וכל אשר יקרא לו האדם נפש חיה הוא שמו

ס פ ר

בעל שם טוב

על התורה

חלק ראשון · מפרשת בראשית עד פרשת בשלח

בו נקבצו דברי קדשו של

הבעל שם טוב

זי"ע ועכי"א

בספר זה נקבצו דברי קדשו של הרב הקדוש והטהור והנורא הבעל שם טוב זי"ע, אשר הובאו בספרי קודש של תלמידו הרב הגאון החסיד מו"ה יעקב יוסף הכהן ז"ל — ה"ה ס' תולדות יעקב יוסף וס' בן פורת יוסף וס' צפנת פענח וס' כתונת פסים — וגם מס' דגל מחנה אפרים, ומס' ליקוטי אמרים וס' אור תורה ואור האמת שנדפסו ע"ש תלמידו הרב המגיד הגדול ממעזריטש זי"ע, ומס' ליקוטים יקרים וס' צוואת הריב"ש, וגם מכל ספרי הצדיקים שיצאו לאור מאז ועד ימינו אלה, ונעתק הכל על סדר פרשיות התורה והמועדים בסדר טוב ויפה, כאשר עיניכם תחזינה מישרים.

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מוהר"ר שמעון מנחם מענדיל ז"ל שו"ב מק"ק גאוואַרטשאוו

Baal Shem Tov

on the Torah

Volume I · *Bereishis to Beshalach*

The holy teachings of Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov, gathered from the sefarim of his disciples and of later tzaddikim, arranged by parsha and festival, newly translated and elucidated.

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זְכֹר יְמוֹת עוֹלָם, בִּינוּ שְׁנוֹת דֹּר וָדֹר;
שְׁאַל אָבִיךָ וְיַגֶּדְךָ, זְקֵנֶיךָ וְיֹאמְרוּ לָךְ
(דברים לב, ז)

לעילוי נשמת

סבינו היקרים, רבותינו ומאור עינינו

אריה ליב בן משה הלוי ז"ל

ראובן בן הערשל הלוי ז"ל

מרדכי בן יצחק ז"ל

משה אהרן ושירה רטנר ומשפחתם



Parashas Bereishis

Teaching 1

Mashiach Will Expound Every Letter Combination of the Torah, Then the Torah as One Word

בְּרֵאשִׁית

"In the beginning" (*Bereishis* 1:1)

קִבַּלְתִּי מֵהָרַב הַמּוֹכִיחַ שֶׁאָמַר בְּשֵׁם הַבַּעַל שֵׁם טוֹב נ"ע, I received from the Rav, the Mochiach, who said in the name of the Baal Shem Tov, may his soul rest in Eden, A *mochiach* is a preacher whose role is to rebuke and arouse the community. The author of *Teshuos Chen* heard the teaching from this preacher, who reported it in the Baal Shem Tov's name.

שֶׁכְּשֶׁיָּבוֹא מָשִׁיחַ בִּמְהֵרָה בְיָמֵינוּ, יְדָרוֹשׁ כָּל הַתּוֹרָה מֵרֵישָׁא לְסֵיפָא עַל כָּל הַצֵּירוּפִים שֶׁבְּכָל תֵּיבָה וְתֵיבָה, that when Mashiach comes, speedily in our days, he will expound the entire Torah from beginning to end, according to all the letter combinations in each and every word. *Tzirufim* are the different orders into which a word's letters can be rearranged. Each new order can yield a new reading. For example, the six letters of בראשית (*beis*, *reish*, *alef*, *shin*, *yud*, and *tav*) also spell ירא שבת, "fearing Shabbos." Since all six letters are different, they can stand in 6 × 5 × 4 × 3 × 2 × 1 = 720 orders.

וְאַחַר כָּךְ יַעֲשֶׂה מִכָּל הַתּוֹרָה תֵּיבָה אַחַת[1] Afterward he will make the entire Torah into a single word, Up to this point, the rearranging stays inside each word's own boundaries. Now Mashiach will erase those boundaries and treat all the Torah's letters, from the *beis* of בראשית to its final letter, as the letters of one word.

וְיַעֲלוּ צֵירוּפִים לְאֵין מִסְפָּר וְיִדְרוֹשׁ עַל כָּל הַצֵּירוּפִים: and the combinations will rise beyond number, and he will expound all the combinations. The same counting shows why the number becomes endless. Six letters already give 720 orders. The Torah contains about 304,805 letters, so the number of possible orders far exceeds anything a person can count. The teaching does not say what these expositions will contain. It says only that Mashiach will expound every one of them.

(*Teshuos Chen*, *parshas Tazria*)

THE MAIN IDEA

The Torah holds more meaning than anyone can count. When Mashiach comes, he will draw out meaning from every possible arrangement of its letters, first within each word and then across the whole Torah read as one word.

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1 The compiler cites sources teaching that the whole Torah is one Divine Name. The *Zohar*, at the opening of *parshas Shemini*, says that the Torah is entirely one holy Name of the Holy One. The introduction to *Bris Menuchah* (fol. 3c) says that the whole Torah is one Name and that all its words are Names that bring about effects. The *Zohar*, *parshas Yisro* (fol. 90b), says that the whole Torah is one Name, the actual holy Name of the Holy One, and that whoever merits the Torah merits the holy Name. The same idea appears in the *Zohar*, *parshas Acharei* (fol. 73a), *parshas Vaeschanan* (fol. 268b), and *parshas Mishpatim* (the start of fol. 124a). See also below, *parshas Vezos Haberachah*, teachings 4 and 5.

Teaching 2

Why Hashem Created the World When He Did, and How Foreknowledge Leaves Room for Choice

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים וְגוֹ'

"In the beginning G-d created..." (*Bereishis* 1:1)

לְתָרֵץ הַקּוּשְׁיָא שֶׁהִקְשׁוּ כָּל הָרִאשׁוֹנִים ז"ל לָמָּה לֹא בָּרָא הקב"ה אֶת הָעוֹלָם קוֹדֶם זְמַן הַזֶּה, **[This comes] to answer the question that all the early authorities, of blessed memory, asked: Why did the Holy One, blessed is He, not create the world before this time?** The early authorities are the medieval Torah sages, among them the Jewish philosophers who debated how an eternal Creator could bring a world into being at a particular moment.

דְּהֲרֵי פְּעוּלָה הוּא תָּמִיד טוֹבָה מֵהֶעְדֵּר, After all, action is always better than absence. The Hebrew העדר means nonexistence, the absence of anything. If a world is better than no world, a good Creator would seem to have a reason to create it as early as possible.

