

EXCERPT

LESSONS IN

תורה אור

A CHASSIDIC DISCOURSE BY
RABBI SHNEUR ZALMAN
OF LIADI

חייב איניש

LESSONS IN
תורה אור
AND
לקוטי תורה

CLASSIC CHASSIDIC DISCOURSE BY
RABBI SHNEUR ZALMAN OF LIADI

PURIM – CHAYAV INISH

Translation and Commentary by
Rabbi Eliyahu Touger



Kehot Publication Society
770 Eastern Parkway • Brooklyn, New York 11213
5781 • 2021



לעילוי נשמת
פינחס בן הרב ברוך עקיבא
גרינברג

Dedicated to the memory of

Pinchos Greenberg

For Pinchos, every day was Purim.

The outpouring of joy and love for one's fellow Jew
that characterizes Purim
was an essential and inherent quality of his personality.

He lived with his heart and shared everything
he was and everything he had with all he met.

יהי זכרו ברוך



PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

A Purim *maamar* is almost a contradiction in terms. A *maamar* is a chassidic discourse, a systematic elaboration of mystic concepts as they are en clothed in a logical framework. Purim, by contrast, stands above all logic and reason, as the teaching that begins this *maamar* states:¹ “On Purim, a man is obligated to become so intoxicated that he does not know the difference between ‘Cursed be Haman’ and ‘Blessed be Mordechai.’” On a day associated with “not-knowing,” where is there room for developed thought?

The resolution to this question depends on the awareness that the not-knowing called for on Purim is not a drunken stupor, but a bond with G-d as He transcends knowledge. Wisdom and knowledge are defined entities and G-d transcends all definition: “No thought can grasp Him.”²

How then can man connect to Him? By dedicating himself to G-d beyond the limits of knowledge. We each possess a soul that is “an actual part of G-d,”³ unlimited and unbounded as is He. Purim is a time when this essential dimension of the soul surfaces and bonds with G-d — essence cleaving to Essence — above the garments of logic and thought.

“IN THOSE DAYS, IN THIS SEASON”

This concept lies at the very core of the Purim miracle. The *Megillah* refers to Mordechai, the hero of the Purim narrative, as *ish Yehudi*,⁴ literally, “a man of the tribe of Yehudah.” Now Mordechai was from the tribe of Benjamin. Why then is he called a *Yehudi*?

The Alter Rebbe explains that the name *Yehudi* alludes to the quality of *hodaah*, acknowledgment, i.e., one steps beyond his own opinion and accepts that of another person. Such conduct reflects the quality of *bittul*, “selflessness,” in which one is not limited by his logic or reason. Mordechai was an *ish Yehudi*, a man characterized by this type of *bittul*.

1. *Megillah* 7b.

2. Cf. the passage *Pasach Eliyahu*; the Introduction to the *Tikkunei Zohar*, p. 17a.

3. *Tanya*, ch. 2.

4. *Esther* 2:5.

Moreover, as explained in the *maamar*, *ish* can also be interpreted as “officer,” i.e., Mordechai served as a leader, inspiring the entire people to *bittul*. Through his example and teachings, he motivated the Jews to rise above their individual identities and devote themselves to G-d to the point of self-sacrifice. They put their thought and logic on the side and followed Mordechai in everything that he asked of them.

PART OF A GREATER PICTURE

Since *bittul* is essential to our connection to G-d, it lies at the core of our people's acceptance of the Torah at Sinai, as epitomized by our ancestors' pledge:⁵ “We will do and we will listen.” “We will do” preceded “We will listen”⁶; i.e., they promised to obey before knowing what they would be commanded to do. This represents a state of utter *bittul*: giving themselves over to G-d without considering the consequences.

At Sinai, however, their *bittul* was motivated from Above. G-d showered them with such great love that they had no alternative but to accept the Torah without reservations. After the awesome revelations they had just witnessed, what else could they do?

This, however, raised an objection in the Heavenly realms,⁷ for perhaps their commitment was not genuine; maybe it was only a response to G-d's love and not an expression of their true feelings.

On Purim, the Jews “carried out what they had already accepted,”⁷ showing a whole-hearted commitment to the Torah even when G-d's love for them was not openly manifest. Their unreserved devotion removed any objections that existed in the spiritual realms regarding the Jews' connection to the Torah.

NOT A ONE-DAY EXPERIENCE

There's a popular Jewish statement, “Not every day is Purim.” In a spiritual sense, this means that the bond to G-d that transcends knowledge and logic realized on Purim cannot be expressed with its full power in a continuous, ongoing manner. One who lives in a constant state of “not knowing” is unable to carry on his ordinary day-to-day lifestyle.

On the other hand, the bonding of essence to Essence realized on Purim should

5. *Shmos* 24:7.

6. *Shabbos* 88a.

7. See *Shabbos*, *op. cit.*

lie at the heart of our experience at all times, even after we return to a state of knowledge and logic. This is accomplished through the Torah. As the Alter Rebbe explains in this *maamar*, the Torah is referred to as *mashal hakadmoni*, “the primeval analogy,”⁸ interpreted to mean “an analogy for ‘the Primary Being of the world,’” i.e., G-d as He exists above the entire Spiritual Cosmos. Just as an analogy enables a person to grasp the analogue, so too, the intellectual dimension of the Torah serves as an analogy that enables limited human beings to connect to the Essence of G-d.

In that way, Purim and the Torah complement each other. The essential bond with G-d realized on Purim energizes Torah study, enabling its G-dly core to be sensed. And Torah study internalizes the connection to G-d experienced on Purim, enabling it to permeate the fabric of our consciousness and be applied in our lives.

Our Sages teach,⁹ “All [the books of] the Prophets will be nullified in the Ultimate Future but the *Megillah* of Esther will not be nullified.” Even in that era of revealed G-dliness, the *Megillah* will stand out as a beacon of light.

The teachings of *Chassidus* give us a foretaste of that future era, enabling us to both anticipate and precipitate the outpouring of G-dly knowledge that will characterize that age. May the study of this *maamar* hasten the coming of that era, leading to the time when “The world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the ocean bed.”¹⁰

Sichos In English

Rosh Chodesh Shvat, 5781

This *maamar* is a foretaste of a larger project to translate selections from the Alter Rebbe’s classic texts, *Torah Or*, and *Likkutei Torah*. When approaching the translation of those texts, our intent was to make the text as user-friendly as possible. With that goal in mind, we made additions to the text, setting them off in a different typeface, provided thorough references, and added further explanations.

We arbitrarily separated the *maamarim* into sections, composed summaries for those sections, and introduced each *maamar* with a short description of its general theme. Following the example of Heichal Menachem’s *Chassidus Mevueres* series, we have separated the additions of the *Tzemach Tzedek* from the text, printing them as endnotes. It is with endless appreciation that we mention their work, because their series on the *Moadim* was an invaluable resource, providing sources and explanations that greatly enhanced our text.

8. *Makkos* 10b, see *Rashi’s* commentary; see also *Rashi* to *Shmos* 21:13.

9. *Talmud Yerushalmi*, *Megillah* 1:5.

10. *Yeshayahu* 11:9.

ג) וביאור הענין יובן ע"פ מ"ש איש יהודי כו' ושמו מרדכי כו' איש ימיני. וצ"ל דימיני פי' שהוא משבט בנימין כדפי' רש"י ואם כן למה קרי ליה יהודי דהוא על שם שבט יהודה. גם צ"ל דבגזרת המן נאמר להשמיד להרג כו' היהודים

— 3 —

וּבִיאור הָעֲנִין The explanation of the concept, i.e., the Jews' acceptance of the Torah with *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice) on their own initiative at the time of the Purim miracle,

יִבְנֶן עַל פִּי מַה שֶּׁכָּתוּב אִישׁ can be understood on the basis of the verse,¹ "There was an *ish* ("the officer

Ish is usually translated as "man." The explanation for the translation as "officer" is given later in the *maamar*.

