to lowering the "king's head" into filth, G-d forbid—a stark metaphor for the spiritual humiliation caused by transgression. Despite the severity, the hidden love within the soul remains intact, yearning to reconnect with G-d and resist separation. This latent love serves as a potential force to overcome temptation and realign with divine unity.

Fulfilling G-d's will—through the observance of both positive and prohibitive commandments—acknowledges His unity and strengthens the bond between the person and the divine. By safeguarding against even minor sins and engaging in divine service, one preserves the profound unity with G-d that underpins Creation.



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# 25: Self-control

Chapter 25 of Tanya concludes the discussion initiated in Chapter 18, explaining the verse, “For this matter is very near to you ... in your speech and in your heart, to do it.” The Alter Rebbe demonstrates that every Jew inherently possesses the ability to serve G-d with love and fear, as this capacity is deeply embedded in the divine soul. This chapter emphasizes that overcoming temptation and fulfilling mitzvot is accessible to all, rooted in the soul’s hidden love for G-d, its aversion to separation from Him, and the exercise of **self-control**.

At the core of this chapter is the concept of the “**spirit of folly**” (*ruach shtut*), which obscures a person’s awareness of how sins sever their connection with G-d. Even minor prohibitions or neglect of positive commandments create a temporary separation from G-d, akin to idolatry. This folly, however, can be dispelled by recalling the innate love of the soul, which instinctively yearns for unity with its Creator. By awakening this latent love, one can recognize the significance of their choices, exercise discipline, and overcome impulses toward sin.

The chapter also warns against a dangerous misconception: relying on teshuvah as a license to sin. The Talmud states, “One who says, ‘I will sin and then repent’—he is not given the opportunity to repent” (Yoma 85b). This means that while teshuvah is always possible, a person who deliberately sins with the assumption that they can easily return may find themselves spiritually blocked. The Alter Rebbe clarifies that such a person is not physically prevented from repenting but may be denied the divine assistance or inner awakening necessary to truly return. However, he adds, “If he seizes **the urgency of the moment** and repents, nothing stands in the way of teshuvah.” Even when the path to repentance seems obstructed, sincere effort and determination can break through.

Since this love inherently carries a **fear of separation**, both avoiding transgression and fulfilling positive commandments become fully attainable. Love and awe provide the strength to remain steadfast in G-d’s will, even in the face of challenges and temptations: “At any time or moment, a person is capable and free to rid himself of the spirit of folly and forgetfulness ... and to recollect and awaken his love of the One G-d, which is certainly latent in his heart, without any doubt.” In fact, the effort required is far less than the suffering of death, which one would willingly endure to avoid idolatry: “Surely, then, it is far easier to subdue one’s appetites, since this entails much lighter suffering than death, which he would willingly endure so as not to be torn away from G-d.”

The chapter concludes by emphasizing the **eternal bond** formed through mitzvot. Unlike sin, which causes a momentary separation, mitzvot unite the soul with G-d’s infinite will in a manner that transcends time. Torah study and mitzvah observance reveal G-d’s innermost will, creating a perfect and everlasting unity between the individual and the Divine.

Every Jew possesses the ability to overcome the inclination towards evil by recalling their innate love for G-d. Through this awareness, one achieves not only victory over temptation but also an eternal connection with the Creator.



# 26: Depression

Chapters 26–32 examine the vital role of joy in divine service and the harmful effects of sadness and **depression**. They offer guidance on overcoming negativity and transforming it into a source of growth. A heavy heart leads to laziness and inaction, while love and fear of G-d must be built on a foundation of positivity and alacrity.

It is essential to maintain joy and a pure, open heart to overcome inner struggles: “It is impossible to conquer the evil inclination with laziness and heaviness ... but with **alacrity** that derives from joy and from a heart that is free and cleansed of worry and sadness.” This idea is illustrated through the analogy of two wrestlers: “Just as two individuals wrestle to throw one another, if one is sluggish and heavy, he will be easily defeated, even if he is stronger than his opponent. So too, it is impossible to overcome the evil inclination with sluggishness and heaviness, which originate in sadness and a dulled heart.”

Sadness—even when it comes from valid concerns, like **past sins**—must be turned into something productive rather than allowed to linger in the heart. Some sadness can lead to repentance and spiritual growth, while other kinds, like melancholy, hold a person back from serving G-d. Sadness that leads to repentance can bring true joy when it is handled in the right way and at the right time, whereas melancholy often serves as a tactic of the evil inclination to disrupt spiritual progress and weaken one’s resolve.

**Worldly concerns** or feelings of inadequacy should not lead to sadness, as they too can be reframed as opportunities to deepen one’s connection with G-d. Challenges are divinely orchestrated to elevate and strengthen a person’s spiritual resilience: “Rejoice in afflictions ... for this joy stems from one’s love of G-d, whose closeness surpasses all the life of this physical world, as it is written, ‘For Your kindness is better than life.’”

Practical steps are offered for addressing and overcoming sadness:

- **Reframing difficulties:** Life’s challenges should be seen as expressions of G-d’s hidden kindness, designed to draw a person closer to Him.
- **Structured reflection:** Introspection and repentance should occur at designated times, ensuring these moments do not disrupt daily life or interfere with divine service.
- **Embracing forgiveness:** After sincere repentance, one must trust in G-d’s mercy, allowing this belief to foster joy and a renewed connection to the Creator: “One must believe wholeheartedly that G-d has removed his sin ... and this brings true joy in the L-rd after sadness.”

While brief moments of sadness, when properly channeled, can serve a constructive purpose, prolonged melancholy undermines spiritual growth. Cultivating joy, reframing challenges, and relying on G-d’s compassion enable a person to serve G-d with the energy and determination necessary to overcome inner struggles.



# 27: Thoughts

Sadness and despondency hinder spiritual growth. Chapter 27 focuses on one of the most persistent challenges to maintaining joy: the emergence of intrusive negative **thoughts** and desires.

When undesirable thoughts arise **during mundane activities**, one should not feel dejected. Immoral thoughts or fantasies, whether of permitted or forbidden activities, are a natural part of the human condition for most individuals, those who are not at the level of tzaddik. The emergence of these thoughts does not make a person wicked but instead reflects the ongoing spiritual struggle faced by the beinoni.

In fact, redirecting the mind away from these thoughts is a **positive act**, fulfilling the mitzvah of avoiding temptations: "When thoughts of immorality arise in his mind, whether regarding permissible matters or otherwise, and he averts his attention from them, he fulfills the prohibition, 'And you shall not follow after your heart and after your eyes by which you go astray.'" This act transforms the struggle into a moment of spiritual accomplishment and should be seen as a cause for joy rather than despair.

Wrestling with such thoughts is not a sign of failure but an integral part of one's spiritual service. Overcoming these impulses brings immense **pleasure to G-d**, as it subjugates the sitra achara, the opposing force to holiness. Even if a person spends their entire life battling these thoughts, they should not become disheartened. On the contrary, this struggle may be their unique purpose: "Perhaps for this reason he was created—to constantly subjugate the sitra achara."

Every effort to reject negative impulses **elevates** the individual and brings divine assistance. Even refraining from permissible indulgences, such as delaying a meal to focus on Torah study during that time, is seen as a form of holiness that draws divine energy into one's life. There is great value even in small acts of self-discipline: "Sanctify yourselves a little below, and you will be greatly sanctified from Above." With this approach, a person lays the foundation for lasting holiness and achieves greater separation from negativity over time.

Negative thoughts are a natural part of spiritual growth and should not lead to despair. Redirecting one's mind away from such thoughts is itself an act of divine service. By embracing this struggle as part of one's purpose and practicing self-discipline, even in small ways, a person transforms challenges into opportunities for holiness and draws closer to G-d—with joy!



## 28: Prayer

While the previous chapter explores the internal struggle with intrusive thoughts in everyday life, Chapter 28 discusses managing such thoughts during **prayer** or divine service, moments that require heightened concentration and connection to G-d.

When negative thoughts intrude during prayer, they should not be a cause for dejection. These distracting thoughts—such as lustful imaginings or irrelevant concerns—are part of the ongoing struggle between the divine and animal souls. Their occurrence does not diminish the value of one's prayer but reflects the vitality of the divine soul's effort to connect to G-d. Instead of engaging with these thoughts or attempting to analyze them, one should immediately **redirect** focus back to prayer: "When thoughts of immorality or other extraneous matters arise during divine service, one must not dwell on them or feel dejected but immediately avert his mind to concentrate on prayer."

To illustrate this point, the Alter Rebbe compares intrusive thoughts to one who attempts to disrupt a Jew's prayer. The appropriate response is to **ignore** the provocations entirely, rather than engage with them:

*This is analogous to a person praying with devotion while facing opposition from a non-Jew who chats and disturbs him in order to confuse him. The best advice in such a case is not to answer him at all, nor to engage in arguments with him, but to behave as though he were deaf and neither hears nor understands what is being said, and to concentrate entirely on prayer.*

This analogy underscores the futility of addressing the distractions directly. Attempting to argue or counteract intrusive thoughts can entangle a person further, drawing their attention away from prayer.

If the thoughts persist and become overwhelming, we are advised to humbly turn to G-d to ask for His help. By **appealing to G-d's compassion** and acknowledging one's dependence on Him, a person strengthens their relationship with the Creator and gains the divine assistance needed to overcome the struggle.

Intrusive thoughts during prayer are not a sign of spiritual failure but part of the challenge of deep concentration. Redirecting focus and maintaining joy in prayer is the most effective response, turning to G-d for assistance in moments of extreme difficulty.



# 29: Crushing

Chapter 29 addresses the challenge of *timtum halev*, a spiritual numbness that hinders heartfelt connection to G-d in prayer. This spiritual dullness can be overcome by **crushing** the sitra achara—breaking the ego-driven forces that obstruct divine light—allowing the soul's emotions to be rekindled.

To break through this stagnation, one must **humble** themselves and confront the arrogance of the sitra achara, as in the verse: "Though you soar aloft like the eagle ... from there I will bring you down." Just as an eagle is cast down from its heights, so too must the sitra achara be subdued to release its grip on the heart. The Zohar offers a striking metaphor: "A log that does not catch fire must be splintered; a body into which the soul's light does not penetrate should be crushed." This crushing is not an act of despair but a necessary process of breaking arrogance and self-importance, which fuel spiritual blockage.

The beinoni must recognize that their animal soul remains dominant. This realization **shatters the ego**, allowing the soul's light to shine through. As the Alter Rebbe states: "The sitra achara is the person himself in the beinoni, for the vitalizing animal soul, which gives life to the body, remains in its full strength in his heart." The beinoni must acknowledge their ongoing struggle and work to subdue their lower nature through humility.

This process of humbling oneself involves **reflecting** on one's spiritual shortcomings—not to despair, but to weaken the sitra achara's control. By contemplating their distance from true holiness, the beinoni develops a contrite heart, as King David described: "A broken and contrite heart, O G-d, You will not despise."