וְלָמָּה נִשְׁתַּנְּתָה רְצוֹנוֹ יִת"שׁ מִלֹּא רוֹצֶה לִרְוֹצֶה, בְּעֵת שֶׁבָּרָא, וְלֹא מִקֹּדֶם לָזֶה, And why did His will, may His name be blessed, change from not wanting to wanting at the time He created, and not before that? הֲרֵי הוּא יִת"שׁ אֵינוֹ בַּעַל שִׁינּוּיִים, ע"ד דִּכְתִיב (מַלְאָכִי ג':ו', פָּסוּק ו') אֲנִי ה' לֹא שָׁנִיתִי: וְהַתֵּירוּץ עַל זֶה, דְּהוּא יִת"שׁ אֵינוֹ דּוֹמֶה לְפוֹעֵל בָּשָׂר וָדָם, כִּי פּוֹעֵל בָּשָׂר וָדָם, הַחָכְמָה שֶׁיֵּשׁ לוֹ עַתָּה לֹא הָיָה לוֹ מִקֹּדֶם, וְחָכְמָתוֹ הוּא קִנְיָנִית, וְגַם הוּא בַּעַל חֶסְרוֹן, Yet He, may His name be blessed, does not undergo changes, as it says: "I am Hashem, I have not changed" (*Malachi* 3:6). The answer to this is that He, may His name be blessed, is not like a human maker. For a human maker did not have before the wisdom he has now. His wisdom is acquired, and he also has a lack. The teaching names two reasons a human acts at one time rather than another. He gains new knowledge, and he has a need that pushes him to act.

ע"ד מָשָׁל, שֶׁמִּפְּנֵי שֶׁהוּא צָרִיךְ מָקוֹם לָדוּר בּוֹ, עַל כֵּן כְּשֶׁקָּנָה חָכְמָה לִבְנוֹת לוֹ בַּיִת אָז הוּא בּוֹנֶה לְעַצְמוֹ בַּיִת, For example, because he needs a place to live, when he acquires the skill to build himself a house, he then builds himself a house. The builder's need supplies the lack, and his newly learned skill supplies the acquired wisdom. The house goes up only once both are in place, so the timing reflects a change in the man.

אֲבָל הוּא יִת"שׁ חָכְמָתוֹ עַצְמִיִּת וְלֹא קִנְיָנִית, וְגַם אֵינוֹ בַּעַל חִסָּרוֹן. But His wisdom, may His name be blessed, belongs to His essence and is not acquired, and He also has no lack. Neither cause that sets the timing of a human act applies to Hashem. So the timing of creation cannot come from new knowledge or new need.

וְלָכֵן זֶה הָרָצוֹן שֶׁעָלָה בִּרְצוֹנוֹ לִבְרוֹא אֶת הָעוֹלָם, לֹא שֶׁנִּתְחַדֵּשׁ לוֹ זֶה הָרָצוֹן בְּעֵת בְּרִיאַת הָעוֹלָם, Therefore this will to create the world, which arose in His will, did not first come to Him at the time the world was created. אֶלָּא שֶׁכְּמוֹ שֶׁהוּא יִת"שׁ קַדְמוֹן כֵּן רְצוֹנוֹ קַדְמוֹן, Rather, just as He, may His name be blessed, is eternal, so His will is eternal. וּמִקַּדְמַת דְּנָא הָיָה מִיָּד רְצוֹנוֹ לִבְרֹאוֹת אֶת הָעוֹלָם בָּעֵת הַזֶּה שֶׁבָּרָא אוֹתוֹ וְלֹא קוֹדֶם לָכֵן, From of old, His will was from the outset to create the world at this time when He created it, and not before. The answer separates the will from its content. The will itself never began, but what it willed was a world starting at one specific time.

וְלָכֵן בְּעֵת שֶׁנִּבְרָא הָעוֹלָם נִבְרָא מַמָּשׁ בְּעִתּוֹ וּבִזְמַנּוֹ, כְּמוֹ שֶׁהָיָה בִּרְצוֹנוֹ הַקָּדוּם לִבְרוֹא אוֹתוֹ בָּעֵת הַזֶּה דַּוְקָא, So when the world came into being, it came into being exactly in its proper time, just as His eternal will was to create it at this time specifically. וְאִם כֵּן שַׁפִּיר לֹא הָיָה לוֹ שׁוּם שִׁינּוּי רָצוֹן כְּלָל: If so, it is quite right that He underwent no change of will at all. וְהָרְאָיָה לָזֶה, דַּהֲרֵי הָעוֹלָם שֶׁיִּהְיֶה לֶעָתִיד לָבֹא, עוֹלָם שֶׁכּוּלּוֹ שַׁבָּת, צַדִּיקִים יוֹשְׁבִים וְעַטְרוֹתֵיהֶם בְּרָאשֵׁיהֶם (בְּרָכוֹת די"ז ע"א), וְנִשְׂגָּב ה' לְבַדּוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא, The proof of this: the world that will exist in the future is "a world that is entirely Shabbos," [where] "the righteous sit with their crowns on their heads" (*Berachos* 17a), and "Hashem alone will be exalted on that day." The teaching strings together three familiar descriptions of the future world. The Sages call it a world that is entirely Shabbos. The Gemara in *Berachos* pictures the righteous enjoying the radiance of the Divine Presence. The last phrase comes from the prophet Yeshayahu's vision of the end of days.

וַודַּאי מַעֲלָתוֹ יוֹתֵר גְּדוֹלָה מִן מַעֲלַת הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהוּא עַתָּה, וּפְעוּלָה טוֹבָה כָּזוֹ בְּוַודַּאי גַּם כֵּן יוֹתֵר טוֹבָה מִן הַהֶעְדֵּר, וְלָמָּה לֹא הִקְדִּימוֹ הקב"ה Its level is surely greater than the level of the present world. And such a good action is surely also better than its absence. So why did the Holy One, blessed is He, not bring it earlier? The proof applies the original question to the future world. That world does not exist yet, though its existence

would be better than its absence. Its delay shows that "better than nothing" does not require Hashem to act at once.

אֶלָּא שֶׁכָּל זֶה צָרִיךְ לָבוֹא בְּעִתּוֹ וּבִזְמַנּוֹ דַּוְוקָא, כְּמוֹ שֶׁדֶּרֶךְ הַשַּׁבָּת לָבֹא דַּוְוקָא אַחַר שֵׁשֶׁת יְמֵי הַחוֹל, Rather, all this must come specifically in its proper time, just as Shabbos comes only after the six weekdays. The image fits the phrase "a world that is entirely Shabbos." Shabbos is better than a weekday, yet it can only come at its set point after the six days.