יְהוּדִי כו' of the Jews")....

We have used the common translation for the term *Yehudi*. More specifically (as the Alter Rebbe proceeds to emphasize), it means "[a member] of the tribe of Yehudah." The common translation came about because after the exile of the Ten Tribes, the overwhelming majority of the Jews remaining in *Eretz Yisrael* (and thus exiled to Babylon) were from the tribe of Yehudah. Therefore, the entire nation was often called by that name.

וְשֵׁמוֹ מֶרְדֳּכָי כו' "His name was Mordechai...

אִישׁ יְמִינִי. a Benyaminite."

וְצִירָף לְהִבִּין דִּימִינִי As *Rashi* explains, the term *Yemini* implies that he was of the tribe of Benjamin.
פְּרוֹשׁ שֶׁהוּא מִשְׁבֵּט
בְּנֵימִין כְּדִפְּרֹשׁ רִש"י

The question arises:

וְאִם כֵּן לָמָּה קָרִי לֵיהּ יְהוּדִי Why then is he called a *Yehudi*

דִּהוּא עַל שֵׁם שְׁבֵט יְהוּדָה. which implies that he was of the tribe of Yehudah?

1. *Esther* 2:5.

והרי בשבע ועשרים ומאה מדינה מלכות אחשוורוש היה גם מכל השבטים אפרים ומנשה אלא שנקראו כולם יהודים מפני בחינת הבטול שיש בהם לאור א"ס ב"ה. כמו שאנו אומרים בשמונה עשרה מודים אנחנו לך. שעל שם זה נק' יהודי כמ"ש

גם צריך להבין דבגזרת
המן נאמר להשמיד
להרג כו' היהודים

It is also necessary to understand why Haman's decree mentioned "annihilating and killing... the *Yehudim*?"²

והרי בשבע ועשרים ומאה
מדינה מלכות אחשוורוש

For in the 127 countries ruled by Achashverosh,

היה גם מכל השבטים
אפרים ומנשה

there were not only members of the tribe of Yehudah, but also members of all the tribes, Ephraim and Menasheh, etc., as well. Obviously, calling them *Yehudim* carries an allusion to a concept of general scope.

אלא שנקראו כלם
יהודים מפני בחינת
הבטול שיש בהם לאור
אין סוף ברוך הוא.

In resolution, it can be explained that they were called *Yehudim* because of the *bittul* they showed to G-d's infinite light.

כמו שאנו אומרים בשמונה
עשרה מודים אנחנו לך.

For the name *Yehudim* relates to the term *hodaah*, which emphasizes the quality of *bittul*, as we say in the *Shemoneh Esreh* prayer, *Modim anachnu lach*, "We thankfully acknowledge You."

The concept of acknowledgment (*hodaah*) implies the acceptance of a position even though one does not understand it totally.³ This is consonant with the concept of *bittul* which involves nullifying one's own will and submitting oneself to another authority.

שעל שם זה נקרא יהודי

For this reason, they are called *Yehudim*. I.e., the name points to the quality of *bittul*, the spiritual attribute which characterizes the Jewish people as a whole.

2. *Ibid.* 3:13.

3. See the *maamar* entitled *Tziyon BeMishpat*, sec. 1, *Likkutei Torah, Devarim*, p. 1a.

לאה הפעם אודה את ה' ע"כ קראה שמו יהודה.^{xvi} ולכן נק' מרדכי איש יהודי. פי' שר ליהודים כמו איש הר הבית כי הוא היה מקור הבטול כמארז"ל מרדכי מן התורה מנין דכתיב מר דרור ומתרגמינן מירא דכיא. ומר זה לדעת הרמב"ם ושאר מפרשים הוא.^{xvii}

-
- כְּמוֹ שֶׁאֶמְרָה לְאָה This relates to the reason the name Yehudah was originally given, as the verse quotes his mother Leah,⁴
הַפֶּעַם אוֹדָה אֶת ה' “This time I will thankfully acknowledge G-d.”
- עַל כֵּן קָרָאָה שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה. Therefore, she called him Yehudah.”^{xvi}
- וְלִכֵּן נִקְרָא מְרַדְּכִי For this reason, Mordechai was called *ish Yehudi*
אִישׁ יְהוּדִי. (“the officer of the Jews”).
- פְּרוּשׁ שֶׁר לַיהוּדִים The term *ish* can be interpreted as “officer”
כְּמוֹ אִישׁ הַר הַבַּיִת as in the expression *ish Har haBayis*, “the officer of the Mountain of the Beis HaMikdash.”⁵
- כִּי הוּא הָיָה מְקוֹר הַבְּטוּל And, as above, *Yehudi* refers to the approach of *bittul*.
The title thus implies that Mordechai **was the source of**
bittul for the entire nation. Through his teachings and
example, and indeed, even through mere contact with
him, Mordechai was able to inspire a commitment of
bittul and *mesirus nefesh* within the people as a whole.⁶
- כְּמֵאמַר רַבּוֹתֵינוּ לְמֶרְדֵּכִי To develop this concept: **Our Sages’ state,**⁷ “What is
מִן הַתּוֹרָה מְנִיץ the allusion to Mordechai in the Torah?
- דְּכָתִיב מֶר דְּרֹר It is written,⁸ ‘*Mor dror*,’”
- וּמִתְרַגְּמִינָן מִירָא דְכֵיא. which the *Targum* renders as *mar dachia* (“pure
mor”). *Mor* was one of the spices used in the prepa-
ration of the anointing oil used in the Sanctuary and
the *Beis HaMikdash* and in the incense offering that
was brought daily.

4. Bereishis 29:35.

5. Middos 1:2.

6. See the *maamar* entitled *VeKibeil HaYehudim*, 5697, and the *maamar* entitled *VeAtah Tetzaveh*, 5741.

7. Chulin 139b.

8. Shmos 30:23.

מושק הנזכר בגמ' פ' כיצד מברכין שהוא דם חיה ידוע שנקרש בחטוטרות שבצוארה ונעשה בושם הנק' מר. והיינו במדות הנפש בחי' אתכפיא ואתהפכא ממרירו למיתקו

וימר זה לדעת הרמב"ם ושאר מפרשים הוא מושק According to *Rambam*⁹ and other commentaries,^{xvii} *mor* is musk,

הנזכר בגמרא פרק כיצד מברכין which is mentioned in the *Talmud*, tractate *Berachos*, ch. *Keitzad Mevarchin*,¹⁰

שהוא דם חיה ידוע i.e., "the blood of a well-known animal," the musk deer,

שנקרש בַּחטוטרות שֶׁבְּצוֹאֲרָה which coagulates in a gland in its neck,

ונעשה בושם הנקרא מר. is dried, and becomes a spice referred to as *mor*.

Raavad and *Ramban* object to *Rambam's* view, for they maintain that a substance coming from a non-kosher animal is inappropriate to be used in the Sanctuary and the *Beis HaMikdash*. They identify *mor* with myrrh – a fragrant, resinous sap. Here the Alter Rebbe is following *Rambam's perspective*.

The Alter Rebbe proceeds to explain the connection between Mordechai and *bittul* as follows: As indicated by the association between Mordechai and musk, Mordechai is associated with the transformation of darkness into light. This is possible through the quality of *Chochmah*, and *Chochmah* is characterized by *bittul*.