The beinoni is advised to **confront** the sitra achara directly, rebuking their lower nature with words such as: "You are truly evil, abominable, loathsome, and disgraceful! How long will you obscure the infinite light of G-d, which fills all worlds?" By exposing the sitra achara as an empty, arrogant force, its false dominance is shattered. Just as darkness disappears in the presence of light, the sitra achara ceases to exist once its deception is revealed. Through this inner confrontation, the beinoni gains clarity, subdues their ego, and rekindles their love and awe of G-d.

Overcoming spiritual stagnation requires humility, honest self-reflection, and direct confrontation with the sitra achara, allowing the divine soul to illuminate the heart once more.



# 30: Lowly

Chapter 30 continues the discussion on humility, shifting the focus to interpersonal relationships. True humility requires cultivating a **lowly** and contrite spirit before every person, regardless of their status or spiritual shortcomings, while engaging in self-reflection and personal growth.

The Alter Rebbe begins with the directive from our Sages: “Be humble of spirit before every person.” Humility is rooted in the awareness that each individual contends with unique challenges shaped by their **environment and circumstances**. For example, someone who must spend their days in morally challenging settings, such as a bustling marketplace, may face overwhelming temptations: “His eyes behold all the temptations; the eye sees and the heart desires, and his evil nature is kindled like a baker’s red-hot oven.” Recognizing this fosters compassion for others and helps us avoid being judgmental.

We are encouraged to engage in a deeper struggle against the evil inclination, as even the most challenging circumstances do **not excuse** sinful behavior: “In truth, even he whose nature is extremely passionate and whose livelihood obliges him to sit all day at the street corners has no excuse whatsoever for his sins.” This is because every person, no matter their background or challenges, has the capacity to exercise free will and submit to the fear of G-d.

Spiritual growth demands strenuous effort, not just in avoiding outright sin but in refining every aspect of one’s conduct and devotion. This struggle is likened to a **test** of faith: “It is indeed a great and fierce struggle to break one’s passion, which burns like a fiery flame, through fear of G-d; it is like an actual test.” This test is not limited to grand acts of spiritual heroism but extends to small, often-overlooked areas of religious life. The Alter Rebbe warns against disregarding minor transgressions, as repeated neglect can lead to a loss of sensitivity to sin.

True humility comes from recognizing both one’s own spiritual struggles and the challenges others face. By cultivating compassion, engaging in honest self-reflection, and striving for continuous growth, a person develops the humility needed to overcome obstacles, refine their character, and deepen their connection to G-d.



# 31: Joy

Chapter 29 and 30 discuss breaking the arrogance of the sitra achara, yet these methods risk leading to despair. Chapter 31 addresses this concern by teaching how to balance contrition with **joy**, transforming negative emotions into powerful catalysts for spiritual growth.

Sadness and melancholy may arise from deep reflection on one's spiritual shortcomings, but when properly channeled, they can lead to joy. There are two forms of sorrow: **atzvut** (dejection) and **merirut** (bitterness). Atzvut is a dull, lifeless state weighed down by despair, whereas merirut is a bitter yet vital realization that motivates change: "In truth, however, a contrite heart and the bitterness of the soul ... are not called atzvut in the sacred tongue, for atzvut implies that the heart is dull like a stone and devoid of vitality." Unlike atzvut, merirut propels a person to confront inner obstacles, paving the way for authentic joy.

The transformation from sadness to joy begins by transcending bodily desires and embracing the aspirations of the divine soul. **Exiled** within the physical body, the soul longs to reconnect with its divine source. Recognizing this, evokes a sense of compassion for the soul and inspires a commitment to its liberation: "The further I am separated from G-d, and the more contemptible and loathsome, the deeper in exile is my divine soul, and the more greatly is she to be pitied. Therefore I shall make it my entire aim and aspiration to extricate her and liberate her from exile."

The path to **liberating** the soul lies in Torah study and the performance of mitzvot. These acts align one with their divine purpose, elevating the soul and restoring its connection to G-d. This transformation brings profound joy, "restoring the soul," as the Alter Rebbe says, "The precepts of the L-rd are right, rejoicing the heart."

Chapter 31 reframes sadness as a potential stepping stone toward joy and spiritual renewal. By recognizing the soul's exile and confronting one's inner struggles, a person can channel their emotions into greater devotion to Torah and mitzvot, filling the heart with joy.



# 32: Neighbor

Chapter 32 concludes the section that began in Chapter 26 on fostering love and fear of G-d by overcoming depression and embracing joy. This chapter extols the fundamental mitzvah to “love your **neighbor** as yourself,” cultivating love and unity among all Jewish people by affirming our shared divine origin.

True love for one’s fellow comes from **prioritizing the soul** over the body. While physical differences divide us, all Jewish souls share a single divine source, uniting us as spiritual siblings: “All Israelites are called real brothers by virtue of the source of their souls in the One G-d; only the bodies are separate.” This perspective shifts focus from fleeting physical distinctions to the eternal divine essence, fostering genuine and unconditional love. By elevating the soul above the body, the divine spark within the Jewish people is affirmed, drawing down “the light of the Infinite G-d, blessed be He, upon the community of Israel ... *l’mehaveh echad b’echad*—the One G-d dwelling among them when they are united as one.”

But how can one love even **those who sin**? While sinful behavior should be opposed, that sentiment must be coupled with compassion and love for the divine spark within each Jew. Even those who persist in wrongdoing retain a hidden good that is worthy of recognition: “Hatred because of the wickedness in them, and love on account of the aspect of the hidden good in them, which is their divine spark.” This dual perspective allows one to rebuke sin while maintaining love for the person, fostering their potential for repentance and spiritual growth.

Those distant from Torah and mitzvot should not be condemned; they should be **drawn closer** through kindness and affection. Hillel’s teaching to “love peace, pursue peace, and bring others close to Torah” illustrates that extending love to those who are far removed from holiness can inspire them to return. Even if one’s efforts fail, they still fulfill the mitzvah of loving their neighbor.

Love, rooted in our shared divine origin, unites and elevates the Jewish people. By recognizing this bond and extending kindness even to those who stray, we foster unity and inspire each other to return to G-d.



# 33: Home

At times, the soul requires additional purification and illumination, which comes through deepening one's awareness of G-d's unity. Chapters 33 and 34 teach that by internalizing the idea that "all is as naught before Him," one experiences a profound and lasting joy that strengthens their connection to G-d. This elevated state empowers a person to transform the material world into a **home** for the Divine.

True **joy** arises from recognizing that G-d fills all realms and that all existence is nullified before Him. Just as the sun's rays are indistinguishable from the sun itself while within its orb, so too, Creation is utterly dependent on and subsumed within G-d's infinite light. This awareness leads the soul to rejoice: "When one deeply contemplates and reflects at length on G-d's true unity, his heart will be filled with joy, and his soul will exult, rejoicing and singing with all his heart, soul, and might. Attaining this faith is an extraordinary genuine experience of closeness to G-d."

The joy of this realization is likened to that of a common person honored by the **presence of a king**, who chooses to reside in their home: "Behold, how great is the joy of a common and lowly man when he is brought near to a king of flesh and blood, who accepts his hospitality and lodges under his roof!" How much greater then is the joy of hosting the King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, by transforming the physical world into His dwelling. Hosting G-d in this way fulfills the divine purpose for creating both the upper and lower worlds: to establish a home for G-d in the material realm.

Recognizing G-d's unity and the foundational role of **faith** brings a joy that is both emotional and practical, empowering us to fulfill all 613 commandments with vitality and resolve. The prophet Habakkuk encapsulated the entire Torah in a single principle: faith. "For by faith alone will he come to fulfill all the 613 commandments ... with the force and vitality of his soul that is generated by this great joy."

G-d experiences a unique delight when **darkness is transformed** into light, and this transformation brings immense joy. Particularly in exile, where spiritual challenges abound, faith creates a special illumination, turning even the most distant and mundane places into expressions of G-d's unity: "There is no greater joy for G-d than the light and joy that result from transforming darkness into light, where the light carries the unique quality derived from having emerged out of the darkness itself."

Faith in G-d's unity brings profound joy, strengthening mitzvah observance and fulfilling the purpose of Creation. By transforming the material world into a dwelling for G-d, one illuminates even darkness, revealing G-d's presence in all existence.



# 34: Sanctuary

Chapter 34 illustrates how individuals can create a **Sanctuary** for G-d in their lives, transforming the joy of recognizing His unity into tangible actions. Through Torah study, prayer, and acts of charity, one can host the Shechinah and experience a profound spiritual connection.

At Mount Sinai, the Jewish people witnessed an overwhelming revelation of G-d's presence—so powerful that their souls left their bodies! To provide a more **lasting** way to engage His presence, G-d commanded the construction of the Sanctuary, where the Shechinah dwells in the Holy of Holies. This physical space serves as the ultimate manifestation of G-d's unity.

After the destruction of the Temple, G-d's dwelling place transitioned into the "four cubits of **halachah** (Jewish law)." Although human understanding is limited and cannot fully grasp G-d's unity, we can still create a dwelling for the Divine by dedicating time to Torah study: "I will make for G-d a Sanctuary and a home by studying Torah at fixed times by day and by night, to the extent of my free time, as stipulated by the law governing each individual's situation, set forth in the Laws of Torah Study."

Acts of **charity** are powerful tools for hosting the Divine. Giving even a portion of one's earnings sanctifies the rest, as it creates a dwelling for G-d in the physical world: "Although one may give a fifth of his earnings, this fifth elevates with it the other four parts."

It is important to balance this spiritual joy with **humility**. While the privilege of hosting the Divine brings immense joy, it should not lead to arrogance. Instead, one must maintain a sense of contrition, acknowledging the limitations of the physical and animal soul:

*Notwithstanding all the various aspects of the soul's joy described above, there is no hindrance to being "despicable in his own eyes, and loathsome," or to having "a broken heart" and "a humble spirit," even at the very moment of joy itself. This is because his sense of being unworthy and so forth stems from his body and animal soul, while his joy stems from the divine soul and the spark of G-d within it that enlivens it, as mentioned earlier (in Chapter 31). Similarly, it is stated in the Zohar: "Weeping is lodged in one side of my heart, and joy is lodged in the other side of my heart."*

Torah study, prayer, and charity transform the physical world into a dwelling place for G-d. By dedicating time to spiritual pursuits, following halachah, and sanctifying material efforts, we become hosts to the Shechinah.



# 35: Action

Chapters 33–34 explore cultivating joy through recognizing G-d’s unity and presence, while Chapters 35–37 emphasize the primacy of **action**-based mitzvot in sanctifying the material world. Even the physical effort involved, such as moving one’s lips in Torah study, is essential to fulfilling G-d’s purpose.

Despite ongoing struggles with inner desires, the beinoni draws down the Shechinah through mitzvot, which serve as the “**oil**” sustaining the divine light. The Zohar offers this analogy: “The wise man has his eyes in his head ... for the Shechinah rests upon him ... But this light above him requires oil—namely, good deeds, for it is the good deeds that man performs that serve as the oil sustaining the light that illuminates his soul.” Just as a flame cannot burn without oil, the Shechinah cannot dwell without good deeds, transforming the physical into a vessel for divine light.