כֵּן הוּא בְּעִנְיַן בְּרִיאַת הָעוֹלָם שֶׁאַף עַל פִּי שֶׁיָּדַע השי"ת שֶׁפְּעוּלָה טוֹבָה מֵהֶעְדֵּר, אַף עַל פִּי כֵן הִתְנַגֵּד רְצוֹנוֹ ית"ש לִידִיעָתוֹ, So it is with the creation of the world. Although Hashem, may He be blessed, knew that action is better than absence, His will, may His name be blessed, nevertheless stood against His knowledge. "Knowledge" (ידיעה) is what Hashem knows to be the case, here that creating is better. "Will" (רצון) is what He wants. The two need not point the same way.

כִּי מִקַּדְמַת דְּנָא, כְּמוֹ שֶׁהָיָה יְדִיעָתוֹ שֶׁהַפְּעוּלָה טוֹבָה, כָּךְ הָיָה מִיָּד רְצוֹנוֹ שֶׁלֹּא לַעֲשׂוֹת הַפְּעוּלָה מִיָּד, עַד שֶׁיָּבֹא הָעֵת, For from of old, just as He knew that the action is good, so from the outset His will was not to do the action at once, until the time would come. **וְלָכֵן עָזַב אֶת הַיְדִיעָה וְנִמְשַׁךְ אַחַר הָרָצוֹן, וְקוֹדֶם הַבְּרִיאָה הָיָה דֶּרֶךְ מָשָׁל עוֹלָם שֶׁכּוּלּוֹ שַׁבָּת Therefore He set aside the knowledge and followed the will. Before creation it was, so to speak, a world that is entirely Shabbos.** The last sentence is compressed. It seems to compare the state before creation to Shabbos, a time of rest when Hashem had not yet acted.

וְזֶהוּ שֶׁאָמַר הַכָּתוּב (קֹהֶלֶת ג':י"א) אֶת הַכֹּל עָשָׂה יָפֶה בְּעִתּוֹ, גַּם אֶת הָעוֹלָם, וְזֶהוּ סוֹד עָמוֹק וְהַמַּשְׂכִּיל יָבִין: This is what the verse says: "He made everything beautiful in its time, also the world" (*Koheles* 3:11). This is a deep secret, and the wise will understand. In the verse, the words גם את העולם begin a new clause: "He also set eternity (*olam*) in their hearts." The teaching cuts them off and attaches them to the first clause. Read this way, the verse says that Hashem made the world itself beautiful in its proper time.

וְזֶהוּ עֶצְמוֹ פֵּירוּשׁ עִנְיַן הַיְדִיעָה וְהַבְּחִירָה הַחָפְשִׁית שֶׁנִּשְׁאֲרָה לָאָדָם, שֶׁלֹּא יוּקְשֶׁה אֵיךְ שַׁיָּךְ שָׂכָר לַצַּדִּיק וְעוֹנֶשׁ לָרָשָׁע, This very same idea explains the matter of [Divine] knowledge and the free choice that remains to man, so that one should not find it difficult how reward for the righteous and punishment for the wicked make sense. The same split between will and knowledge that answered the question about creation now answers the classic problem of foreknowledge and free choice.

הֲלֹא יָדַע אֵל וְיֵשׁ דֵּעָה בְּעֶלְיוֹן, וְצָפָה וְהִבִּיט עַד סוֹף כָּל הַדּוֹרוֹת, וְיָדַע מֵרֹאשׁ שֶׁזֶּה יִהְיֶה צַדִּיק, For "does G-d not know, and is there not knowledge in the Most High"? He foresees and looks to the end of all generations, and He knows in advance that this one will be righteous. The first phrase echoes a verse in *Tehillim*. The second echoes the *Rosh Hashana* prayers, which describe Hashem looking ahead to the end of all generations.

וְאִם כֵּן מוּכְרָח הוּא לִהְיוֹת צַדִּיק, וְלֹא יִתָּכֵן לוֹ שָׂכָר, וְגַם יָדַע שֶׁזֶּה יִהְיֶה רָשָׁע, וְלֹא יִתָּכֵן לְעוֹנֶשׁ, כֵּיוָן שֶׁלֹּא הָיָה יָכוֹל לְשַׁנּוֹת יְדִיעָתוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ. If so, he is compelled to be righteous, and reward makes no sense for him. He also knows that this one will be wicked, and punishment makes no sense, since he could not change His knowledge, blessed is His name. Reward and punishment assume that a person could have acted differently. If Hashem's knowledge fixes the outcome in advance, that assumption seems to fail.

אֲבָל זֶה אֵינוֹ כִּי הַגַּם שֶׁיֵּשׁ לוֹ ית"ש יְדִיעָה, מִכָּל מָקוֹם הָרָצוֹן שֶׁלּוֹ הוּא שֶׁיֵּיטִיבוּ מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם, כִּי עַל כֵּן נָתַן לָנוּ כָּל הַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְווֹת לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹנוֹ ית"ש, But this is not so. Although He, may His name be blessed, has knowledge, His will is nevertheless that people improve their deeds. That is why He gave us the whole Torah and the mitzvos: to do His will, may His name be blessed. The giving of the Torah shows what Hashem wants. The commandments express His will, not merely a forecast of what people will do.

וְאִם כֵּן חֲרִי הָרָצוֹן שֶׁלּוֹ הוּא מִתְנַגֵּד לְהַיְדִיעָה שֶׁמִּתְחִלָּה הַמַּחֲשָׁבָה, If so, His will stands against the knowledge that [was there] from the start of [His] thought. The wording is compressed. It seems to mean the foreknowledge Hashem had from the very beginning. As at creation, His will and His knowledge point in different directions.

וּלְכֵן יָכוֹל הָאָדָם לִהְיוֹת נִמְשָׁךְ אַחַר הָרָצוֹן שֶׁל השי"ת וְלֹא אַחַר הַיְדִיעָה, שֶׁהָרָצוֹן יַכְרִיחַ אֶת הַיְדִיעָה Therefore a[2]

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[2] The compiler cites *Derash Tov* (on the topic of will, essay 2), which copies a passage from *Divrei Chaim*. That passage quotes a manuscript in the name of the Baal Shem Tov. It says that the Creator withdrew His light and left an impression (*reshimu*), only a *yud*, a single point, which stands for ten and is called the crown of *Malchus*. From these points came bounded creatures. This seems to go against His will, since He wills that His kingship and glory spread out, and the withdrawal served to hide. But His will is that there be choice and will. One who truly understands will see that the will for choice and good deeds lies hidden within the withdrawal itself. The same holds in this world: the good is hidden, and people are tempted to follow the pull of the physical, "the flaming, turning sword." At first glance that seems to be the purpose of creation. On closer understanding, the purpose is that a person with choice will turn evil into good by

person can follow the will of Hashem, may He be blessed, and not the knowledge, for the will prevails over the knowledge. This parallels the account of creation. There, Hashem set aside His knowledge and followed His will. Here, a person can do the same and attach himself to Hashem's will rather than to what Hashem foreknows.