והיינו במדות הנפש בחינת אתכפיא The spiritual parallel in the attributes of the soul are the services of *iskafia* (subjugation), i.e., ruling over one's material desires and compelling them to conform to the Torah's standards,

ואתהפכא ממרירו למיתקו and *is'hap'cha* (the transformation of) bitterness to sweetness, i.e., transforming one's natural desires to such an extent that they also seek holiness.

In that vein, our Sages¹¹ interpret the command,¹² "And you shall love G-d your

9. *Hilchos Berachos* 9:1; *Hilchos Klei HaMikdash* 1:3.

10. *Berachos* 43a.

11. *Berachos* 9:1.

12. *Devarim* 6:5.

כי הדם הוא הנפש החיונית נפש המתאוה וכשמהפך תאוותיו הבהמיות מתענוגי עוה"ז להיות כל חפצו ותענוגיו בה' זהו ענין שנעשה ממנו בושם. ועל דרך זה יש לפרש מחלוקת הפוסקים במור הנ"ל שרבינו יונה מתירו אפילו באכילה ויש אוסרים

L-rd with all your heart,” as “with both your hearts,” i.e., that even the *yetzer hara* should be motivated to love G-d and seek a connection with holiness. This idea is epitomized in the transformation of an animal’s blood, i.e., its vitality and energy, into a fragrance.¹³

כי הדם הוא הנפש For blood represents the vital soul, the soul
החיונית נפש המתאוה which desires.

וכשמהפך תאוותיו The process in which the animalistic desires of this
הבהמיות מתענוגי soul are redirected from the pleasures of this
עולם הזה world

להיות כל חפצו to the extent that all of its desires and pleasures
ותענוגיו בה' are focused on G-d

זהו ענין שנעשה is reflected by the transformation of this blood into
ממנו בושם. a fragrant spice.

ועל דרך זה On this basis, i.e., based on the idea of transforming
negativity to good,

יש לפרש מחלוקת it is possible to explain the above-mentioned
הפוסקים במור הנ"ל difference of opinion among the *halachic* author-
ities concerning musk.¹⁴

The Rabbis debate whether, through the drying process, the very nature of the physical substance of musk has changed – and therefore, even though it originally came from a non-kosher animal, it may be eaten as well – or whether the nature of its physical substance remains forbidden and is permitted only as a fragrance.

שרבינו יונה מתירו Rabbeinu Yonah¹⁵ permits it, even allowing it to
אפילו באכילה be eaten.

13. In *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5571, p. 134, the Alter Rebbe explains that this transformation is alluded to by the description of the musk as “pure,” i.e., refined, with its material impurities stripped away.

14. See *Tur, Orach Chayim* 216.

15. See the gloss of Rabbeinu Yonah to *Berachos*, *loc. cit.*

אותו באכילה דס"ל שלא נתהפך אלא ריחו אבל גופו אסור באכילה. והרר"י ס"ל שחזר לגמרי להיות היתר. וכמ"ש בטור א"ח סימן רי"ו. ומחלוקתם ע"פ חסידות תלוי בענין הנזכר בגמ' ביומא^{xviii} גבי תשובה אם זדונות נעשו כשגגות או כזכויות כי שניהם ענין א' שהוא מה שהרע נהפך לטוב. שהרי חיה ידוע הנ"ל הוא ידעוני הנזכר

-
- ויש אוסרים אותו באכילה Other authorities¹⁶ forbid it to be eaten,
 דסבירא להו שלא maintaining that only its fragrance has been
 נתהפך אלא ריחו transformed,
 אבל גופו אסור באכילה. but that its physical substance remains forbidden
 to be eaten.
- והרב רבנו יונה סבירא ליה Rabbeinu Yonah, by contrast, maintains that
 שחזר לגמרי להיות היתר. even its physical substance has been transformed
 and it has become permitted,
 וכמו שכתוב בטור as stated in the *Tur, Orach Chayim*, sec. 216.
 ארח חיים סימן רי"ו.
- ומחלוקתם על פי חסידות According to *Chassidus*, this difference of
 opinion
 תלוי בענין הנזכר בגמרא is dependent on the difference of opinion men-
 ביומא גבי תשובה tioned in the *Talmud*, tractate *Yoma*,^{17, xviii} with
 regard to the power of *teshuvah*:
 אם זדונות נעשו Does it merely transform one's intentional sins to
 כשגגות או כזכויות unintentional ones, or does it even transform them
 to merits?
- כי שניהם ענין אחד שהוא For both matters involve the same basic con-
 מה שהרע נהפך לטוב. struct: the transformation of evil to good.

I.e., according to the view that transgressions can be transformed entirely, the blood of the musk deer, though originally forbidden, can be made fit for consumption. The view which minimizes the power of *teshuvah*, by contrast, sees the blood of the musk deer as something that can never be elevated entirely.

16. R. Meir HaLevi, as quoted in the above sources.

17. *Yoma* 86b.

בתורה בפרש' שופטים שהוא מקליפות הטמאות כמ"ש ושאל אוב וידעני ודרש אל המתים. ולכן זה שיהיה הבושם הלז מותר אפילו באכילה הוא כמו שבתשובה מאהבה הזדונות נעשו כזכיות שהרע נהפך לגמרי להיות טוב ממש. ועל זה אמרו

שְׁהָרִי חִיָּה יְדוּעַ הַנ"ל To explain: The "well-known animal" mentioned
הוא יְדוּעֵנִי הַנֶּזְכֵּר בַּתּוֹרָה above, the musk deer, is identified with the *yidoni*
בְּפָרְשֵׁת שׁוֹפְטִים divination mentioned in *Parshas Shoftim*.

*Rashi*¹⁸ explains that this form of divination involved using a bone from an animal that is called a *yidua*. *Rambam*,¹⁹ by contrast, identifies a *yidua* as a type of fowl.

שְׁהוּא מְקַלְפוֹת הַטְּמָאוֹת It derives from the impure *kelipos*,
כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב וְשָׁאֵל אֹב as it is written,²⁰ "One who asks of an *ov* or a
וְיָדַעְנִי וְדָרַשׁ אֶל הַמֵּתִים. *yidoni* or seeks to commune with the dead...."

וְלִכֵּן זֶה שִׁיְהִיָּה הַבֹּשֶׁם Since it has its source in such a negative substance, the
הַלֵּז מִתֵּר אֶפְלוֹ בְּאֲכִילָה process enabling this spice to be permitted, even
to be eaten

הוא כְּמוֹ שֶׁבְּתִשְׁבּוּבָה parallels *teshuvah* motivated by love which trans-
מֵאֲהָבָה הַזְדוֹנוֹת forms intentional sins into merits,
נַעֲשׂוּ כְּזָכוֹת

שֶׁהָרַע נִהְפֵּךְ לְגִמְרִי i.e., the evil is transformed entirely into good.
לְהִיּוֹת טוֹב מִמֶּשׁ.

As the Alter Rebbe explains in *Tanya*,²¹ after a person transgresses, he feels distant and removed from G-dliness. This very distance awakens within him a thirst and a desire to reconnect that is more powerful than he would have otherwise experienced. When seen as a phase in this process, the transgression can be seen as a catalyst that prompts the deeper connection, i.e., a merit.

וְעַל זֶה אָמְרוּ בְּמָקוֹם שֶׁבַעֲלִי With regard to this, it is said,²² "In the place
תְּשׁוּבָה עוֹמְדִים אֵין צְדִיקִים where *baalei teshuvah* stand, perfectly righteous
גִּמְוָרִים יְכוּלִים לַעֲמוֹד. men cannot stand."

18. *Rashi*, *Sanhedrin* 65 a-b.

19. *Rambam*, *Hilchos Avodas Kochavim* 6:2.

20. *Devarim* 18:11.

21. *Tanya*, ch. 7.