While the divine soul is inherently connected to G-d, it alone cannot create a dwelling place for the Shechinah. Only through **mitzvot**, which engage the body and its physical energies, can the material realm be sanctified. This process redirects the energy of the animal soul toward holiness, even if the essential nature of the evil inclination remains unchanged.

But how can G-d’s presence manifest in multiple places without compromising His absolute unity? In the Talmud, a heretic challenges Rabban Gamliel, questioning the teaching that “the Shechinah rests wherever ten men gather,” and asks, “Does this mean there are multiple Shechinahs?” Rabban Gamliel responds with a metaphor: “The light of the sun enters many windows, yet its source remains **undivided**.” Just as sunlight illuminates multiple spaces without dividing, so too does G-d’s presence permeate the world through the mitzvot performed by different individuals, while His unity remains intact. The Shechinah rests upon those who serve Him—not as a fragmented presence, but as an undivided, infinite light revealed through their actions.

Through mitzvot, even the physical world becomes a vessel for the Divine, revealing G-d’s presence without diminishing His unity. This fusion of action and holiness fulfills the ultimate purpose of Creation—bringing the Shechinah into every aspect of life.



# 36: Desire

Building on the primacy of physical action in line with G-d's will, Chapter 36 explores G-d's **desire** to transform the physical world, a realm of concealment and darkness, into His dwelling place. While mitzvot performed through thought and speech illuminate the divine soul, it is action-based mitzvot that draw the Shechinah upon the physical body and animal soul, fulfilling the purpose of Creation.

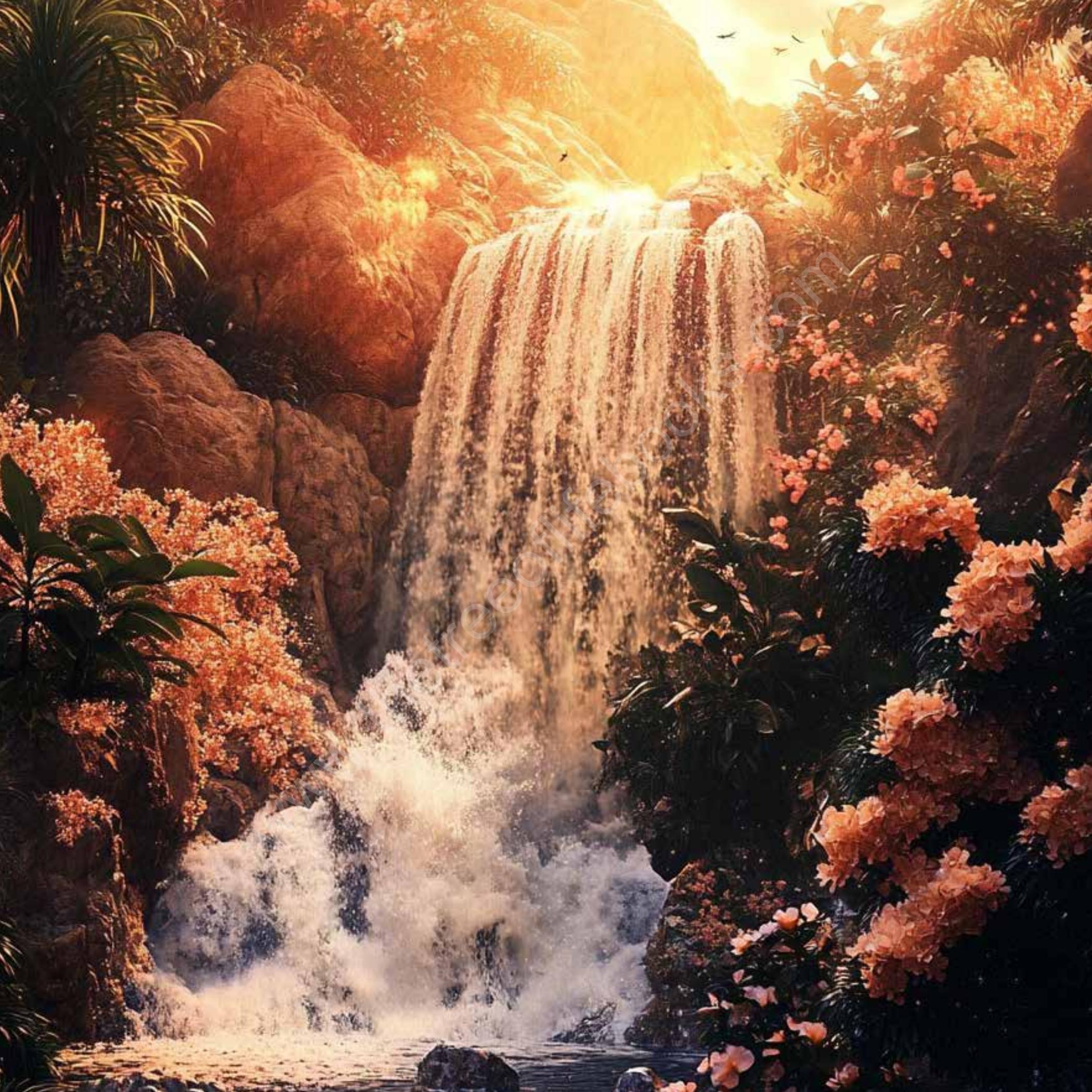
The chapter begins by addressing the enigmatic notion that G-d, who transcends distinctions such as "upper" and "lower," desires an abode specifically in the **lower worlds**: "The ultimate purpose of Creation is this lowest world, for such was His will, blessed be He, that He shall have satisfaction when the sitra achara is subdued and the darkness is turned to light." The transformation of the physical world's darkness, dominated by kelipot (shells of impurity) and sitra achara (forces of evil), into a source of divine light represents the highest fulfillment of this desire and intent.

Torah and mitzvot are central to achieving this **transformation**. The Torah is described as "might" and "strength," empowering individuals to engage with and sanctify the physical world. Through mitzvot, the material realm becomes a vessel for the divine, allowing G-d's infinite light to dwell within the most concealing aspects of Creation. This divine empowerment also ensures that the righteous in the World to Come will not be nullified by the intensity of G-d's light, as it says: "For the L-rd shall be to you for an everlasting light."

The Giving of the Torah at **Mount Sinai** offers a pivotal glimpse into this ultimate purpose. At Sinai, G-d's presence was openly revealed, and the Israelites experienced the divine will directly: "They looked eastward and heard the speech issuing forth, 'I am the L-rd your G-d,' etc., and turning toward the four points of the compass, and upward and downward." However, following the great revelation at Mount Sinai, the sin of the Golden Calf caused a regression, reintroducing spiritual concealment and leaving the world unfit to sustain such a revelation.

The chapter concludes with a vision of the **Messianic Era** and the Resurrection of the Dead, when the impurities of the body and world will be fully cleansed. At that time, the divine light will illuminate not only Israel but also the nations of the world, fulfilling G-d's ultimate desire for a dwelling place in the lower realms: "And, as a result of the overflow of the illumination on Israel, the darkness of the gentiles will also be lit up." This universal enlightenment marks the culmination of Creation's purpose, when darkness itself will be transformed into the brightest light.

G-d's ultimate purpose is to transform the physical world into His home, achieved through action-based mitzvot that sanctify the material realm and draw down His presence. This transformation will culminate in the Messianic Era, when darkness will be turned to light, and G-d's infinite light will illuminate all Creation.



# 37: Deeds

Chapter 37 concludes the discussion on how mitzvot and good **deeds** transform the physical world into a dwelling place for the Divine presence. Though the physical world, the “lowest of all worlds,” is shrouded in “doubled and redoubled darkness,” concealing G-d’s creative power, it is precisely this world that G-d desires as His ultimate home—a realm where His presence is fully revealed.

Mitzvot accomplish this transformation by drawing infinite divine light into the physical world, **sanctifying** objects and actions previously under the dominion of kelipat nogah. “The reward for a mitzvah is the mitzvah itself,” as each mitzvah infuses materiality with divine vitality. Even mundane items—like parchment for tefillin, mezuzot, or a kosher etrog—become vessels of holiness through their use in mitzvot: “When one performs a mitzvah with a physical object, the divine life-force within that object is elevated and absorbed into the sanctity of the mitzvah itself, becoming nullified within G-d’s infinite will.”

This process also elevates the physical **energy** of the person performing the mitzvah. The vitality of the animal soul, which animates the body, is absorbed into holiness, shifting from kelipat nogah to a sanctified state. Even Torah study and prayer, though less directly tied to physicality, engage the body through speech, drawing divine light into the material world:

*Even in mitzvot such as Torah study, prayer, and the like, which do not involve physical action, one must articulate the words with one’s lips, for ‘articulating words of Torah with one’s lips is itself an action,’ and through this, the vitality of the animal soul, which enables the person to speak, is also absorbed into holiness.*

Ultimately, this sanctification of the physical world paves the way for the full revelation of G-d’s presence in the **Messianic era**, as the Alter Rebbe states: “The fulfillment of the Messianic era and the Resurrection of the Dead depends on our actions and service now.” Each mitzvah refines the world, dispelling spiritual concealment and allowing divine light to shine unobstructed until G-d’s unity is fully revealed.

Through mitzvot, every action advances Creation’s ultimate purpose. As divine light permeates existence, the world moves toward its perfected state, where G-d’s presence will be openly manifest.



# 38: Intent (*kavanah*)

Chapters 38–40 focus on the essential role of *kavanah* (**intent**) in Torah study and the performance of mitzvot *lishma*, for their own sake. These chapters explore how *kavanah* elevates the physical actions of mitzvot and imbues them with deeper spiritual significance, serving as a bridge between the physical and spiritual realms. Chapter 38 likens *kavanah* to the soul that animates the body of our actions.

Jewish law requires verbal **articulation** in prayer and certain mitzvot. Even if prayers or blessings are recited mentally with full concentration, the obligation is not fulfilled without verbal expression. Conversely, if one recites them aloud without proper intent, the obligation is still technically fulfilled, except for specific key parts of prayer—such as the first verse of the Shema and the first blessing of the Shemoneh Esrei—which require focused intention.

The soul (*neshamah*) itself does not require rectification through the commandments. Its purpose is to channel divine light to refine and elevate the person’s physical aspects, including the **body** and the vitalizing soul, through speech and action: “The soul needs no perfecting for itself by means of the commandments but has only to draw forth light to perfect the vivifying soul and body, by means of the letters of speech which the nefesh pronounces with the aid of the five organs of verbal articulation.” However, prayer or blessings without *kavanah* is likened to a body without a soul.

There are two main dimensions of *kavanah*: the higher level, born of intellectual **contemplation** of G-d’s greatness, and the lower level, stemming from the soul’s **instinctive** love and fear of G-d. The intellectual *kavanah* is compared to the soul of a human, characterized by reason, free will, and deliberate action. By contrast, the instinctive *kavanah* is likened to the soul of an animal, driven by innate tendencies rather than conscious thought.