כֵּיוָן שֶׁאֵין חֵפֶץ להשי"ת בִּידִיעָה זוֹ וּבְמַעֲשֶׂה זֶה, וְהַיְדִיעָה הָיְתָה שֶׁלֹּא לְרָצוֹן, For Hashem, may He be blessed, has no desire for this knowledge or for this deed, and the knowledge was against [His] will. "This knowledge" refers to Hashem's foreknowledge of a bad deed. He knows it, but He does not want it.

וְאִם יִרְצֶה הָאָדָם יֵיטִיב מַעֲשָׂיו כְּמוֹ שֶׁהוּא הָרָצוֹן שֶׁל הש"י, וְלֹא יוֹרִיד וישַׁלְשֵׁל לְעַצְמוֹ אֶת הַיְדִיעָה, If a person wishes, he will improve his deeds as Hashem, may He be blessed, wills, and he will not draw the knowledge down upon himself. The phrase pictures foreknowledge of evil as something hanging above a person. He brings it down into his own life only if he sins. If he chooses good, it never becomes his.

כִּי הַיְדִיעָה שֶׁל הָרַע נִבְרְאָה לְנִסָּיוֹן הַצַּדִּיקִים, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב (בְּפ' רְאֵה) כִּי מְנַסֶּה ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֶתְכֶם, For the knowledge of evil was created as a test for the righteous, as it says (*parshas Re'eh*): "For Hashem your G-d is testing you." In its context, the verse explains why Hashem lets a false prophet's sign come true. He wants to see whether the people will stay loyal. The teaching widens the idea: the foreknown evil exists so that the righteous can withstand it.

כִּי עוֹלָם הַזֶּה הוּא עוֹלַם הַנִּסָּיוֹן, שֶׁנִּשְׁלְחָה הַנְּשָׁמָה לְהִיוֹתָהּ בְּנִסָּיוֹן בָּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, For this world is a world of testing. The soul was sent to be tested in this world. **שֶׁאִם יַעֲשֶׂה הַחֵטְא יַטֶּה אַחֲרֵי הַיְדִיעָה, וְאִם לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה הַחֵטְא הֵרִי יַטֶּה אַחֲרֵי הָרָצוֹן וְהַצִּיווּי, הַמִּתְנַגֵּד לְהַיְדִיעָה, If he commits the sin, he leans toward the knowledge. If he does not commit the sin, he leans toward the will and the commandment, which stand against the knowledge.** **שֶׁעַל זֶה נֶאֱמַר (בְּפ' וַיִּקְרָא) אִשֵּׁה רֵיחַ נִיחוֹחַ לה', שֶׁהוּא נַחַת רוּחַ לְפָנַי שֶׁאָמַרְתִּי וְנַעֲשָׂה רְצוֹנִי, וְהָבֵן זֶה הֵיטֵב: About this it says (*parshas Vayikra*): "A fire-offering, a pleasing aroma to Hashem," meaning, [Hashem says,] "It is a satisfaction before Me that I spoke and My will was done." Understand this well.** The explanation quoted here appears in Rashi on that verse. It reads ניחוח ("pleasing") as related to נחת רוח, "satisfaction." The teaching applies it to the person who passes the test. When he follows the will against the knowledge, Hashem's command is carried out, and that gives Him satisfaction.

(*Kesser Shem Tov*, part 2, fol. 13c)

THE MAIN IDEA

Hashem's will can stand apart from what He knows. He willed from eternity to create the world at its proper time, so creating it involved no change in Him. In the same way, He wills that every person do good even though He knows what will happen, and a person can follow that will freely.

Teaching 3

Why the First of the Ten Sayings Lacks the Words 'And He Said'

בְּשֵׁם הָאֱלֹהִי רבש"ן, בַּגְּמָרָא (מְגִילָה דכ"א ע"ב) בְּעִנְיַן עֲשָׂרָה מַאֲמָרוֹת, In the name of the G-dly rabbi, the Baal Shem [Tov], of blessed memory: The Gemara (*Megillah* 21b) discusses the Ten Sayings. The Ten Sayings are the ten Divine statements through which Hashem created the world. The Gemara raises a difficulty with this count: it counts only nine such sayings introduced by "And G-d said" (ויאמר) in the first chapter of *Bereishis*.

וּמְשַׁנֵּי הַגְּמָרָא בְּרֵאשִׁית נַמִּי מַאֲמָר הָוֵי, The Gemara answers that "In the beginning" (*Bereishis*) is also a saying. The opening verse, "In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth," therefore counts as the first saying. It brings the total to ten, although no "And G-d said" introduces it.

וְהִקְשָׁה לָמָּה לֹא כְּתִיב בַּתּוֹרָה לְשׁוֹן וַיֹּאמֶר, He asked: why does the Torah not use the word "And He said" [for this first saying]? If the first act of creation was a saying like the others, it should carry the same introduction as the other nine.

וְתֵירֵץ כִּי בְּהִירוּת שֶׁל מַאֲמָר הָרִאשׁוֹן אִי אֶפְשָׁר לְקַבְּלוֹ: He answered[3] that no one can receive the brightness of the first saying. The Baal Shem Tov explains the missing word as a deliberate concealment. The light of the

acting only according to the holy Torah. Then the evil submits and turns to good, and the light of the original withdrawal of holiness is revealed. The passage calls this the revelation of *Atik*, from נעתק, "removed": Hashem removed it at the start of creation so that there would be choice. When a person conquers his *yetzer hara*, the good is revealed.

3 For an explanation of this idea, see below, *parshas Behaaloscha*, teaching 2, and note 1 there.

first saying was too intense for any creature to receive openly. So the Torah did not state it outright as a saying, and left it hidden within the word *Bereishis*. The compiler's note points to *parshas Behaaloscha*, teaching 2, and note 1 there, for an explanation.

(*Kisvei Kodesh*, fol. 26a)

THE MAIN IDEA

The Torah does not introduce the first saying of creation with "And G-d said." Its light is too bright for us to receive openly.

Teaching 4

The Name Yisrael: Chochmah, Binah, Daas and the Yesh That Sustains the Worlds

יִשְׂרָאֵל

"Yisrael"

שָׁמַעְתִּי מִן אֲדוֹנִי אָבִי וְקִינִי זללה"ה עַל גְּמָרָא בְּמַסֶּכְתָּ שַׁבָּת (דל"א ע"א) וְהָיָה אֱמוּנַת עִתֶּיךָ וכו' **I heard from my master, my grandfather [the Baal Shem Tov], of blessed memory, on the Gemara in *Masechta Shabbos* (31a) about the verse "And the faith of your times shall be..."** The verse is *Yeshayahu* 33:6. The Gemara reads its six phrases, faith, your times, strength, salvation, wisdom and knowledge, as the six orders of the Mishnah. The verse then closes: "the fear of Hashem is his treasure."