22. *Rambam*, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Teshuvah* 7:14, based on *Berachos* 34b.

במקום שבעלי תשובה עומדים אין צדיקים גמורים יכולים לעמוד. אבל בתשובה שלא מאהבה רבה הזדונות הם כשגגות אבל לא נהפכו לגמרי להיות טוב וזהו מ"ד שהמור הנ"ל אע"פ שריחו טוב מ"מ לא חזר להיות מותר באכילה כו'. והנה מרדכי

There are two explanations for the concept that a *baal teshuvah* reaches a higher peak than a completely righteous man:

a) Through *teshuvah*, a person can even elevate the sparks of G-dliness within the sins that he intentionally committed. A righteous man can only elevate the sparks of G-dliness that are invested in permitted entities, while a *baal teshuvah* can elevate even those embedded within the realm of evil. Based on the kabbalistic principle²³ that everything which falls farther away has a higher source, it follows that these sparks invested in sin contain a more elevated potential than those invested in permitted entities. Hence, when a *baal teshuvah* elevates them, he attains a higher level than that of a righteous man.

b) The Divine service of the righteous, even those on the highest rungs, is defined – and thus, limited – by the nature of their spiritual personalities. Since their service is defined, they relate to the levels of G-d's will that are also defined and limited. The Divine service of *baalei teshuvah*, by contrast, is characterized by *bittul* – an unbounded and unlimited commitment. Therefore, they draw down G-d's Essence, a level that likewise has no boundaries or limitations.²⁴

אָבֵל בְּתִשְׁבּוּבָה שֶׁלֹּא
מֵאַהֲבָה רַבָּה When, by contrast, *teshuvah* is not motivated by
such great love,

הַזְדוֹנוֹת הֵם כְּשִׁגְגוֹת one's intentional sins merely become considered
inadvertent transgressions, which, although viewed
far more leniently than willful transgressions, still leave
a blemish both in the spiritual realms above and within
a person's soul.

אָבֵל לֹא נִתְהַפֵּכוּ
לְגִמְרֵי לְהִיּוֹת טוֹב They are not, however, transformed entirely to
the extent that they would be considered good.

וְזֶהוּ מֵאֵן דָּאָמַר שֶׁהַמּוֹר
הַנִּיחַ אֶף עַל פִּי שְׂרִיחוֹ טוֹב This parallels the approach which maintains that
although the fragrance of musk is good,

23. *Derech Mitzvosecha*, p. 191a, et al.

24. *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 7, p. 20ff.

שנק' מירא דכיא היינו שהוא מקור הבטול שהוא בחי' יסוד אבא שחכמה היא כח מ"ה ובחכמה אתברירו. ולכן נק' איש יהודי דוקא. והנה המן הי' לעומת זה של בחי'

מִכָּל מְקוֹם לֹא חָזַר לְהִיּוֹת it has not become sufficiently transformed that
מִתֵּר בְּאַכִּילָה כּו'. it is permitted to be eaten.

וְהִנֵּה מֵרְדֵּכַי שְׁנִקְרָא As mentioned above, Mordechai is identified
מִירָא דְכָּיָא with pure *mor*,

הֵינּוּ שֶׁהוּא מְקוֹר הַבְּטוּל i.e., he is the source of *bittul* –

שֶׁהוּא בְּחִינַת יְסוֹד אָבָא in kabbalistic terms, the attribute of *Yesod* within
the sublime father.

The sublime father refers to the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah*, which is associated with *bittul*.²⁵ *Yesod* is the *Sefirah* associated with the quality of connection. The *Yesod* of *Chochmah* thus refers to the dimension within *Chochmah* that connects with other qualities and infuses them with *bittul*.

שְׁחֻכְמָה הִיא כַּח מ"ה The term *Chochmah* (חכמה) shares the same let-
ters as מה, “the power of *bittul*.”

Mah, lit., “what”, points to the amorphous nature of *Chochmah*, a state just short of non-existence. “The power of *mah*” thus reflects the ability within a person to rise above his identity.

וּבְחֻכְמָה אֶתְבְּרִירו. It is stated,²⁶ “With *Chochmah*, they will be refined.”
The intent is that the guiding light of *Chochmah* enables a person to refine and elevate his environment and the situations he encounters.

וְלִכֵּן נִקְרָא אִישׁ Therefore, Mordechai is called *ish Yehudi*, which
יְהוּדִי דְּוִקָא. in this context means, “the officer of *bittul*.”

As implied by the connection with musk, Mordechai represents the epitome of the transformation of evil into good. Since this transformation is accomplished through *Chochmah*, Mordechai is identified with this quality. As “the officer of *bittul*,” Mordechai’s mission was to infuse the entire Jewish people with this quality and empower them to carry out such transformation.

25. See sec. 1 and notes.

26. See *Zohar*, Vol. II, p. 254b.

זו דוקא כמו שאמר למי יחפוץ המלך לעשות יקר יותר ממני שהיה יש ודבר בעיניו ונפרד מאחדותו ית' לומר אני ואפסי עוד כי היה מזרע עמלק וכתוב ראשית גוים עמלק כי ז' אומות הכנעני והחתי כו' שבפסוק הם ז' מדות רעות תאות ורציחה כו'.

וְהִנֵּה הָמָן הָיָה לְעֵמֶת
זֶה שֶׁל בְּחִינָה זוֹ דּוֹקָא

Haman represents the antithesis of this quality,

כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר לְמִי
יִחְפֹּץ הַמֶּלֶךְ לַעֲשׂוֹת
יָקָר יוֹתֵר מִמֶּנִּי

as evidenced by his statement,²⁷ “Whom would the king desire to honor more than me?” This statement indicates that pride and haughtiness lay at the core of his being.

שֶׁהָיָה יֵשׁ וְדָבָר בְּעֵינָיו
וְנִפְרָד מֵאַחַדוּתוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ

He considered himself a significant entity and, in that way, separated himself from G-d's oneness,

לֹאמַר אֲנִי וְאַפְסִי עוֹד

saying,²⁸ “I, and nothing else but me.” In the verses cited, this expression is used to describe the Babylonians who exiled the Jewish people. It has, however, a far greater range of application, relating to all those possessed by self-concern and egotism.

כִּי הָיָה מִזֶּרַע עֲמָלֵק

Haman was a descendant of Amalek, i.e., he was called “the Agagite,” implying that he was a descendant of Agag, the last king of Amalek.²⁹

וְכָתִיב רִאשִׁית גּוֹיִם עֲמָלֵק

concerning whom it is written,³⁰ “Amalek is the head of the nations.”

כִּי ז' אֲמֹת הַכְּנַעֲנִים
וְהַחֲתִי כו' שֶׁבִּפְסוּק

For the seven nations mentioned in the verse,³¹ “the Canaanites, the Chitites,...”

הֵם ז' מִדּוֹת רָעוֹת
תִּאֲוָה וְרִצְיָחָה כו'.

correspond to the seven undesirable emotional qualities: desire, a tendency to murder.... Selfish desire is a corruption of the attribute of love; a tendency to corruption is a reflection of the quality of might, etc.

27. Esther 6:6.

28. Yeshayahu 47:8, 10.

29. See the Targum Sheni to Esther 3:1; Sofrim 13:6.

30. Bamidbar 24:20.

31. Devarim 7:1.

ועמלק הוא גסות הרוח והוא ראשית להם. כי גסות הרוח היא שרש כל המדות רעות. ולכן המן שהוא בחי' גסות רצה להשמיד ולהרוג את כל היהודים שהם בבחי' בטול הפך היש והגסות. ואם היו כופרים ח"ו לא היו עושי' להם כלום שהרי לא גזר רק

וְעַמְלָק הוּא גִּסּוּת הָרוּחַ Amalek is identified with “haughtiness,”

וְהוּא רִאשִׁית לָהֶם. which is “the head” of these nations,

כִּי גִּסּוּת הָרוּחַ הִיא שְׂרֵשׁ for haughtiness is the source of all the undesirable emotional qualities.
כָּל הַמְּדוּת רָעוֹת.