There are four levels of divine illumination, corresponding to inanimate objects, plants, animals, and humans, each reflecting increased vitality and spiritual receptivity. The **inanimate**, such as stones and earth, receives the most constricted divine light, reflecting actions without *kavanah*, which fulfill the divine will but still remain at the lowest level of spiritual expression. **Plants** represent growth and vitality, corresponding to actions performed with basic awareness. **Animals**, with their vitality and movement, parallel mitzvot performed with emotional engagement, such as love or awe of G-d, which infuse the mitzvot with greater spiritual vitality. **Humans**, possessing intellect and the ability for deep *kavanah*, represent the highest level, where mitzvot are performed with full intention, channeling expansive divine light and sanctifying the physical world by revealing G-d’s presence in it.

*Kavanah* is the soul of mitzvot, determining their spiritual impact and aligning them with the person’s inner connection to G-d. While mitzvot fulfill the divine will even without intent, *kavanah* elevates them to higher levels of divine illumination, much like the difference between inanimate objects, plants, animals, and humans, each reflecting increasing vitality and spiritual refinement.



## 39: *Lishmah* (for its own sake)

While Chapter 38 introduces *kavanah* as the inner intent that animates mitzvot, likening it to a soul that gives life to the body of one's actions, Chapter 39 asserts the importance of serving G-d **lishmah**, "for its own sake"—fulfilling mitzvot solely out of love and fear of G-d, without ulterior motives.

Serving G-d *lishmah*, through Torah and mitzvot, requires **love and fear** of G-d, which empower one's service to ascend and unite with the Divine. Actions performed without these emotions, on the other hand, remain confined to the realm of separation, described as "the externality of the worlds," and lack the ability to rise and connect with the ten divine sefirot. As stated in Tikkunei Zohar: "Without fear and love, one's service does not fly upward and cannot stand before G-d."

To clarify the distinction between service with divine intent and service without it, the Alter Rebbe compares (lower level) angels and human beings. **Angels**, whose love and fear of G-d are instinctive and natural, are described metaphorically as "animals" because their devotion is devoid of choice or intellectual effort: "Angels are called beasts and animals ... because their fear and love of G-d are natural to them." This natural service corresponds to the realm of Yetzirah, where the divine emotional attributes, such as love and fear, shine forth.

In contrast, **human beings** possess the unique ability to serve G-d with awe and love that arise from intellectual contemplation of His greatness. This form of service elevates them to the realm of Beriah, which surpasses the world of Yetzirah. In Beriah, G-d's intellectual attributes—wisdom (*chochmah*), understanding (*binah*), and knowledge (*daat*)—shine brightly. This deliberate and profound connection to G-d transcends the instinctive devotion of angels, revealing the transformative power of thoughtful spiritual engagement.

Since human beings must actively cultivate intent, not all service is performed with full awareness. But even service performed **without lishmah**—whether out of habit, routine, or selfish motives—retains inherent value. If one performs mitzvot purely out of habit, without conscious love and fear, the act remains holy but does not ascend spiritually. However, should one later engage in Torah study or mitzvot with true *lishmah*, even prior actions done without intent are elevated along with them.

If, however, one acts with an **ulterior motive**—seeking honor, status, or personal gain—his actions remain concealed within impurity. Yet even that is not irredeemable: "Even when one performs Torah or mitzvot not *lishmah*, the act itself carries a divine spark, and through eventual repentance, it can be fully elevated." As our Sages teach: "One should always engage in Torah and mitzvot, even if not for their own sake, for from doing it not for its own sake, one will come to do it for its own sake."

By serving G-d *lishmah*, love and fear elevate Torah and mitzvot to unite with the Divine. Intent is not merely an enhancement but the essential force that determines whether one's service ascends and becomes bound to holiness.



# 40: Ascent

Chapter 40 explores how kavanah, intention, shapes the spiritual **ascent** of Torah and mitzvot. Actions infused with love and fear of G-d ascend to higher realms, uniting with the Divine. Habitual or rote observance remains confined within the external framework of the spiritual worlds, unable to reach the inner sanctity of the sefirot, where G-dliness is fully revealed.

Love and fear of G-d are described as “**wings**” that lift Torah and mitzvot to higher spiritual realms, as reflected in the verse, “And with two wings he flies,” symbolizing love and fear as the driving forces behind spiritual ascent. Just as a bird’s wings enable it to soar but are not part of its body proper, love and fear of G-d are not the core of the mitzvah but are essential for its elevation. The Zohar teaches that those who engage in Torah and mitzvot with love and fear are called “children” (*banim*), whereas those who lack this deeper connection are like “fledglings” (*efrochim*) who cannot yet take flight. Similarly, just as a bird remains a bird even without its wings, mitzvot retain their intrinsic holiness even when performed without intent—but without love and fear, they do not ascend.

The observance of Torah and mitzvot **without proper intent** doesn’t reach its highest spiritual potential but still has an impact. Mitzvot are purely action-based, so when performed without intention, they remain in Asiyah, the lowest world. Torah, however, by definition involves the intellect, and even when studied mechanically, it naturally stirs some level of emotional response. Because of this, Torah studied without intention rises to Yetzirah, the world of emotion. However, Torah studied with **selfish motives**, such as seeking personal recognition or prestige, does not ascend at all. It remains bound to the physical world, trapped within kelipot. In contrast, Torah learned mechanically—while lacking lishmah (pure intent)—still holds potential and can later ascend when reviewed with proper intention.

The Alter Rebbe illustrates the importance of proper intention through the analogy of a person standing by a river and **crying out for water**. This person symbolizes one who thirsts for spiritual connection yet fails to drink from the abundant “water” of Torah readily available to them. As the prophet Isaiah rebukes: “Everyone who is thirsty, go to the water.” This scenario reflects a soul longing for closeness to G-d but overlooking the very source of spiritual nourishment right in front of them—like someone desperately searching for meaning while ignoring the wisdom of Torah that could quench their thirst.

While Torah and mitzvot inherently possess holiness, their spiritual ascent depends on kavanah, with love and fear acting as the wings that lift them toward unity with G-d. Divine service performed mechanically retains the potential for elevation, but only when infused with proper intent does it truly transcend the external layers of existence.



# 41: Service

Chapters 41–50 introduce the pillars of divine **service**—fear and love of G-d—in their various levels and expressions. These two forces work together to shape meaningful service: fear instills discipline and reverence, primarily expressed through observing prohibitions, while love fosters closeness and devotion, motivating the fulfillment of positive commandments.

**Fear** of G-d serves as the **foundation** of all divine service, much like a servant’s reverence for a master. It is not an acquired trait but an inherent quality within every Jewish soul—a deep, instinctive awareness of G-d’s sovereignty that prevents rebellion against Him: “One must at least first arouse the innate fear which lies hidden in the heart of every Jew ... so that this fear shall manifest itself in his heart or, at least, his mind.” This fear is something one must consciously cultivate through meditation, internalizing the awareness that “behold, G-d stands over him ... and searches his mind and heart to see if he serves Him properly.” The realization that G-d not only fills the world but observes each individual personally fosters a heightened sense of responsibility and devotion.

Tanya distinguishes between two levels of fear of G-d. The lower level of fear, **yirah tata’ah**, instills discipline, preventing sin and establishing a foundation for mitzvah observance. It is compared to the instinctive restraint one feels in the presence of another person, as Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai told his students: “May it be G-d’s will that the fear of Heaven be upon you like the fear of a human being.” This practical reverence is a prerequisite for deeper connection. The higher dimension of fear, **yirah ila’ah**, is an awe born of an overwhelming awareness of G-d’s infinite presence, leading to self-nullification (*bittul*) before Him. This higher fear refines a person’s service, transforming their relationship with G-d into one of profound humility and closeness.

Yet, fear alone is incomplete. True divine service also requires **love**, like a child who honors their parents not just out of duty but with deep affection. One must awaken the natural love hidden in the heart, bringing it into conscious thought—“to remember one’s love for G-d and seek closeness to Him. This should be the intent in engaging in Torah and mitzvot: to cleave to G-d with both their divine and animal souls, along with their garments.” The highest form of service transcends self-interest, focusing solely on fulfilling G-d’s will rather than seeking personal reward, as expressed in the teaching: “I was created solely to serve my Maker.”

Fear of G-d is the foundation of divine service, ensuring reverence and accountability in Torah and mitzvot. When paired with love, which fosters closeness, it creates a complete service. Cultivating lower fear instills discipline, while higher awe deepens awareness of G-d’s presence, shaping a more genuine and devoted connection to Him.



# 42: Fear

**Fear** and reverence form the foundation of all divine service and mitzvot, ensuring that one's connection to G-d is rooted in humility and awareness of His presence. Chapter 42 explores how fear of G-d is an innate quality within every Jewish soul, accessible through contemplation and effort.

The chapter opens with a discussion from the Talmud on the verse, "And now, Israel, what does the L-rd your G-d ask of you? Only to fear the L-rd your G-d" (Deuteronomy 10:12). The Talmud questions whether fear of G-d is truly a small matter, as the verse implies, and answers, "For Moses, it was." The Alter Rebbe explains that since every Jewish soul contains a **spark of Moses**, each person has the potential to awaken this innate reverence for G-d.

This fear requires a profound internalization through **contemplation** of G-d's omnipresence and greatness: "The Holy One, blessed be He, stands over him, and the whole earth is full of His glory, and He looks upon him and searches his reins and heart to see if he is properly serving Him." Being mindful of G-d's constant presence inspires a practical transformation in thought, speech, and action, leading one to refrain from sin and fulfill His commandments.

The Alter Rebbe likens the effort of developing this fear to digging for a hidden treasure: "If you seek it as silver and search for it as hidden treasures—then you will understand the fear of the L-rd" (Proverbs 2:4–5). Just as uncovering a buried treasure demands strenuous effort, attaining a meaningful sense of reverence requires diligence and focus. Regardless of one's spiritual starting point, the **innate fear** hidden within the heart of every Jew can be brought to the forefront through sincere effort.

Observing the natural world as G-d's outer garment should inspire awe and deepen awareness of His presence. The Alter Rebbe compares fear of G-d to **fear of a mortal king**, explaining that true fear stems not from the king's physical form but from his inner vitality and essence. Just as fear fades when a king sleeps, so too, awareness of G-d's presence must extend beyond the physical to recognize the divine vitality animating Creation: "The inner character and vitality of a king are not perceived by physical eyes but only by the mind's eye." By contemplating the heavens, earth, and all their hosts, one perceives the infinite light of the Ein Sof sustaining existence, transforming the physical into a window to the divine. The celestial bodies, moving westward in submission to the Shechinah, exemplify this nullification to G-d's will, teaching humanity to recognize and revere the divine life-force that sustains all.