וַאֲפִילּוּ הָכִי יִרְאַת ה' הוּא אוֹצָרוֹ, אִי אִיכָּא יִרְאַת ה' אִין, אִי לָא לָא, **And even so, "the fear of Hashem is his treasure." If there is fear of Hashem, [the learning counts]. If not, it does not.** **וּמֵבִיא הַגְּמָרָא מָשָׁל לְאֶחָד שֶׁאָמַר לַחֲבֵירוֹ הַעֲלֵה לִי כּוֹר חִטִּין,** **The Gemara brings a parable of a man who told his fellow, "Bring up a *kor* of wheat for me."** He means bring it up into the storage loft. A *kor* is a large measure, equal to 180 *kav*.

אָמַר עֵירַבְתָּ בּוֹ קַב חוֹמְטִין אָמַר לָאו, אָמַר אִם כֵּן מוּטָב שֶׁלֹּא הֶעֱלִיתָ, **He asked, "Did you mix a *kav* of *chumtin* into it?" The other answered, "No." He said, "If so, it would have been better had you not brought it up."** *Chumtin* is a substance that people mixed into stored grain to keep it from spoiling. Without it the whole store rots. So one small *kav* protects 180 *kav* of wheat.

וְדִקְדֵּק הוּא זי"ל בָּזֶה, הֲלֹא אֵין הַמָּשָׁל דּוֹמֶה לַנִּמְשָׁל, **He, of blessed memory, examined this closely. Surely the parable does not match its lesson.** **כִּי הַמָּשָׁל הוּא שֶׁהַחוֹמְטִין הֵם הַטָּפֵל וְהַחִטִּים הֵם הָעִיקָּר,** **In the parable, the *chumtin* is secondary and the wheat is the main thing.** **וְהַנִּמְשָׁל הוּא שֶׁהַיִּרְאָה הִיא עִקָּרִית וְהַתּוֹרָה הוּא הַטָּפֵל לַיִּרְאָה,** **But in the lesson, fear is the main thing and the Torah is secondary to the fear.** The mapping is the problem. Torah corresponds to the large store of wheat, and fear corresponds to the small *kav* of *chumtin*. Yet the Gemara treats fear as the treasure itself. The small ingredient in the parable stands for the main thing in the lesson.

וְהִרְבָּה לְהָשִׁיב בְּצַחוּת לְשׁוֹנוֹ, וּפוּמֵיהּ מְמַלֵּל רַבְרְבִין בְּסוֹדוֹת הַנִּסְתָּרוֹת פְּנִימִיִּים, **He answered at length in his pure language, and his mouth spoke great things in hidden, inner secrets.** **וְתוֹכֶן הַדְּבָרִים[4] כִּי כְּשֶׁהקב"ה**

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4 *Heichal HaBerachah* (*parshas Devarim*, fol. 4c) quotes this teaching in the Baal Shem Tov's name, and its version reads "until He created Yisrael." It adds the following points. All of *Atzilus*, at its own level, is part of the Infinite, and at every instant it returns into the Infinite's light. Only the Jewish people hold it back. It must return to the level of what is emanated, so that it can give the Jewish people every good and so that reward and punishment can exist, because neither applies to the simple Nothing. So out of love for the Jewish people, the Holy One contracts Himself into a limited measure of 236 thousand myriads of *parsaos*. In essence all the worlds of *Atzilus*, and the souls of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, are G-dliness itself, "He and His life are one in them," without end or limit. But the *yesh* of the Jewish people holds on and sustains all the worlds. The same author expands on this in *parshas Va'eschanan* (fol. 27c, beginning "Asher tzivcha"), and at great length in his *Nesiv Mitzvosecha*, *Nesiv Emunah*, path 3, sections 3 and 32. *Zohar Chai* (*parshas Vayikra*, fol. 4a) cites the Baal Shem Tov on "the secret of *yesh* 231": the letters of ישראל also read יש רל"א, "there are 231," since *reish* (200), *lamed* (30) and *alef* (1) add up to 231. There the Baal Shem Tov teaches that the world could not stand, even though the Holy One contracted Himself level by level, because in their great light and longing the lights returned to the Infinite, to Nothing. When the Holy One looked at the Jewish people, at their mitzvos and Torah, the world endured, from nothing to something. The upper lights long to rise to their root, but they also long greatly to come back down to Jewish souls and delight in them and in their Torah. In brackets the compiler adds his own remarks. The idea that *reish* signifies *Chochmah* appears below, *parshas Yisro*, teaching 48, and *parshas Toldos*, gloss 1. On *alef* and *lamed*, however, *parshas Pinchas*, teaching 1 (beginning "And the Rav said"), teaches that *alef* alludes to *Chochmah* only after it has joined with *Binah*. By that reading, the name *alef* mainly alludes to *Binah*, and *lamed* would then be *Daas*. The same passage speaks of three lines that correspond to the Patriarchs (see also *parshas Vayera*, teaching 7; *parshas Yisro*, teaching 12; *parshas Va'eira*, teaching 1; *parshas Devarim*, teaching 1). He leaves the question open. He suggests that the teaching's main intent matches what he copied nearby in teaching 7, on the secret of the *tzimtzum* that comes from Him and remains within Him, and on the "three heads." The body's needs,

וב"ש בָּרָא עוֹלָמוֹ, לֹא הָיָה הָעוֹלָם יָכוֹל לְהִיוֹת קַיָּים The substance of his words was this. When the Holy One, blessed is He and blessed is His Name, created His world, the world could not endure, כִּי הַכֹּל חָזַר לְשָׁרְשׁוֹ לְאַיִן ב"ה, עַד שֶׁבָּרָא וְנִתְקַיֵּים הָעוֹלָם, for everything returned to its root, to the Nothing, blessed is He, until He created [Yisrael], and the world endured. "The Nothing" (*Ayin*) names the Divine source. It has this name because nothing can be grasped or said of it. A creation drawn toward that source dissolves back into it. The Hebrew here leaves "created" without an object. The version the compiler quotes in the note reads "until He created Yisrael."

וְהַשֵּׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל מוֹרֶה עַל זֶה, כִּי הָרֵ' הוּא הַחָכְמָה וְהַלְ' הַבִּינָה וְהָאָ' הַדַּעַת, The name Yisrael shows this. The *reish* is *Chochmah*, the *lamed* is *Binah*, and the *alef* is *Daas*. ישראל has five letters: *yud*, *shin*, *reish*, *alef* and *lamed*. The teaching assigns three of them to the three faculties of the intellect. It gives no reason for these assignments. The compiler also finds the assignment of *alef* and *lamed* difficult (see the note).