To further develop this idea: The seven undesirable emotional characteristics parallel the seven emotional characteristics of the G-dly soul. For example, in the G-dly soul, the attribute of love is directed to the love of G-d and the love of one's fellow man, while in the animal soul, this quality is directed to the objects of one's material desires. Similarly, in the G-dly soul, the attribute of fear is directed to the fear of G-d, while in the animal soul, that attribute reflects the fear of worldly entities. The intent of our Divine service should be to direct the attributes of the animal soul toward the service of G-d. This endeavor parallels the Jews' conquest of the seven Canaanite nations and the transformation of their lands into *Eretz Yisrael*, a land of holiness.

Amalek, by contrast, is not associated with any particular quality, but rather with the approach of self-concern that lies at the core of all the attributes of the animal soul. That self-orientation must be eradicated entirely; it cannot be transformed. Similarly, the wars against Amalek were never for conquest. And we are commanded to annihilate that nation entirely; there is no way of using anything associated with it for a positive purpose. Therefore, when King Saul thought of using the herds of Amalek as sacrifices, his initiative was repudiated entirely by G-d.³²

וְלִכֵּן הָמָן שֶׁהוּא Accordingly, Haman, who is identified with
בְּחִינַת גִּסּוּת haughtiness,

רָצָה לְהַשְׁמִיד וּלְהָרוֹג desired to annihilate and kill all the Jews,
אֶת כָּל הַיְּהוּדִים

שֶׁהֵם בְּבְחִינַת בְּטוּל for they are identified with *bittul*,

הַפֶּךְ הַיֵּשׁ וְהַגִּסּוּת. the opposite of self-concern and haughtiness.

וְאִם הָיוּ כּוֹפְרִים חֵס וְשָׁלוֹם If they had denied their Jewishness, Heaven forbid,

32. *I Shmuel*, ch. 15.

על היהודים. אך כולם כאחד לא עלה על דעתם מחשבת חוץ ח"ו ומסרו נפשם על אחדותו ית' וזהו בחי' בטול הנ"ל וישנו בכח בכל אחד מ ישראל ואפי' קל שבקלים יכול למסור נפשו בפועל ממש שלא ליפרד מאחדותו ית' בשום אופן בעולם. ומה שעובר שאר עבירות היינו מפני הרוח שטות שמטעהו לחשוב שאינו נפרד מהקב"ה

| | |
|---|---|
| לֹא הָיוּ עוֹשִׂים לָהֶם כְּלוּם | nothing would have been done to them, |
| שֶׁהָיָה לֹא גִזֵּר רַק עַל הַיְּהוּדִים. | for the decree was directed only to the Jews. If the Jews had chosen to assimilate, they would not have been harmed by Haman's decree. ³³ |
| אָךְ כָּלֶם כְּאַחַד לֹא עָלָה עַל דַּעְתָּם מִחֲשַׁבֶּת חוּץ חֵס וְשָׁלוֹם | Nevertheless, all of them, as one, did not even conceive of any thought outside their Jewishness |
| וּמָסְרוּ נַפְשָׁם עַל אַחֲדוּתוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ | and they were prepared to sacrifice themselves for His oneness. |
| וְזֶהוּ בְּחִינַת בְּטוּל הַנ"ל | This represents the quality of <i>bittul</i> that, as explained above, |
| וְיִשְׁנֵנוּ בְּכַח בְּכָל אַחַד מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל | exists in potential within every member of the Jewish people and was expressed at the time of Purim. |
| See <i>Tanya</i> , ³⁴ which explains that, due to the merit of our Patriarchs, every Jew possesses a spiritual heritage that motivates him or her to self-sacrifice. | |
| וְאַפְלוּ קַל שֶׁבְּקָלִים יָכוֹל לְמַסּוֹר נַפְשׁוֹ בְּפֹעַל מְמָשׁ | Even the most unworthy Jews are prepared to actually sacrifice their lives |
| שֶׁלֹּא לִפְרֹד מֵאַחֲדוּתוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ בְּשׁוּם אָפֶן בְּעוֹלָם. | not to be separated from G-d's oneness to any degree, as is borne out by the thousands-year-old tradition of martyrdom that exists within our people. |
| וְזֶה שֶׁעוֹבֵר שְׂאָר עֲבֵרוֹת | The fact that he violates other prohibitions |
| הֵינוּ מִפְּנֵי הָרוּחַ שֶׁטוּת שֶׁמְטַעֵהוּ | is because a spirit of folly possesses him ³⁵ and causes him to err |

33. *Megillas Setarim* to *Esther* 3:13.

34. *Tanya*, chs. 18-19,

35. *Sotah* 3a.

על ידי עבירה ההיא כיון שלובש ציצית ומניח תפלין.

It might seem that the fact that a person is willing to commit other transgressions negates this principle. For if a person is willing to sacrifice his life to maintain his Jewish heritage, it would appear that he would surely sacrifice and conquer his petty material desires. In fact, however, this is not true. Both phenomena are present within our conduct. On one hand, even the most estranged Jews are willing to sacrifice their lives to maintain their connection with G-d. Simultaneously, they often commit other transgressions.

The Alter Rebbe³⁶ explains this paradox based on our Sages³⁵ statement, “A person does not violate a transgression unless a spirit of folly enters him.” No Jew can and no Jew will consciously separate himself from G-d. Therefore, every Jew is willing to sacrifice his life in sanctification of G-d’s name.

Why does he commit other transgressions? Because this spirit of folly confuses him and prevents him from appreciating that through committing any transgression, even a seemingly slight one, he is separating himself from G-d. Were he to realize this, he would never sin.

לחשוב שאינו נפרד מהקדוש ברוך הוא על ידי עבירה ההיא and think that this transgression does not separate him from the Holy One, blessed be He,
כיון שלובש ציצית ומניח תפלין. for he observes other *mitzvos*, e.g., he wears *tzitzis* and puts on *tefillin*. His observance of these *mitzvos* lures him into complacency and enables him to think that his connection with G-d is intact even when his observance lapses.

SUMMARY

The previous section explained that at the time of the Purim miracle, the Jews expressed consummate *bittul*. This section focuses on the catalyst for that *bittul*, Mordechai. The quality of *bittul* he manifested is highlighted by the reference to him as a *Yehudi*, even though he was from the tribe of Benyamin, not Yehudah. *Yehudi* reflects the quality of *hodaah*, acknowledgment, that is associated with *bittul*.

36. *Tanya*, chs. 14 and 25.

The association of Mordechai with *bittul* is developed by explaining the allusion in the Torah to his name as cited by our Sages: *mor dror, mar dachia*, "pure *mor*." *Mor* is identified as musk. Now musk comes from a non-kosher animal. The fact that it can be used in the *Beis HaMikdash* indicates that its nature has been transformed into holiness. This parallels the power of *teshuvah* stemming from love which transforms intentional sins into merits. The attribute of *Chochmah* is the medium that brings about this transformation. And *Chochmah* is categorized by *bittul*, Mordechai's primary quality.

By contrast, Haman and the nation of Amalek from which he descended are characterized by self-concern. Therefore, he desired to annihilate and kill all the Jews. The Jews responded with self-sacrifice, revealing the potential for *bittul* possessed by every member of our people, regardless of his or her spiritual level.