By contemplating G-d's sovereignty, observing His presence in the natural world, and recognizing that He constantly watches over and sustains all existence, one can awaken a conscious awareness of fear of G-d. This reverence forms the foundation for sincere and meaningful divine service.



# 43: Love

Chapter 42 establishes fear as the foundation of divine service. Yet, just as a bird needs two wings to fly, both fear and **love** are necessary for spiritual ascent, with the typical order beginning with fear and leading to love. Chapter 43 introduces two levels of love for G-d and explores their connection to fear and wisdom.

As we have learned, **lower-level fear** arises from contemplating how G-d both fills and transcends all worlds, instilling reverence that compels mitzvah observance. This basic fear is a prerequisite for wisdom, as expressed in the Mishnah: "If there is no fear, there is no wisdom." In contrast, **higher-level fear** is an inner awe and humility before G-d's infinite nature and the realization of Creation's utter insignificance in His presence. This aligns with the Mishnah's counterpart statement, "If there is no wisdom, there is no fear"—"for this higher fear is the awe that comes from a deep understanding and knowledge of the greatness of the Infinite One, blessed be He, before whom all is as nothing."

Following the discussion on fear and its two levels, the Alter Rebbe likewise distinguishes between two fundamental levels of love. **Ahavat olam** (literally, "worldly love") arises from contemplating G-d's greatness as it is revealed within the worlds, how G-d interacts with Creation. By meditating on how G-d fills and transcends all worlds and is the source of all existence, one desires to feel closeness to Him: "Ahavat olam stems from the understanding and knowledge of the greatness of G-d ... who fills all worlds and surrounds all worlds." This love is effort-based, requiring meditation and reflection, and it leads one to detach from worldly desires in pursuit of divine closeness. However, since it is rooted in intellect, it remains dependent on sustained contemplation.

In contrast, **ahavah rabbah** (literally, "great love") is an ecstatic and boundless love, described as a "fiery flame that ascends on its own." That is, unlike ahavat olam, which must be cultivated through effort, ahavah rabbah is a divine gift, bestowed upon those who have perfected the higher-level fear of G-d: "Without prior fear, it is impossible to attain this great love ... for it stems from the level of Atzilut, where no separation or division from G-d exists." It is described as "love of delights" (*ahavah b'taanugim*), a love experienced as pleasure in G-d, an experience that is relatable and felt.

Although the **standard order** of divine service begins with fear and leads to love, there are exceptions. At times, love may precede fear, such as in moments of deep spiritual awakening or repentance. The Alter Rebbe cites the story of Rabbi Elazar ben Durdaya, who achieved an extraordinary repentance out of love, despite his prior life of extreme hedonism. Overcome with remorse, he wept so profusely that he literally cried himself to death. However, "The fixed order of divine service requires beginning with the fulfillment of Torah and mitzvot through the lower-level of fear ... after which the light of love shines upon the soul."

Chapter 43 outlines two levels of love for G-d: ahavat olam, a love cultivated through contemplation of G-d's greatness within Creation, and ahavah rabbah, a boundless love that transcends intellectual effort and is granted as a divine gift. While the typical order of divine service begins with fear and progresses to love, moments of profound awakening can occasionally reverse this progression.



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# 44: Yearns (for You)

The previous chapter explored two general levels of divine love: one cultivated through contemplation (*ahavat olam*) and one bestowed as a divine gift (*ahavah rabbah*). Chapter 44 unveils two profound expressions of the latter, **ahavah rabbah**—innate love inherited from our Patriarchs.

The first of these modes of inherited love is expressed in the verse, “My soul **yearns for You** at night,” “*nafshi iviticha balayla*” (Isaiah 26:9). It reflects the soul’s instinctive yearning for G-d as its true source of life. Just as a person naturally craves the return of vitality in moments of weakness or exhaustion, so too does the soul long to be revitalized by connecting with its divine origin. (Although *ahavat olam* also involves yearning, it is a love that emerges through contemplation—a deliberate striving toward G-d. In contrast, *nafshi iviticha* engages the person’s core instinct, like the body’s innate drive for life itself, rather than a love cultivated through focused thought and effort.)

There is an even deeper love of G-d, likened to a **child’s selfless devotion** to their parents. This love is described in *Ra’aya Mehemna* in reference to the unique service of Moses, who served G-d “like a child who strives to please his father and mother, loving them more than himself, his soul, and his spirit.” And although one might ask, who could possibly attain even a fraction of Moses’ immense love?—the *Tikkunei Zohar* assures that “an emanation from Moses is present in every generation to shine upon them.”

Even if this light is concealed, it resides within every Jew as an inherent part of their soul. Indeed, it can be **awakened** through consistent verbal expression, deep contemplation, and active engagement in Torah and mitzvot. If this process feels forced or artificial at first, persistent effort gradually transforms it into a natural, heartfelt connection, infusing divine service with genuine passion and devotion. This awakening brings joy not only to the individual but also to G-d—like the profound happiness of a king rejoicing over the return of his beloved child.

While some may find it challenging to awaken these loves emotionally, deep contemplation still carries significant spiritual weight, for “a good thought, the Holy One, blessed be He, joins to action.” Even when Torah and mitzvot are performed with limited emotional engagement, they still elevate one’s divine service. However, these loves realize their fullest potential when they transition from mere intellectual understanding to heartfelt emotion. When confined to the mind, they ascend to the spiritual world of *Yetzirah*; when deeply felt, they rise to the higher realm of *Beriah*. This transformation from thought to experience is achieved through **daat**—a profound, internalized awareness of G-d as the soul’s true source of life—allowing love and awe to infuse and shape one’s divine service.

These two forms of inherited love—yearning for G-d as one’s very life and selfless devotion like a child to a parent—are embedded within every Jewish soul, waiting to be revealed. Through contemplation, heartfelt expression, and engagement in Torah and mitzvot, one can awaken these innate loves and cultivate a deep, vibrant connection with G-d.



# 45: Compassion

Chapter 45 introduces a path to divine service through **compassion**, rooted in the attribute of tiferet (harmony or beauty) and embodied by Jacob. This approach focuses on awakening mercy for the soul by reflecting on its descent from its lofty origin in the infinite light of G-d to its current state, concealed within the limitations of this lowly physical world.

The divine spark within the soul originates from the infinite source of life but becomes **clothed in the body** and the material realm, metaphorically described as being wrapped in “a serpent’s skin.” This descent represents a dramatic concealment of the divine light, as the physical world is the furthest point from spiritual purity and it is dominated by kelipot.

This awareness deepens when one reflects on how their own thoughts, speech, and actions may have further obscured the divine presence. Tanya describes the Shechinah as being **exiled** with the soul, with the King of the world “fettered by the tresses,” bound by impetuous mortal thoughts. That is, when the mind is consumed by worldly distractions, divine consciousness is confined, limiting its revelation. This contemplation stirs deep compassion for the soul, inspiring one to elevate it from its exile and reconnect it with the infinite divine light.

To illustrate this process, Tanya invokes the biblical story of **Jacob kissing Rachel** and weeping, interpreting it as: “Jacob lifted his voice and wept to arouse and draw great compassion upon all souls and the source of Knesset Yisrael, elevating them from their exile to be united with the Infinite Light.” Rachel represents Knesset Yisrael (the collective soul of Israel), while Jacob, embodying divine mercy, recognizes the plight of the divine spark within every soul. His tears plead for compassion from On High, lifting the soul from its spiritual exile and drawing it back to its divine source.

Compassion for the soul is expressed through Torah study and mitzvot, which forge an **intimate bond** with G-d. That is, Torah study is likened to a kiss, as in the verse, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth” (Song of Songs 1:2), symbolizing the merging of human and divine spirit. Mitzvot—especially acts of kindness and charity—are compared to an embrace, as it is written, “And His right arm embraces me” (ibid 2:6, 8:3). By following this path of compassion, one elevates the divine spark within and draws closer to the lofty state of ahavah rabbah (great love).

The soul’s descent into the body and material world cloaks it in a darkness likened to “a serpent’s skin.” By awakening compassion for the soul’s plight and engaging in Torah and mitzvot, one elevates this divine spark from its concealment, reuniting the soul with its infinite source.



# 46: Water

Chapter 46 presents a simple yet powerful approach to awakening one's innate love for G-d. It draws on the natural human tendency to mirror love, as captured in the verse, "As **water** reflects the face, so does the heart of man to man" (Proverbs 27:19). By recognizing G-d's boundless love and kindness toward us, this awareness naturally stirs a heartfelt, reciprocal love in return.

Just as water mirrors the face looking into it, the human heart instinctively reflects the love it perceives. When contemplating G-d's immense love for humanity, one's heart is naturally stirred to respond in kind—especially when considering the unique relationship between G-d and the Jewish people. To illustrate the depth of this divine love, the Alter Rebbe offers a vivid analogy: a mighty king who **descends** from his palace to **uplift** a destitute, lowly person from the dust. The king not only rescues this individual but brings them into his inner chambers, offering true closeness and intimacy: "G-d brought him close with true affection and attachment, with an embrace, a kiss, and a bonding of spirit to spirit."

This divine love is most evident in the **Exodus** from Egypt. G-d Himself—not through an intermediary—descended into the depths of impurity to redeem His people. This act demonstrates His profound love and closeness, as He chose the Jewish people from among all peoples of the earth and gave us the Torah and its commandments, forging a unique, eternal bond. This love endures, manifesting in every generation as G-d continues to draw each Jew close, regardless of their spiritual state.

Reflecting on this divine love ignites a powerful, **reciprocal love** in the heart of each Jew. Even those whose hearts feel hardened are moved: "Even if one's heart is like stone, it will melt and flow like water." Such contemplation awakens an intense, fiery devotion, empowering one to serve G-d with passion and overcome obstacles on their spiritual journey.

Contemplating G-d's boundless love naturally stirs a reciprocal response, offering every Jew a simple path to awaken their innate love. Just as a mighty king descends to lift someone from the dust and brings them into his innermost chambers with affection and closeness, so too does this reflection ignite a deep love within the soul.



# 47: Exodus

Having cited the **Exodus** from Egypt in the previous chapter as an act of divine love, Chapter 47 expands on its spiritual significance as an ongoing, daily experience. As the Mishnah teaches, “In every generation and every day, a person is obligated to regard himself as if he had that day come out of Egypt” (Pesachim 10:5). This daily Exodus reflects the divine soul’s continual effort to free itself from the constraints of the physical body—the “serpent’s skin”—and reunite with the infinite light of G-d.

The daily recital of the Shma is a key to reliving the experience of the Exodus. By declaring, “The L-rd is our G d, the L-rd is one,” we actively accept G-d’s **unity and sovereignty**, liberating ourselves from our spiritual exile. This acceptance is not merely a verbal statement but an act that draws the soul toward G-d, achieving unity with Him. The Alter Rebbe describes this process as a “spirit evoking and drawing forth another spirit.”