וְהַיֵּשׁ' שֶׁבְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, אוֹתִיּוֹת הַנִּשְׁאָרִים, הוּא הַיְּשׁוּת שֶׁל קִיּוּם הָעוֹלָם וְנַעֲשָׂה יֵשׁ מֵאַיִן, The *yud* and *shin* in Yisrael, the letters that remain, are the existence that sustains the world, which became something from nothing. *Yud* and *shin* spell יש (*yesh*), the ordinary Hebrew word for "there is," or "something that exists." So the name holds the three faculties of the intellect together with *yesh*. "Something from nothing" (*yesh me'ayin*) is the classic phrase for creation out of nothing.

וְזֶהוּ שֵׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְזֶהוּ קִיּוּם הָעוֹלָמוֹת שֶׁנַּעֲשָׂה יֵשׁ מֵאַיִן, This is the name Yisrael, and this is what sustains the worlds, which became something from nothing. וְלָכֵן יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵם הַקִּיּוּם שֶׁל כָּל הָעוֹלָמוֹת וְהַבְּרִיאָה, כִּי בְּאֹם לָאו הָיָה הַכֹּל חוֹזֵר לְקַדְמוּתוֹ לְאַיִן, Therefore the Jewish people sustain all the worlds and all creation. Otherwise everything would return to its earlier state, to Nothing. וְהַיְּשׁוּת שֶׁבְּיִשְׂרָאֵל הֵם מְקַיְּימִין כָּל הַיֵּשׁ שֶׁל כָּל הָעוֹלָמוֹת, The *yesh* within the Jewish people sustains all the *yesh* of all the worlds. וְדַוְוקָא כְּשֶׁאֵישׁ הַיִּשְׂרְאֵלִי אֵין לוֹ יְשׁוּת רַק כְּפִי הַצּוֹרֶךְ לְקִיּוּם הָעוֹלָמוֹת, לְאַפּוֹקֵי אִם יֵשׁ בּוֹ יוֹתֵר ח"ו, But this holds only when a Jew has no more sense of self in him than the worlds need to endure. It does not hold if he has more, G-d forbid. The word ישות shifts meaning here. Until now it meant "existence," what keeps creation from dissolving. Applied to a person, it means his sense of self, his feeling that he is someone. Anything beyond the measure creation needs is self-importance.

עַד כָּאן תּוֹכֶן דְּבָרָיו הַנּוֹרָאִים, This ends the substance of his awesome words. וּלְהָבִין זֶה אֵין הַפֶּה יָכוֹל לְדַבֵּר, וְכָל הַדְּבָרִים יְגֵעִים, מִפְּנֵי עוֹמֶק הַמּוּשָׂג וְקוֹצֶר הַמַּשִּׂיג, The mouth cannot speak enough to explain this, and all words grow weary, because the idea is deep and the one grasping it falls short. כִּי לפענ"ד כָּל הַתּוֹרָה רוֹמֶזֶת בָּזֶה: For in my humble opinion, the whole Torah alludes to this. The summary never states how this answers the question about the parable. The compiler offers a suggestion in the note. He reads fear as holding back and the *kav* of *chumtin* as the body's needs, which must be mixed in so that the world can exist.

(*Degel Machaneh Efraim*, *parshas Va'eschanan*, on the verse "And it will be righteousness," and *parshas Vezos Haberachah*)

THE MAIN IDEA

The world stands because the Jewish people give it something solid to rest on. A person should keep only as much sense of self as that purpose needs, and no more.

Teaching 5

The Deeds of the Wicked and the Righteous in the Contraction and Line of Creation

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים וְגו'

"In the beginning G-d created..." (*Bereishis* 1:1)

דְּלֹא הָיָה בְּאֶפְשָׁרִי לִהְיוֹת בְּרִיאַת הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהָיָה מִתְפַּשֵּׁט עַד אֵין סוֹף, For the creation of the world could not take place, since [the light] spread out without end. The Hebrew opens in the middle of a thought, with "for," and does not name what was spreading. The next segment shows that it is the Divine light. As long as that light filled everything without limit, no separate, finite world had room to exist.

which are the *tzimtzum*, must exist in a person together with the three heads, *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daas*. The *tzimtzum* is therefore from Him and within Him, and the inner side of the physical is spiritual. This is fear, because fear is *tzimtzum*: fear and *Gevurah* are one. The *kav* of *chumtin* alludes to the body's needs, which a person must mix into the *Chesed* so that existence can sustain the world. He calls this the plain sense of the matter and signs it as the compiler, citing "the secret of Hashem is for those who fear Him."

וְנִסְתַּכֵּל הקב"ה בְּמַעֲשֵׂה הָרְשָׁעִים וְנִתְצַמְצֵם הָאוֹר הַרְבֵּה, **The Holy One, blessed is He, looked at the deeds of the wicked, and the light contracted greatly.** This contraction is the *tzimtzum*. In the Arizal's system, *tzimtzum* is the first step of creation. Hashem conceals His infinite light so that there is space for limited beings. Here the concealment is linked to the deeds of the wicked, which Hashem foresaw.

וְהִסְתַּכֵּל בְּמַעֲשֵׂה צַדִּיקִים וְנִמְשָׁךְ קַו חַיִּים, **He looked at the deeds of the *tzaddikim*, and a line of life extended.** After the *tzimtzum*, the Arizal describes a thin "line" (*kav*) of light that Hashem draws into the emptied space. That line brings life and gives existence to every world. The teaching pairs the two stages with two kinds of people. The deeds of the wicked correspond to the concealment, and the deeds of the *tzaddikim* correspond to the light that returns. The picture of Hashem looking at the deeds of the righteous and the wicked at the start of creation echoes the Midrash on these verses.

בְּסוֹד מָטֵי וְלָא מָטֵי, **in the mystery of "reaching and not reaching."** The phrase מטי ולא מטי is Aramaic. It describes a light that touches and does not touch at the same time: it reaches its recipient but does not settle there completely. Applied to the line, this seems to mean that the light arrives in measured form and does not flood the world as before.

כָּל זֶה יָדוּעַ מִמָּרָן האר"י וְאוֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל מָרָן הריב"ש טוֹב: **All this is known from our master the Arizal and from the light of Israel, our master the Baal Shem Tov.** The account of *tzimtzum* and the line comes from the Arizal. The link to the deeds of the wicked and the righteous is given in the name of both the Arizal and the Baal Shem Tov.

(*Heichal HaBerachah*, beginning of *parshas Bereishis*)

THE MAIN IDEA

Hashem shaped creation with people's deeds in mind. The deeds of the wicked caused His light to withdraw. The deeds of the righteous drew a line of life back into the world.