ד) **והנה** בחינת מסירת נפש נמשך מחמת אהבה המסותרת שהיא למעלה מן הדעת ולכן לא נזכר בתורה טעם על מסירת נפש רק על אהבה נאמר טעם כמ"ש לאהבה את הוי' אלקיך כי הוא חיידך. ואין זה טעם על מסירת נפש כיון שהטעם הוא

— 4 —

והנה בחינת מסירת נפש The self-sacrifice (*mesirus nefesh*) shown by the Jewish people

**נמשך מחמת אהבה
המסותרת שהיא
למעלה מן הדעת** is drawn forth from the reservoir of **hidden love** that transcends intellect that which every Jew possesses.¹ Since the essence of every Jew's soul is an actual part of G-d,² he or she is naturally drawn to Him and cannot bear the thought of separation at any costs.

**ולכן לא נזכר בתורה
טעם על מסירת נפש** For this reason, the Torah does not mention a rationale for *mesirus nefesh*.

As the Alter Rebbe proceeds to explain, there are reasons to love G-d. This essential love, however, is not motivated by reason. Instead, it is a natural part of our spiritual makeup, defining who we are.

What does that mean? A person does not need a command or a reason to eat; because it is a basic need of the body, he feels a natural urge to eat. Nor does he need an explanation why he should avoid fire; he appreciates that it is harmful and keeps away from it. In a similar way – and to a certain degree even more so – he feels an inherent and instinctive desire to cling to G-d and avoid any situation that will disrupt his bond with Him.

רק על אהבה נאמר טעם True, with regard to the love of G-d, the Torah mentions a rationale,

**כמו שכתוב לאהבה את
הוי' אלקיך כי הוא חייך.** as it is written,³ “to love G-d your L-rd, because He is your life.” I.e., since the vitality that gives life to a person and to the world at large stems from G-d, a person should respond with love for Him – cleaving

1. *Tanya*, chs. 18 and 19.

2. *Ibid.*, ch. 2

3. *Devarim* 30:20.

כי הוא חייך והרי מסירת נפש הוא להשליך חייו מנגד. אלא הענין שאין שייך טעם ושכל על מסירת נפש כי המס"נ נלקח מבחינ' שלמעלה מן הדעת כי הנה פירוש

to Him and, in that way, enabling the flow of vitality from G-d to him.

וְאֵין זֶה טַעַם עַל מְסִירַת נֶפֶשׁ This, however, is not a rationale for *mesirus nefesh*,

כִּינֵן שֶׁהַטַּעַם הוּא כִּי הוּא חַיִּיד for the rationale is “He is your life,”

וְהָרִי מְסִירַת נֶפֶשׁ הוּא לְהַשְׁלִיךְ חַיִּיו מִנֶּגֶד. *Mesirus nefesh*, by contrast, involves casting away one’s life. Therefore, the fact that G-dliness is the source of life could not motivate such a commitment.

אֵלֶּא הָעֲנָן שֶׁאֵין שִׁיךְ טַעַם וְשִׁכָּל עַל מְסִירַת נֶפֶשׁ. Instead, there is no reason or rationale for *mesirus nefesh*.

כִּי הַמְסִירַת נֶפֶשׁ נִלְקָח מִבְּחִינָה For *mesirus nefesh* has its source in a level, both within the soul and within G-d, as it were,

שֶׁלְּמַעַלָּה מִן הַדַּעַת that transcends knowledge.

Our powers of thought and logic accept concepts that support and strengthen our existence, but not those that will nullify that existence. Even when a person will logically make a decision to choose martyrdom for an ideal or a value, in his mind, he is not nullifying his existence. On the contrary, he sees himself as identifying with an ideal that is greater than himself and elevating himself through sacrificing his physical being for that ideal.

The Jewish concept of martyrdom, by contrast, involves sacrificing one’s life without thinking of a reason.⁴ As the Alter Rebbe explains:⁵

Even underdeveloped and unlearned people who do not know the greatness of G-d [sacrifice their lives for Him].... They do not meditate on G-dliness at all and do not sacrifice their lives because of knowledge and meditation on G-dliness at all.... It is just that it is as though it were entirely impossible to deny the one G-d. [There is] no reason or rationale at all.

4. See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 20, p. 75ff.; *Selections from Likkutei Sichos*

5. *Tanya*, ch. 18.

כי הוא חייך היינו מה שהוא ית' ממכ"ע וסוכ"ע שעי"ז מחיה ומהוה כ"ע וכבר נת' לעיל דבחינת ממלא וסובב הוא רק הארה לבד ממנו ית' אבל מהותו ועצמותו ית' אינו בגדר עלמין כלל אפילו להיות סובב וממלא לעלמין. כי לא זה היא עיקר האלקות מה שהעולמות מתהוים ממנו ומקבלים חיותם ממנו ית'. שהרי אתה הוא

To explain: **Behold,** כִּי הִנֵּה

As the Alter Rebbe proceeds to explain, the nature of our commitment to G-d depends on the level of G-dliness to which it relates. The limited love produced by the realization that G-d is “your life” relates to a level of G-dliness that is also limited. The unbounded commitment of *mesirus nefesh*, by contrast, relates to G-d’s Essence, which is also unlimited.

פְּרוּשׁ כִּי הוּא חַיִּיךְ “Because He is your life” implies

הֵינּוּ מַה שֶּׁהוּא יִתְבָּרֵךְ refers to G-d as He “fills the worlds,” *memale kol almin* in the original,

וְסוֹבֵב כָּל עֲלָמִין and “transcends the worlds,” *sovev kol almin* in the original. See sec. 1 where these terms are explained.

שֶׁעַל יְדֵי זֶה מְחִיָּה Through these forms of godly light, He gives life to
וּמְחִיָּה כָּל עֲלָמִין and brings into being all the worlds.

וְכָכָר נִתְבָּאֵר לְעֵיל However, as explained above,

דְּבַחֲיַנַּת מְמַלָּא וְסוֹבֵב הוּא His light that fills the worlds and transcends them
רַק הָאָרָה לְבַד מִמֶּנּוּ יִתְבָּרֵךְ is only a ray from Him.

אֲבָל מַהוּתוֹ וְעֲצָמוּתוֹ His Being and Essence shares no connection to
יִתְבָּרֵךְ אֵינוֹ בְּגֵדֵר the worlds at all,
עֲלָמִין כָּלֵל

אֲפֹלוּ לְהִיּוֹת סוֹבֵב not to fill them, nor even to transcend them, For
וּמְמַלָּא לְעֲלָמִין. by saying that He transcends the worlds, we imply that
He shares a certain connection with them.

כִּי לֹא זֶה הִיא עֲקָר for this – that the worlds come into existence and
הָאֱלֻקוֹת מַה שֶּׁהוּא עוֹלָמוֹת derive their vitality from Him – is not the funda-
מִתְהוּיִם מִמֶּנּוּ וּמִקְבָּלִים mental dimension of G-dliness.
חַיּוּתָם מִמֶּנּוּ יִתְבָּרֵךְ.

עד שלא נברא העולם ולאחר שנברא בשוה ממש. וגם אילו לא היה בורא העולמות היה הכל שוה לפניו ית' אלא מה שמחיה ומהוה העולמות זהו רק הארה ממנו ית' וכמ"ש במ"א דלכך נק' הבריאה יש מאין. שבחי' התהוות היש הוא רק ע"י הארה

To explain by analogy: In human terms, there are dimensions of an individual's personality that he can share with others and then deeper, more personal aspects that he feels are private and he cannot share. However, even the personal and private dimensions of one individual are not totally beyond sharing with others, for they exist in the same realm and share a fundamental commonality. G-d, the Creator, by contrast, is entirely above the realm of the created beings. The fact that He created the worlds tells us nothing about Who He is for Himself, as it were.