Unlike Abraham, who attained unity with G-d through his own spiritual ascent, the Jewish people were granted this connection as an inheritance and a **divine gift**. While Abraham reached higher levels through personal effort, we have been granted direct access to G-d through Torah and mitzvot, as the Alter Rebbe states, “He gave us His Torah, in which He vested His will and wisdom, which are united with His very essence, as though He gave us Himself.”

The daily recital of the **third paragraph of Shma** affirms the Exodus from Egypt. Although reciting Shma and remembering the Exodus are distinct mitzvot, the latter is included in Shma because both are thematically linked to the soul’s journey toward divine unity. Just as the Exodus represents liberation from Mitzrayim—symbolizing freedom from spiritual constraints (*meitzarim*, narrow straits)—the declaration of G-d’s oneness in Shma (“*Hashem Elokeinu Hashem echad*”) signifies the soul’s release from concealment, becoming fully unified with the Divine.

Accepting G-d’s sovereignty draws the soul into His infinite light, making the daily Shma both a personal reenactment of the Exodus and an act of spiritual liberation. The only true barrier to this unity is a person’s own **will**. When one resists the call to recite Shma, they obstruct this bond, but “as soon as one desires and accepts His divinity ... their soul instantly becomes included within His unity.”

The Exodus is a daily spiritual journey, where the soul strives to free itself from physical constraints and reconnect with G-d’s infinite light. Through the daily recital of Shma, we reenact this liberation, accepting G-d’s unity and sovereignty, and drawing our souls into an intimate, eternal bond with the Divine.



# 48: Greatness

Chapter 48 delves into the **greatness** and infinite nature of Divinity and the necessity of *tzimtzumim* (contractions) to allow Creation to exist. The infinite light of G-d would overwhelm and nullify all existence if it manifested without limitation.

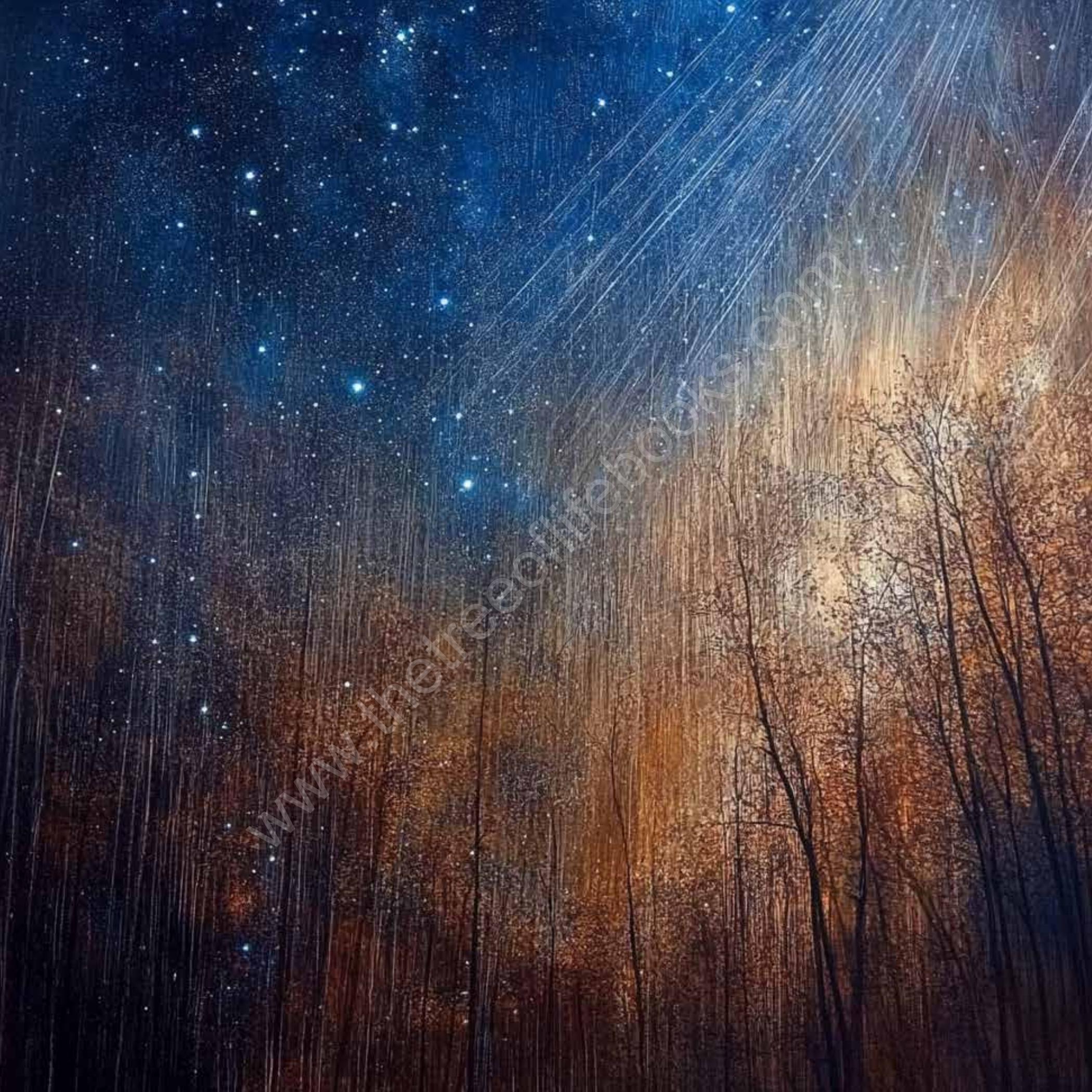
The Alter Rebbe writes: “The greatness of the Ein Sof (Infinite One), blessed be He, is as His name implies—without end, without limit, and without any boundary to the light and vitality that emanate from Him through His simple will.” Therefore, for the worlds to exist in their finite form, this infinite light had to undergo countless **contractions**, permitting only a minuscule portion to be revealed within Creation.

Even the highest spiritual realms—such as the World to Come and the Higher Garden of Eden—along with angels and souls, are finite and limited. They can only perceive and receive a **fraction** of the divine light, as the full intensity of the infinite light would preclude their existence: “Even the souls of the greatest tzaddikim and angels are finite and limited in their capacity to perceive and derive pleasure from the divine light.”

This is the concept of divine **transcendence**, described in Kabbalah as *sovev kol almin*, surrounding or encompassing all worlds. Here the term “surrounding” does not imply physical encirclement but rather that the divine light is beyond conscious experience, beyond direct revelation and comprehension. It influences Creation in a concealed manner, allowing existence to persist without being overwhelmed. The Alter Rebbe illustrates this with an analogy: “Just as a person can encompass an object in their thought without physically containing it, so too does the Ein Sof encompass all Creation in actuality.”

Unlike human thought, which is limited to imagination, G-d’s thought is real and encompasses all of Creation: “His thought and knowledge encompass every aspect of Creation, from its innermost depths to its outermost limits, and this knowledge itself **gives life** to all existence.” This divine knowledge, being infinite, cannot be described as “clothed” within finite worlds. Instead, it is said to “encircle” or transcend them, providing life through concealed influence while preserving divine transcendence.

There is a delicate balance between G-d’s infinite greatness and the necessity of limitation for Creation to exist. Through *tzimtzum*, divine light is concealed just enough to allow for existence, while still remaining far beyond comprehension, enabling the world to receive life from G-d while His true essence remains transcendent.



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# 49: Tzimtzumim

The previous chapter explains that since the divine light of G-d is infinite, it had to undergo numerous **tzimtzumim** (contractions) to allow for the creation of a finite world. Chapter 49 teaches how these contractions stem from G-d's love for the Jewish people.

Just as G-d concealed His infinite light to allow for Creation, a Jew must transcend personal limitations to serve Him. This concept is rooted in the Talmudic phrase, "**Love** impels the flesh," which teaches that true love is not about unrestrained expansion but about contraction, making space for the beloved. Tanya applies this principle to tzimtzum, illustrating that G-d's act of self-concealment was not an act of separation but an expression of love, enabling finite existence and the possibility of a meaningful relationship between man and the Divine.

G-d withheld His infinite light to create a space where humanity could exist and draw close to Him. A Jew is called upon to do the same—to **overcome personal barriers**, whether physical, emotional, or material, in their pursuit of closeness to G-d, as the Alter Rebbe writes: "One sets aside all he has, from soul to body, and abandons everything to cleave to G-d with yearning and desire, allowing nothing—not body nor soul, not wealth nor family—to hold him back."

The blessings before the morning Shma recount G-d's love for the Jewish people. "You have loved us with an eternal love," the blessing begins, revealing how G-d contracts His infinite light to connect with the **finite** world: "It is called *ahavat olam* because He encloses His boundless light within the limits of the world—all out of love for Israel, to draw them close and unite them with Him." This act of tzimtzum, G-d's self-limitation, creates space for a relationship with humanity. These reflections prepare one to declare G-d's unity in Shma, deepening awareness of His love.

A powerful spiritual connection is achieved through **Torah study**, especially when spoken aloud, as an "attachment of spirit to spirit." Verbalizing Torah draws divine light into the vivifying soul, elevating the physical world. The Alter Rebbe describes this as "drawing the infinite light of G-d downward to illuminate the world in a revealed manner, fulfilling Creation's ultimate purpose."

G-d's self-concealment was an act of love, creating space for a meaningful relationship with humanity. Just as He contracted His infinite light to have a relationship with the Jewish people, a Jew must transcend their personal limitations to draw closer to Him.



# 50: Fiery

Love can be gentle and nurturing, or it can burn with **fiery** intensity, seeking to dissolve all separation between lover and beloved. Chapter 50 explores this highest mode of divine love—a love that surges upward in an insatiable longing for the Divine.

Unlike a steady, embracing love that gently draws the soul closer to G-d, this love is all-consuming, ignited by an overwhelming recognition of G-d's infinite greatness. It does not settle for peaceful closeness but burns with a yearning so intense that it seeks to **break free** from all limitations.

Tanya describes this love as a fiery force erupting from deep **contemplation** of the Divine:

*Through reflection on the greatness of the Infinite One, before whom all existence is as nothing, the soul is ignited and set aflame with longing for the glory of His majesty. Like a blazing flame, it surges upward, seeking to separate from the wick and fuel that sustain it. This powerful yearning strengthens the soul's divine fire, leading first to an insatiable **thirst**, as in the verse, "My soul thirsts for You." It deepens into **lovesickness**, "I am lovesick," and ultimately reaches the point of total **rapture**, "My soul longs for You to the point of expiring."*

This form of love is compared to **gold**, which surpasses silver in value and refinement. The types of divine love discussed in earlier chapters are likened to silver, rooted in kindness—they draw the soul toward G-d with a steady, nurturing pull. In contrast, this love of gold stems from *gevurah* (strength and might), burning away all barriers as it soars upward in an uncontainable longing for complete unity with the Divine.