Teaching 6

The Tzimtzum: Hashem Looks at the Deeds of the Tzaddikim and of the Wicked

שָׁמַעְתִּי מֵהָרַב הַמּוֹכִיחַ ז"ל שֶׁאָמַר בְּשֵׁם הַבַּעַל שֵׁם טוֹב נ"ע לְפָרֵשׁ עִנְיַן הַצִּמְצוּם הַמּוּזְכָּר בַּמְּקוּבָּלִים, **I heard from the Rav, the Mochiach, of blessed memory, who said in the name of the Baal Shem Tov, may his soul rest in Eden, an explanation of the *tzimtzum* that the Kabbalists mention.** [5] A *mochiach* is a preacher who rebukes and inspires his listeners. The Kabbalists, above all the Arizal, teach that before creation Hashem's infinite light filled everything. Hashem then "contracted" or concealed that light so that a limited world could exist. This contraction is the *tzimtzum*. The Kabbalists describe it in terms of light and space. The Baal Shem Tov explains the same event through two ways Hashem looks at human deeds.

שֶׁהָעִנְיָן הוּא כְּשֶׁעָלָה בִּרְצוֹנוֹ ית"ש לְהֵיטִיב לַנִּבְרָאִים, **The matter is this. When it arose in His will, may His Name be blessed, to do good to the creatures,** The phrase "when it arose in His will" is the Kabbalists' own wording for the first stirring of creation.

הַיְינוּ שֶׁהִתְעוֹרְרוּת הָרָצוֹן הָיָה כְּשֶׁנִּסְתַּכֵּל הקב"ה בְּמַעֲשֵׂה הַצַּדִּיקִים וְהִשְׁתּוֹקֵק מְאוֹד לְהֵיטִיב לָהֶם, **that is, the will awakened when the Holy One, blessed is He, looked at the deeds of the *tzaddikim* and longed greatly to do good to them.** Before creation no *tzaddik* yet existed. The teaching implies that Hashem saw in advance the deeds that the *tzaddikim* would do.

וְעַל יְדֵי זֶה עָלָה בְּדַעְתּוֹ לִבְרוֹא הָעוֹלָם, **Through this it arose in His mind to create the world.** **אַךְ לְגוֹדֶל הַשְׁפָּעַת הַחֲסָדִים הָיָה מִתְבַּטֵּל הָעוֹלָם מִכֹּל וָכֹל, וְהוּכְרַח לִהְיוֹת צִמְצוּם,** **But because the flow of kindness was so great, the world would have been completely nullified. So there had to be a *tzimtzum*.** Hashem's longing to do good is *Chesed*, kindness that gives without limit. A created thing that received kindness without any limit

[5] The compiler cites *Zos Zikaron*, fol. 9c, in the passage explaining the words "eleven days." There the author writes that if the Creator's great flow reached a person without a separating screen, the world would cease to exist. Even creation could not happen at first without a screen, because the receivers were lacking. So the Creator emanated endless worlds, which are summed up in ten *sefiros* and *middos*. Through them He created this world, and through these same *sefiros* the flow and life-force pass down to us, so that we can receive them without being nullified. The author adds that he heard a parable on this subject from Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem about seven walls, "that it appears so." The note does not give the parable itself. For more on the *tzimtzum*, the compiler refers the reader below, *parshas Bereishis*, teaching 23 and onward.

would dissolve back into its source and cease to exist as a thing of its own. Kindness therefore needs a limit before a world can receive it.

הַיְינוּ שֶׁנִּסְתַּכֵּל הקב"ה בְּמַעֲשֵׂה הָרְשָׁעִים הַמְעוֹרְרִים גְּבוּרוֹת בָּעוֹלָם, that is, the Holy One, blessed is He, looked at the deeds of the wicked, who awaken *Gevuros* in the world, *Gevuros* (plural of *Gevurah*, "might") are the forces of judgment and restraint. They hold back and measure out *Chesed*. The Kabbalists identify the *tzimtzum* with *Gevurah*. The two gazes line up with two attributes. Looking at the *tzaddikim* awakens *Chesed*. Looking at the wicked awakens *Gevurah*, and that *Gevurah* is the *tzimtzum*.

וְעַל יְדֵי זֶה הָיָה אֶפְשָׁר לִבְרוֹא אֶת הָעוֹלָם: and through this it became possible to create the world. The deeds of the wicked arouse restraint. That restraint lets the kindness awakened by the *tzaddikim* reach the world in a measure it can bear. The teaching does not discuss how the wicked themselves are judged for their deeds.

(*Teshuos Chen*, *parshas Chayei Sarah*, and in the *Likutim* on *parshas Shelach*)

THE MAIN IDEA

Hashem created the world out of love for the righteous, but that love, given without limit, would have overwhelmed the world. The deeds of the wicked awaken restraint, and that restraint makes room for the world to exist.

Teaching 7

The Soul's Longing, the Body's Pull, and the Rhythm of Running and Returning

נוֹדָע שֶׁהָאָדָם מוּרְכָּב מֵחוֹמֶר וְצוּרָה, שֶׁהוּא הַנְּשָׁמָה וְהַגּוּף, It is known that a person is composed of matter and form, that is, the soul and the body. "Matter" and "form" are terms from medieval philosophy. The Hebrew names the pair and then its referents in reverse order. Form is the soul, the element that gives a thing its identity. Matter is the body, the physical stuff that carries it.

וְהַנֶּפֶשׁ הַנְּשָׁמָה תִּתְלַהֵב תָּמִיד לִידָּבֵק בְּקוֹנָהּ, The soul always burns with longing to cleave to its Maker, רַק סִיבּוּב הַחוֹמֶר מַפְסִיק הַדְּבֵקוּת, but the matter that surrounds it interrupts the *devekus*. *Devekus* means clinging to Hashem, an unbroken attachment of the mind to Him.

וּמִתְאַוֶּה גַּם לְחוֹמְרִיִּים מִשְׁגָּל וַאֲכִילָה, [A person] also desires material things, such as marital relations and eating, שֶׁהוּא גַּם כֵּן צוֹרֶךְ גָּבוֹהַּ לְבָרֵר נִיצוֹצִין[6] וְכַיּוֹצֵא בָּזֶה, and this too is a need on High, to refine sparks and the like. The *nitzotzos* are sparks of holiness hidden in physical things. When a person eats or has marital relations for the sake of Heaven, he frees the spark in them and raises it to its source. This is why the Hebrew calls the body's pull a "need on High". The body interrupts the soul's *devekus*, yet its desires also serve a Divine purpose.