שְׁהָרִי אֶתָּה הוּא עַד
שְׁלֹא נִבְרָא הָעוֹלָם
וְלֵאחֶר שְׁנִבְרָא For "You were the same before the world was created... and after the world was created,"⁶ This quote underscores that, with regard to G-d as He exists for Himself, as it were, the Creation has no effect on Him, for the Creation does not bring about any change within Him.

בְּשׁוּה מְמַשׁ. in absolute equality.

וְגַם אִלּוּ לֹא הָיָה
בוֹרֵא הָעוֹלָמוֹת Even if He were not to have created the worlds, הָיָה הַכֹּל שְׁוֶה לְפָנָיו יִתְבָּרֵךְ everything would be the same before Him. I.e., the Creation does not change anything. Even if He had not created the worlds, He would not be lacking anything.

אֲלֵא מָה שְׁמַחֲיָה וּמְהִיָּה
הָעוֹלָמוֹת זֶהוּ רַק
הָאֲרָה מִמֶּנּוּ יִתְבָּרֵךְ Instead, the source that vitalizes and brings the worlds into being is merely a ray from Him,

וּכְמוֹ שֶׁפָּתוּב בְּמִקּוֹם אַחֵר as stated in another text.⁷

דְּלִכְךָ נִקְרָאת הַבְּרִיָּאָה
יֵשׁ מֵאַיִן. Therefore, the Creation is described as *yesh mei'ayin*, something from nothing. The term "nothing" here refers to an entity that has no substance. The

6. The daily liturgy.

7. See *Torah Or, Shmos*, p. 61d, et al.

לבד שנק' אין לגבי מהותו ועצמותו יתברך^{xix} וכמ"ש ואתה מחיה את כלם. פירוש ואתה היינו כ"ב אותיות דבר ה' מא' ועד תי"ו וה' מוצאות שעל ידי האותיות מחיה

ray of G-dliness from which the world comes into being is of no substance when compared to His Essence.

שְׁבַחֲנִית הַתְהוּוֹת הַיֵּשׁ הוּא For the *yesh* is brought into being from a mere ray,
רק על ידי הארה לְבָד

שְׁנִקְרָאת אֵין לְגַבִּי מַהוּתוֹ which is called *ayin*, “nothing,” in relation to His Being and Essence,^{xix}
וְעֶצְמוּתוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ

Describing the Creation as *yesh mei'ayin*, “something from nothing,” is somewhat paradoxical. For G-d, the source of Creation, is True Being. How then can we say that the Creation comes from *ayin*, “nothing”? And how can we describe our limited existence as *yesh*, “something,” when compared to Him?

The explanation is that the expression “something from nothing” is not referring to G-d, the ultimate source of Creation, but to the level of *Malchus*, His Kingship, which is the immediate source of Creation. When seen in relation to G-d's Essence, *Malchus* is only a ray.

To explain: Kingship refers to the power of a person to command authority over others. That quality does not represent the person himself, i.e., the way he thinks or feels, but only the way he relates vis-à-vis others. Thus it can be considered “a ray,” i.e., something without substance. Similarly, since the *Sefirah* of *Malchus* does not reflect G-d as He is for Himself, it is considered a ray and without substance. Hence, it is described as “nothing.” Our existence, which we feel as significant and substantial, a “something,” comes into being from that nothingness.

וְכִמּוֹ שְׁפָתוֹיב וְאַתָּה as it is said,⁸ “And You give life to them all.”
מְחִיָּה אֶת כָּלָם.

פְּרוֹשׁ וְאַתָּה הֵינּוּ “And You,” refers to the 22 letters of God's speech
כ"ב אוֹתִיּוֹת דְּבַר ה' from א to ת
מֵא' וְעַד תִּי"ו

וְה' מוֹצְאוֹת And the ה, numerically equivalent to five. represents
the five organs of speech, i.e., the lips, the tongue, the teeth, etc.

8. *Nechemiah* 9:6; included in the daily liturgy.

את כולם. והאותיות הם רק הארה לבד כמו האותיות באדם הן רק לבושי הנפש כו'. וא"כ מהותו ועצמותו ית' הוא למעלה גם מבחי' ומדרגה זו הנזכר כי הוא חייך כי זהו רק היותו ממלא וסובב ומזה נמשך לאהבה כי הוא חייך. וכמ"ש נפשי אויתך

שְׁעַל יְדֵי הָאוֹתִיּוֹת Implied is that through the letters, G-d grants
מְחִיָּה אֶת כָּלֶם. vitality to all existence.

וְהָאוֹתִיּוֹת הֵם רַק Now the letters are merely a ray,
הָאֶרֶה לְבַד

כְּמוֹ הָאוֹתִיּוֹת בְּאָדָם הֵן like the capacity of a person to express his thought
רַק לְבוּשֵׁי הַנֶּפֶשׁ כו'. and speech in letters, which are merely garments
for the soul. Just as garments are external entities and
not parts of a person's body, letters are not a person's
thoughts and feelings, his conscious self, but external
entities through which – like garments – he presents
his self to others. Thus, they are analogous to the con-
cept of *Malchus* described above. Indeed, *Malchus* is
described as the source of G-d's speech.

וְאִם כֵּן מֵהוּתוֹ וְעֶצְמוּתוֹ If so, His Being and Essence is above the level
יִתְבָּרֵךְ הוּא לְמַעַלָּה referred to by the phrase, "because He is your
גַּם מִבְּחִינָה וּמִדְּרָגָה זוֹ life."
הַנִּזְכָּר כִּי הוּא חַיִּיד

כִּי זֶהוּ רַק הֵיְוֹתוֹ For that level only relates to the dimensions of
מִמְלָא וְסוֹבֵב G-dliness that fill the worlds and transcend the
worlds,

וּמִזֶּה נִמְשָׁךְ לְאַהֲבָה the dimension of G-dliness that motivates man to
כִּי הוּא חַיִּיד. love G-d "because He is your life,"

וְכֵמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב נִפְשִׁי אֲוִיתִיךָ as it is written,⁹ "My soul longs for You," as
כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב בְּתַנְיָא. explained in *Tanya*.^{10, xx} The Alter Rebbe¹¹ interprets
that verse as meaning: Since You, G-d, are the true

9. *Yeshayahu* 26:9.

10. *Tanya*, ch. 44.

11. Based on the *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 68a.

כמ"ש בתניא.^{xx} אבל המס"נ להשליך חייו מנגד נמשך שלא ליפרד ממהותו ועצמותו ית' שהוא למעלה מחיי החיים וקמיה כלא ממש חשיבי ואתה הוא קודם שנברא כו'. והנה כ"ז הוא שיש בכח כל א' מישראל^{xxi} ולכן היה אז מסירת נפש בפו"מ אצל כל ישראל שלא ליפרד מאחדותו יתברך. וזהו ואת מאמר מרדכי כי מרדכי היה מקור

vitality of my soul, I yearn for You, as one yearns for his very life.

אֲבָל הַמְסִירַת נֶפֶשׁ
לְהַשְׁלִיךְ חַיָּיו מִנְּגֵד Self-sacrifice, by contrast, the casting away of one's life,

נִמְשָׁךְ שֶׁלֹא לִפְרֹד מִמְהוּתוֹ
וְעֲצָמוּתוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ comes from the unwillingness to separate from His Being and Essence,

שֶׁהוּא לְמַעַלָּה מִחַיֵּי הַחַיִּים
a level above His being the Life of life, for, on that level,

וְקַמְיָה כָּלָא מִמֶּשׁ חֲשִׁיבִי
"everything, i.e., all living entities in both the physical and spiritual worlds, is of no importance before Him"¹²

וְאַתָּה הוּא קִדְמָא שֶׁנִּבְרָא כו'.
and "You were the same before the world was created..." Just as from the standpoint of G-d's Essence all existence is of no importance, so too, a person who identifies with His Essence, holds nothing – neither material or spiritual – as important except for His bond with Him. He is willing to sacrifice everything, including his life, for the sake of that bond.