The Levites in the Holy Temple embody this fiery love through **song**. Their service is characterized by a dynamic spiritual rhythm of ascent and return, called *ratzo v'shov*. "The Levites' service was to raise their voices in song, with melody and harmony, in a cadence of 'advance and retreat.'" Similarly, sustainable divine inspiration follows this natural rhythm—surging upward in longing yet returning to live and engage with the world. If this yearning is not tempered, it can lead to *kelot hanefesh*—a state of spiritual rapture so intense that the soul, overwhelmed by longing, seeks to leave the body entirely, even to the point of death. The Mishnah teaches, "Against your will you live," reminding the soul that its purpose is not to escape the world but to transform it. Rather than abandoning the body, it must infuse it with holiness, bringing divine light into the world through Torah and mitzvot.

The love compared to gold—the highest and most powerful form of divine love—surpasses the gentler love likened to silver. Yet this fiery love of ascent must be tempered with return, like the rhythm of the Levites' song, so that it fuels spiritual elevation without leading to self-destruction. Ultimately, one must channel this intensity into sacred action, bringing divine light into the world through Torah and mitzvot.



# 51: Presence

Chapters 51–53 teach about the Shechinah (Divine **presence**) and its relationship to Creation. This chapter teaches that just as the soul animates the entire body yet primarily resides in the brain, the Shechinah permeates all existence but is more pronounced and revealed in specific spiritual “locations.”

“The whole earth is filled with His glory,” and there is no place devoid of the Divine presence. Yet, the Shechinah’s revelation **varies** across realms. Higher worlds experience the divine light in a more revealed state, while lower worlds, such as the physical world, perceive it through layers of concealment known as “garments.” These garments filter and obscure the light, allowing for the creation and sustenance of the finite, physical realm.

The soul is a singular, indivisible spiritual consciousness without physical form or location. Its essence is not divided across the body’s organs, yet each organ receives vitality suited to its unique **function**—eyes to see, ears to hear, and so forth. Similarly, the infinite divine light is a singular, uniform presence, yet it manifests differently across the worlds and beings that exist within them based on their capacity to receive it.

The Shechinah, likened to the **brain’s** control of the body, radiates vitality outward to all realms. This vitality is perceived differently in each realm: higher worlds receive the divine light with greater clarity, while lower worlds, including our physical existence, perceive it through dense layers of concealment. Though the physical world may appear lifeless and mundane, it is continuously sustained by this hidden divine vitality: “Even within the material world, the light of the Ein Sof gives life to all beings, preventing them from reverting to non-existence.”

The difference between higher and lower worlds lies not in the presence of Divinity but in the **degree of its revelation**. In the higher realms, divine light is received with minimal obstruction, whereas in the lower realms, it is heavily concealed. This concealment reaches its peak in the physical world, where divine energy is so obscured that Creation appears independent of its source.

Nevertheless, the divine light is present even in the most material aspects of Creation, hidden beneath layers of **spiritual garments**. The purpose of these garments is not merely to sustain physical existence but to preserve the potential for elevating the material world through human action. This serves the greater goal of revealing the Divine presence in even the most concealed realms.

Just as the soul animates the body while remaining indivisible, so too does the Shechinah pervade all of existence, with only the extent of its revelation varying between realms. The ultimate purpose of Creation is to uncover this hidden Divine presence, transforming the physical world into a dwelling place for G-d.



# 52: Brain

Chapter 52 teaches how the Shechinah serves as the source of vitality for all Creation. Drawing on the metaphor from the previous chapter, the Alter Rebbe explains that just as the human soul resides most prominently in the **brain** while animating the entire body, the Shechinah manifests primarily in specific sacred realms while illuminating all worlds. These realms, such as the Holy of Holies, serve as focal points for the Divine presence, radiating vitality throughout Creation.

The Shechinah's manifestation begins with wisdom (*chochmah*), understanding (*binah*), and knowledge (*daat*), together comprising the Supernal mind. These divine attributes are expressed in Torah and mitzvot, which act as **garments** for the infinite divine light, allowing it to be received by the worlds without overwhelming them. The Torah originates from this Supernal wisdom but descends through the levels of Creation, adapting to each realm's capacity for divine revelation. As the Shechinah descends, it cloaks itself in progressively denser garments, ensuring that the infinite light of G-d can sustain all beings while remaining hidden enough for Creation to exist independently. This concealment is essential because, without it, the overwhelming Divine presence would nullify the distinct existence of all created beings.

The Shechinah's light is not only the source of life but also a **guiding force** in Jewish practice and Torah study. For example, the Shechinah in the world of Beriah (Creation) corresponds to the study of Talmud, which involves deep intellectual engagement, reflecting the higher revelation of divine wisdom in that realm. In Yetzirah (Formation), the Shechinah is connected to the Mishnah, which is more concise and structured, reflecting a slightly lower level of revelation. In Asiyah (Action), the Shechinah descends further, aligning with the physical performance of mitzvot.

Two central ideas encapsulate this chapter's message. First, "the essence of the Shechinah resides in the Holy of Holies of each world," demonstrating how Divine presence is revealed at **varying levels** of intensity across Creation. Even though G-d's essence is equally present in all realms, the degree of its revelation changes based on the spiritual capacity of each world. Second, the Shechinah's light must be **veiled** in Torah and mitzvot to prevent it from overwhelming Creation. Just as sunlight can only be appreciated once it leaves the blinding intensity of the sun itself, so too can the divine light only be experienced by Creation once it is filtered through the "garments" of Torah and mitzvot.

The Shechinah is both the life force of Creation and the guiding light that connects us to G-d. Though its presence is hidden, it becomes accessible through Torah and mitzvot, allowing us to bring holiness into our daily lives and reveal the Divine within the world around us.



# 53: Temple

Chapter 53 concludes the first book of Tanya by tracing the evolution of the Shechinah's dwelling from the First and Second Temples to its present manifestation in Torah study and mitzvot. The chapter explores the dynamic relationship between the Shechinah and the physical world, illustrating how Divine presence once concentrated in the **Temple** has become accessible through individual spiritual practice.

In the **First Temple**, the Shechinah's presence was at its most intense, dwelling in the Holy of Holies within the Ark that housed the Tablets of the Ten Commandments. These Tablets contained the essence of the entire Torah, which originates from the Supernal wisdom of Atzilut—a level that transcends the natural order of Creation. This allowed the Shechinah's light to manifest in its purest form, shining with a greater revelation even than in the highest spiritual realms. The miraculous nature of the Tablets—"the work of G-d" with letters suspended in the stone—reflected a Divine presence unfiltered by the usual descent through the spiritual worlds.

In the **Second Temple**, however, the absence of the Ark and Tablets led to a diminished revelation of the Shechinah. While the Shechinah still dwelled in the Holy of Holies, it did so through a more structured descent, passing incrementally through the worlds of Atzilut (Emanation), Beriah (Creation), Yetzirah (Formation), and Asiyah (Action). This resulted in a veiled presence, less intense than in the First Temple, and reflective of the Shechinah's gradual adaptation to the lower realms.

**Following the destruction** of the Second Temple, the Shechinah's presence shifted dramatically, as our Sages teach, "From the time that the Temple was destroyed, the Holy One, blessed be He, has nothing in His world but the four cubits of halacha." This means that every Jew, through the study of Torah law and the performance of mitzvot, has the ability to host the Shechinah. Even one who studies Torah alone brings the Shechinah into their midst.

The Shechinah's descent into the **physical** world is anchored through mitzvot, especially those involving action, which transform the mundane into vessels of holiness. Even mitzvot performed through speech or thought, like prayer or Torah study, involve physical elements such as moving the lips, aligning them with the world of Asiyah (Action). The Shechinah, like a flame, requires oil—representing divine wisdom and good deeds—to shine. Yet, just as a flame needs a wick, the Shechinah's light clings to the animal soul, which is refined and transformed through Torah and mitzvot.

Thus, the first part of Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, concludes by affirming that the ultimate purpose of Creation is fulfilled when the Shechinah is drawn into the world through Torah and mitzvot. This process transforms not only the individual but the entire physical world into a dwelling place for G-d.



# Tanya “in 1000 Words”

Every person holds the potential for transformational spiritual growth, as illuminated in *Tanya: Likkutei Amarim*. Founded on the verse, “For this matter is very near to you, in your speech and in your heart, to do it” (Deuteronomy 30:14), the Alter Rebbe explains how closeness to G-d is achieved by aligning one’s thought, speech, and action with G-d’s will and wisdom—the Torah.

In this fundamental map for the soul, there are two paths:

- The “**long path**” fosters love and awe of G-d through deep contemplation and reflection, gradually shifting one’s desires toward spirituality.
- The “**short path**” awakens the hidden love and awe inherent in every soul, revealing the innate connection to G-d and making spiritual closeness accessible to all.

## **TWO SOULS; THE ANIMAL SOUL (CHAPTER 1)**

Each person has two souls. The first, the animal soul, drives physical and material desires. It focuses on survival, comfort, and personal gratification. While not inherently evil, it is self-centered, rooted in emotions, and resides in (the left side of) the heart, influencing desires and impulses.

## **THE DIVINE SOUL (CHAPTERS 2–3)**

The divine soul, a literal part of G-d, seeks holiness through Torah study, mitzvot, and spiritual refinement. It resides primarily in the mind, emphasizing the intellect’s role in controlling emotions and guiding moral decisions. Through wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, the divine soul influences behavior, fostering a constant connection to G-d that permeates every aspect of life. Its mission is to elevate the body and the animal soul, transforming mundane activities into acts of divine service.

## **GARMENTS/SUSTENANCE OF THE SOUL (CHAPTERS 4–5)**

The soul expresses itself through three “garments”: thought, speech, and action. These faculties allow the soul to engage with the world, fulfilling mitzvot and manifesting divine purpose. Thought connects the soul to G-d through study and meditation; speech brings holiness into the world through prayer and sacred words; and action fulfills G-d’s commandments in the

physical realm. Torah study is the soul’s sustenance, strengthening its bond with G-d and refining both the individual and the world around them.

## **THE OTHER SIDE (KELIPOT, HUSKS) (CHAPTERS 6–8)**

Kelipot are spiritual forces that obscure holiness and draw individuals toward selfish, material pursuits. They represent a barrier between the soul and G-d, rooted in indulgence and misalignment with divine purpose. Engaging with the material world for personal gain strengthens these forces, but using the physical for divine service weakens and transforms them. Even neutral, “permissible” actions, when aligned with G-d’s will, can elevate the soul and sanctify the world.

## **WAR OVER THE BODY (CHAPTER 9)**

The body becomes the battlefield between the divine and animal souls. The animal soul, rooted in the heart, pulls toward physical desires, while the divine soul in the mind seeks to guide these impulses toward holiness. This struggle is not a flaw but the essential dynamic of spiritual growth, with mastery over desires being the goal rather than their elimination.

## **TZADDIK (RIGHTEOUS) (CHAPTER 10)**

The tzaddik has completely transformed the animal soul, eradicating any desire for material or selfish pursuits. This individual experiences only love and awe of G-d, living in a state of spiritual perfection and inner peace. The tzaddik serves as a beacon of divine light, inspiring others by embodying the potential for complete alignment with G-d’s will. While this level is rare and not expected of most, it represents the highest ideal of spiritual refinement and devotion.

## **RASHA (WICKED) (CHAPTER 11)**

The rasha allows the animal soul to dominate, leading to sinful behavior in thought, speech, or action. This state reflects a disconnection from G-d, yet no one is beyond redemption. Through sincere repentance and sustained effort, a person can move from rasha to beinoni. Even repeated failure does not close the door to spiritual growth, as the process of return is always possible.

**BEINONI (INTERMEDIATE) (CHAPTERS 12–16)**

The beinoni is the central figure in Tanya, representing an attainable spiritual ideal. This person experiences constant inner conflict between the divine and animal souls but maintains full control over their thought, speech, and action, never succumbing to sin. Unlike the tzaddik, the beinoni hasn't eradicated negative desires but achieves mastery through ongoing self-discipline and mindfulness. The beinoni's struggle is life-long, and the effort itself holds immense spiritual value and divine purpose.

**"NEAR TO YOU...TO DO IT" (CHAPTER 17)**

Serving G-d is accessible to all, as reflected in the verse "It is very near to you, in your speech and in your heart, to do it." Spiritual growth doesn't require extraordinary experiences but hinges on practical, consistent effort. By controlling behaviors—thought, speech, and action—anyone can draw closer to G-d.

**ATTAINABLE (CHAPTERS 18–25)**

Every Jew possesses a hidden love for G-d, rooted in the soul's divine source. This love can be awakened through reflection, practice, and connection to Torah and mitzvot. Even without constant emotional inspiration, this inherent love provides the motivation to overcome spiritual obstacles.

**OVERCOMING DEPRESSION (CHAPTERS 26–32)**

Sadness and despair hinder spiritual growth, stemming from the animal soul and paralyzing divine service. Joy, on the other hand, energizes the soul, making it essential for serving G-d. Gratitude and focusing on the privilege of divine service help overcome negative emotions. Personal struggles are reframed as opportunities for growth, fostering resilience and positive engagement. Loving others is essential in serving G-d, and unity and mutual support are fundamental to spiritual success.

**ILLUMINATING THE SOUL (CHAPTERS 33–34)**

Illuminating the soul begins with recognizing that G-d's presence permeates all of Creation, even the most mundane aspects of life. This awareness transforms daily activities—like eating, working, or relationships—into opportunities for divine connection when aligned with G-d's will. By contemplating

His unity and realizing nothing exists outside His presence, a person finds purpose beyond ritual observance. This mindset brings joy and vitality into performing mitzvot, as every thought, word, and deed reveals G-dliness. In this way, both the soul and the physical world become vessels for holiness.

**A HOME IN THE PHYSICAL REALM (CHAPTERS 35–37)**

The ultimate purpose of Creation is to make the physical world a dwelling place for G-d. This is achieved through mitzvot, which sanctify the material and draw divine light into the world. This process of elevating the physical world is not only the foundation of daily spiritual life but also prepares the world for the coming of Moshiach, when G-d's presence will be fully revealed, and the world will reach the ultimate state of redemption.

**INTENT (CHAPTERS 38–40)**

While physical mitzvot are essential, intention (*kavanah*) enriches them by connecting actions to higher spiritual realms. Thoughtful, purposeful engagement infuses mitzvot with vitality, elevating them beyond mere ritual. However, even without perfect intent, the physical fulfillment of commandments remains fundamentally valuable and indispensable. Intention serves as the soul of the action, enhancing its spiritual significance and deepening the individual's connection to G-d.

**LEVELS OF LOVE AND FEAR (CHAPTERS 41–50)**

Love and fear are fundamental to divine service. Basic fear instills discipline, preventing sin, while higher forms evoke awe and self-nullification before G-d's greatness. Love fosters closeness, ranging from a love of G-d that is cultivated through contemplation, to an all-consuming yearning for unity with G-d.

**G-D'S PRESENCE (CHAPTERS 51–53)**

Just as the soul animates the body but is primarily centered in the brain, G-d's light fills all existence but manifests most clearly in sacred spaces and actions. Drawing the Shechinah into daily life through mitzvot transforms the physical world into a divine dwelling, fulfilling the ultimate purpose of Creation.

# Glossary

## KEY TERMS OF TANYA

**Alter Rebbe:** Title of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the first leader of Chabad Chassidut and author of Tanya.

**Chabad:** A branch of Chassidut emphasizing intellectual contemplation, acronym for *chochmah* (wisdom), *binah* (understanding), and *daat* (knowledge).

**Chassidut:** The mystical movement founded by the Baal Shem Tov, focusing on joy and divine connection.

**Likkutei Amarim:** *A Compilation of Teachings*, the first book of Tanya, also known as *Sefer Shel Beinonim*.

**Sefer Shel Beinonim:** The Book of Beinonim. The subtitle of Tanya, focusing on the attainable spiritual level of the beinoni.

## THE THREE SPIRITUAL ARCHETYPES

**Tzaddik (tzaddikim, pl.):** A righteous person who has completely subdued their evil inclination and experiences only love and awe of G-d.

**Beinoni (beinonim, pl.):** The "intermediate" person who maintains control over thought, speech, and action but still struggles internally with desires.

**Rasha (rasha'im, pl.):** A wicked person who succumbs to negative impulses in thought, speech, or action.

## THE SOUL AND ITS COMPONENTS

**Nefesh Elokit:** The divine soul, which seeks connection to G-d and spiritual refinement.

**Nefesh HaBehamit:** The animal soul, associated with physical desires and self-centered impulses.

**Yetzer Hara:** The evil inclination, the internal drive toward selfishness and sin.

**Yetzer Tov:** The good inclination, the internal drive toward holiness and alignment with G-d's will.

## THE FOUR WORLDS

**Atzilut (Emanation):** The highest of the four worlds, where divine light is fully revealed. The sefirot there are in complete unity with G-d, with no sense of separation.

**Beriah (Creation):** The first emergence of Creation ex nihilo, where beings have self-awareness but remain nullified to the Divine. Associated with binah (understanding), it is considered the realm of the Divine Throne.

**Yetzirah (Formation):** The realm where Creation takes on structure, manifesting the divine emotions. It is associated with angelic service, as angels embody these attributes.

**Asiyah (Action):** The lowest world, where Creation is fully actualized. It has both a spiritual and physical dimension, with divine light most concealed. Here, human effort is essential in revealing G-dliness.

## THE SEFIROT

**Keter (Crown):** The highest sefirah, representing the divine will and the source of all Creation.

**Chochmah (Wisdom):** The first intellectual sefirah, representing the spark of inspiration and the seed of understanding.

**Binah (Understanding):** The intellectual process of expanding and developing the initial insight from Chochmah.

**Daat (Knowledge):** The synthesis and integration of Chochmah and Binah, connecting intellect to emotion.

**Chesed (Kindness):** The attribute of unconditional love and generosity, extending divine goodness.

**Gevurah (Strength):** The attribute of discipline, judgment, and restriction, balancing Chesed.

**Tiferet (Beauty):** The harmony and balance between Chesed and Gevurah, creating compassion.

**Netzach (Endurance):** The attribute of persistence and victory in the face of obstacles.

**Hod (Splendor):** The attribute of humility, gratitude, and submission to divine will.

**Yesod (Foundation):** The channel that connects and transmits divine flow to the physical world.

**Malchut (Kingship):** The final sefirah, representing divine sovereignty and the manifestation of G-d's presence in the world.

## LEVELS OF LOVE AND FEAR

**Yirah Tata'ah (Lower Fear):** Basic fear of G-d rooted in fear of punishment and awe of His authority. It motivates adherence to mitzvot through discipline and reverence.

**Yirah Ila'ah (Higher Awe):** A deeper, more refined awe of G-d's greatness and transcendence, beyond fear of punishment, often leading to a sense of self-nullification.

**Ahavat Olam (Worldly Love):** A love for G-d cultivated through reflection on His presence in Creation and His kindness. It is generated by human effort and meditation.

**Ahavah Rabbah (Great Love):** A higher, more intense love of G-d that transcends intellectual contemplation. It is often considered a divine gift rather than something achieved through human effort.

**Ahavah B'taanugim (Love of Delights):** The highest level of love, characterized by spiritual pleasure and delight in G-d's presence, beyond longing or yearning.

### **ADDITIONAL CONCEPTS AND TERMS**

**Asur (Forbidden/Bound):** Something prohibited in Jewish law. Spiritually, asur means “bound” in impurity, unable to be elevated unless transformed through deep repentance.

**Chibut Hakever:** The spiritual cleansing process that occurs after death.

**Dirah Betachtonim:** The ultimate purpose of Creation, making the physical world a dwelling place for G-d.

**Dveikut:** Cleaving to G-d, representing a deep spiritual attachment.

**Gehinom:** The Jewish concept of purgatory, where souls undergo purification.

**Halacha:** Jewish law, guiding all aspects of religious and daily life.

**Hitbonenut:** Contemplation or meditation on G-d’s greatness.

**Kavanah:** Intention and focus, especially during prayer and mitzvah observance.

**Kelipa (kelipot, pl.):** A spiritual husk that obscures holiness and leads to impurity.

**Kelipat Nogah:** A neutral spiritual shell that can be elevated to holiness or fall into impurity.

**Kelot Hanefesh:** The soul’s intense yearning to unite with G-d, often to the point of self-nullification.

**Knesset Yisrael:** The collective soul of the Jewish people.

**Lishmah:** Performing mitzvot or studying Torah for its own sake.

**Mamzer:** A child born from certain prohibited relationships under Jewish law.

**Mishnah:** The foundational text of the Oral Torah.

**Moshiach:** The Messiah, who will usher in the era of redemption.

**Mutar (Permissible/Untied):** Something allowed by Jewish law. Spiritually, mutar means “untied,” capable of being elevated to holiness when used for a divine purpose.

**Ohr Ein Sof:** The infinite light of G-d that sustains all of Creation.

**Ratzo V’shov:** The oscillation between yearning to connect with G-d (*ratzo*) and returning to engage with the physical world (*shov*), reflecting the balance between spiritual ascent and grounded action.

**Ruach Shtut:** A “spirit of folly” that leads a person to sin.

**Sefer Shel Tzaddikim:** The Book of the Righteous. A lost manuscript by the Alter Rebbe, focusing on the divine service of the righteous.

**Sefira (sefirot, pl.):** The ten divine attributes through which G-d manifests in the world.

**Shemoneh Esrei:** The central prayer of the Jewish liturgy, recited three times daily.

**Shma:** The declaration of G-d’s oneness, recited as part of daily prayers.

**Sitra Achara:** Literally “the other side,” referring to forces of impurity and spiritual concealment.

**Shechinah:** The indwelling divine presence within the world.

**Sovev Kol Almin:** The divine light that surrounds all worlds, symbolizing G-d’s transcendence.

**Teshuva:** Repentance, the process of returning to G-d and correcting spiritual failings.

**Tzimtzum:** The concept of divine contraction, where G-d conceals His light to allow for Creation.