וְהֵנָּה כָּל זֶה הוּא שְׂיִישׁ
בְּכַח כָּל אֶחָד מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל The potential for such a commitment exists within the power of every Jew.^{xxi}

וְלִכֵּן הָיָה אִזְ מְסִירַת
נֶפֶשׁ בְּפַעַל מִמֶּשׁ
אֲצֵל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל Therefore, at the time of the Purim miracle, the entire Jewish people expressed *mesirus nefesh*. They were willing to sacrifice their lives,

שֶׁלֹא לִפְרֹד מֵאַחַדוּתוֹ
יִתְבָּרֵךְ. for no Jew desires to separate himself from G-d's oneness.

12. *Zohar*, Vol. I, p. 11b.

הבטול איש יהודי כנ"ל. וזהו וקבל היהודים את אשר החלו לעשות. שבמתן תורה שהקדימו נעשה לנשמע ועל כל דבור פרוחה נשמתם שהוא בחי' בטול ומס"נ שלכך

וְזֶהוּ וְאֵת מֵאֲמַר מֶרְדֵּכַי **On this basis, we can understand the verse:¹³ "Esther would carry out Mordechai's word,"**

כִּי מֶרְדֵּכַי הָיָה מְקוֹר הַבְּטוּל i.e., **Mordechai inspired the self-sacrifice she demonstrated because he was the source of *bittul*.**

אִישׁ יְהוּדִי כַּנ"ל. **He was *ish Yehudi*, "the officer of the Jews," the one who motivated them to *bittul*.**

As explained in the *maamar* entitled *VeAtah Tetzaveh*,¹⁴ the aspect of the soul that motivates *bittul* and *mesirus nefesh* is the level referred to as *yechidah*, the core of the soul that is bound up and unified with G-d's core, as it were. Mordechai represented the *yechidah* of the entire Jewish people. As such, he was able to inspire these qualities in all the individuals with whom he came in contact.

וְזֶהוּ **This is the intent of the verse,**

With the explanation to follow, the Alter Rebbe is resolving one of the questions raised in sec. 1 of the *maamar*.

וְקָבַל הַיְּהוּדִים אֵת **"And the Jews accepted what they had begun to perform."**
אֲשֶׁר הֵחֵלוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת.

שֶׁבְּמִתֵּן תּוֹרָה שֶׁהִקְדִּימוּ **At the time of the Giving of the Torah, they declared, "We will do" before "We will listen"**
נִעֲשֶׂה לְנִשְׁמָע

וְעַל כָּל דְּבוּר **and "their souls expired at every Divine utterance,"**
פְּרוּחָה נִשְׁמָתָם

שֶׁהוּא בְּחִינַת בְּטוּל **which reflected the consummate expression of *bittul***
וּמְסִירַת נֶפֶשׁ **and *mesirus nefesh*.**

שֶׁלְכָךְ **For this reason, i.e., because of the *bittul* they expressed,**

13. *Esther* 2:20.

14. *Sefer HaMaamarim Melukat*, Vol. 6, p. 129ff.

זכו למ"ת התגלות אלקות. וכך היה בימי אחשוורוש הבטול הזה ביתר שאת כי במ"ת היה בטול זה מחמת כח האתעדל"ע שכפה עליהם הר כו'. וכמים הפנים כו'. אבל בימי אחשוורוש היה הבטול מצד עצמם בחינת אתעדל"ת תחלה. ולכן גם ההמשכה שנמשך עי"ז הוא ממקום עליון יותר עד שהגילוי שבמ"ת נק' רק החלו התחלה לגבי

זכו למתן תורה they merited the Giving of the Torah and the revelation of G-dliness.

וכך היה בימי אחשוורוש הבטול הזה ביתר שאת Similarly, at the time of Achashverosh, they demonstrated this *bittul* – and indeed – even more powerfully so.

פי במתן תורה היה בטול זה מחמת כח האתעדל"ע דלעלא For at the time of the Giving of the Torah, the *bittul* came as a result of the power of the arousal from Above, G-d's "holding the mountain above them,"

וכמים הפנים כו'. and "as water reflects a face..." See sec. 2 of the *maamar* where these concepts are explained.

אבל בימי אחשוורוש היה הבטול מצד עצמם In the time of Achashverosh, by contrast, the *bittul* came from their own initiative;

בחינת אתעדל"ת דלתתא תחלה. there was an arousal from below first.

ולכן גם ההמשכה שנמשך על ידי זה הוא ממקום עליון יותר Therefore, the Divine influence elicited as a result had its roots in a loftier source. As explained in the notes of the *Tzemach Tzedek* to this *maamar* and at length in other sources,¹⁵ when an arousal from below evokes an arousal from Above, the arousal from Above stems from a higher level of G-dliness than is aroused when the arousal from Above comes on its own initiative.

עד שהגילוי שבמתן תורה נקרא רק החלו For this reason, the revelation at the Giving of the Torah is described as merely "the beginning." This explanation also resolves one of the issues raised in sec. 1 of the *maamar*.

15. See the *maamar* entitled *Sos Tasis* (*Likkutei Torah, Vayikra, p. 20a*).

אור ההמשכה שנמשך להם בפורים שנק' וקבל שזהו הגמר וזהו וקבל היהודים כו'.^{xxii}

התחלה לגבי אור for it can be considered merely an initial phase in
המשכה שנמשך comparison with the light drawn down for the
להם בפורים שנקרא Jews on Purim which is referred to as “the accep-
וקבל שזהו הגמר tance of the Torah,” i.e., the consummation.

וזהו וקבל היהודים כו'. This is the intent of the verse cited initially: “And
the Jews accepted.”^{xxii}

Until the reaffirmation of their commitment to the Torah on their own initiative, the Jews' acceptance of the Torah was not complete. Similarly, the G-dliness drawn down to the world as a result of their acceptance reflected a more consummate and more lasting revelation.

SUMMARY

The previous section emphasized the importance of the *bittul* and self-sacrifice (*mesirus nefesh*) [shown by the Jewish people] at the time of Purim. This section explains that such *bittul* is an inherent element of a Jew's being, stemming from the reservoir of hidden love which transcends intellect possessed by every Jew.

There is a level of love for G-d motivated by reason, as it is written: “love G-d your L-rd, because He is your life.” But this rationale will not motivate sacrificing one's life. Instead, a Jew's potential for self-sacrifice stems from his inherent, natural love for G-d that transcends reason. That love originates in – and relates to – a level of G-dliness that is likewise unbounded, i.e., it does not relate to G-d as He is the source of Creation, but to His Essence, as He exists above being a source for Creation.

The potential for such a commitment exists within the power of every Jew, for no Jew desires to separate himself from G-d's oneness. Mordechai was able to inspire this commitment among the people at large.

On this basis, we can understand how the self-sacrifice of the Jewish people at the time of Purim consummated the Giving of the Torah. At the time of the Giving of the Torah, they declared, “We will do” before “We will listen” and “their souls expired at every Divine utterance,” which reflected the consummate expression of *bittul* and *mesirus nefesh*. Nevertheless, that *bittul* was inspired from Above. During the time of Achashverosh, by contrast, they aroused the *bittul* on their own initiative. Therefore, it evoked a higher level of G-dliness.