כִּי אִם לִזְמַנִּים יְדוּעִים יָכוֹל לִגְבּוֹר הַצּוּרָה עַל הַחוֹמֶר לִידָּבֵק בּוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ Only at certain times can the form overpower the matter and cleave to Him, blessed is His Name, בְּסוֹד (יְחֶזְקֵאל א' י"ד) וְהַחַיּוֹת רָצוֹא וָשׁוֹב[7] וְנִקְרָא קְטָנוּת וְגַדְלוּת, in the mystery of "And the living creatures ran and returned" (*Yechezkel* 1:14). This is called *katnus* and *gadlus*. In Yechezkel's vision the *chayos*, the angelic living creatures of the Divine chariot, dart forward and back "like the appearance of lightning". The teaching applies their motion to the soul. When the soul "runs", it overcomes the body and clings to Hashem. When it "returns", the body regains its hold. *Gadlus* ("greatness") is the expanded state of closeness. *Katnus* ("smallness") is the contracted state that follows it.

וּכְמוֹ שֶׁשָּׁמַעְתִּי מִמּוֹרִי בָּזֶה סוֹד הַצִּמְצוּם שֶׁהוּא מִינִיהּ וּבְיהּ, As I heard from my teacher [the Baal Shem Tov] on this, the mystery of *tzimtzum*, which is "from it and within it", *Tzimtzum* is the contraction or concealment of the Divine light. "From it and within it" (מִינִיהּ וּבְיהּ) is an Aramaic idiom for something that comes out of a thing itself rather than from outside it.

וְסוֹד[8] ג' רֵישִׁין וּדְפַח"ח: and the mystery of the three heads. And his words are beautiful. Here too the

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6 On the sparks found in everything, see below in this *parsha*, teaching 167; *parshas Miketz*, teaching 1; *parshas Vayechi*, teaching 4; and *parshas Metzora*, teaching 24.

7 The compiler explains "running and returning" below in this *parsha*, teaching 70, and in his note 59 there. See also *parshas Noach*, on the verse "Noach walked with G-d", teachings 11 and 12, where he treats the subject fully. On *katnus* and *gadlus*, see *parshas Lech*, teachings 19 and 34. The compiler explains the mystery of *tzimtzum* and the three heads earlier in this section, in his note 4.

8 On the mystery of the three heads, the compiler cites *Degel Machaneh Efraim*, *parshas Vayera*, on the verse "And behold, three men". There the author quotes the *Zohar* (*parshas Vayera*, fol. 95b), which identifies the three men with three heads, meaning the three *middos*

teaching gives only a heading. In the passage the compiler cites in note 8, the three heads are *Chesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tiferes*. Each of these *middos* holds a mixture of good and bad, and a person must break the bad in them.

(*Toldos Yaakov Yosef*, *parshas Yisro*, fol. 54b)

THE MAIN IDEA

The soul always wants to be close to Hashem, but the body pulls it away. Even that pull has a holy purpose when a person eats and lives for the sake of Heaven. Closeness to Hashem comes in waves: a person rises, falls back, and rises again.

Teaching 8

The Holy One Looked into the Torah: Thought as a Book That Is Read

אִסְתַּכַּל קוב"ה בְּאוֹרַיְיתָא וּבְרָא עָלְמָא (זוה"ק ר"פ תּוֹלְדוֹת וּפ' תְּרוּמָה דקס"א ע"א וְרֵישׁ ע"ב), הַמַּחֲשָׁבָה הוּא כְּמוֹ סֵפֶר, "The Holy One, blessed is He, looked into the Torah and created the world" (*Zohar*, beginning of *parshas Toldos*, and *parshas Terumah*, 161a and the beginning of 161b). Thought is like a book. The *Zohar* saying is in Aramaic. It pictures the Holy One consulting the Torah as a builder consults a plan. The teaching compares thought to a book, so that 'looking into the Torah' can mean G-d looking into His own thought.

שֶׁאוֹמֵר מַה שֶּׁרָאָה בַּסֵּפֶר, כֵּן אוֹמֵר מַה שֶּׁרוֹצֶה בְּמַחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ Just as a person says what he has seen in a book, so he says what he wants in his thought. A reader reports the words he finds on the page. A person who thinks does the same with his own mind. He "reads" what he wants in his thought, and his speech reports it. The book in this image belongs to the person himself: it is his own thought.

וְכִמְדוּמֶה לִי שֶׁזֶּהוּ שֶׁשָּׁמַעְתִּי הַפֵּירוּשׁ אִסְתַּכַּל קוב"ה בְּאוֹרַיְיתָא וּבְרָא עָלְמָא, It seems to me that this is the explanation I heard of "The Holy One, blessed is He, looked into the Torah and created the world": The speaker says that he heard this explanation from someone and is reconstructing it. He hedges with "it seems to me." He does not name his source.

שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה מֵחָכְמָה נָפִיק, that "the Torah issues from *Chochmah*." This phrase is also Aramaic. It echoes a well-known *Zohar* teaching that the Torah comes forth from Divine wisdom. *Chochmah* is the first of the *sefiros* of the intellect, the point where Divine thought begins. If the Torah flows from *Chochmah*, then the Torah is not a separate book. It is G-d's own wisdom set out in letters.

ר"ל, מַה שֶּׁרָאָה שֶׁמַּחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ כִּבְיָכוֹל רוֹצָה שֶׁיִּבָּרֵא, זֶה הַדָּבָר בָּרָא: That is, whatever He saw that His thought, so to speak, wanted Him to create, that thing He created. This line applies the book image. "Looking into the Torah" means that the Holy One "read" His own *Chochmah*. Whatever He found that His thought wished to bring into being, He created, just as a person speaks what he finds in his own mind. The word "so to speak" signals that thought and wanting are human terms applied to G-d only as a figure.

(*Likkutei Amarim*, fol. 4a; *Keser Shem Tov*, part 2, fol. 2d; and see below, end of note 25)

THE MAIN IDEA

G-d created the world out of His own wisdom, the way a person speaks from what he sees in his own mind. The Torah is that wisdom, so it holds the plan of everything that exists.

of *Chesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tiferes*. Every *middah* holds a mixture of good and bad. A person must break the power of the bad within them and act on each *middah* only for good, in a way that brings benefit before Hashem. See also *parshas Yisro*, teaching 2, and notes 1 and 2 there, where the compiler copies more on the three heads, and below in this *parsha*, note 49.

Teaching 9

The World Stands on a Higher Level When the Tzaddik Is in It

שָׁמַעְתִּי מִן הָרַב הַמְּנוּחַ מו"ה יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף הַכֹּהֵן זללה"ה, שֶׁשָּׁמַע מִן אֲדוֹנִי אָבִי זְקֵנִי [הַבַּעַל שֵׁם טוֹב] זללה"ה שֶׁאָמַר, I heard from the late Rabbi, our teacher Rabbi Yaakov Yosef HaKohen, of blessed memory, who heard my master, my grandfather [the Baal Shem Tov], of blessed memory, say: לִפְעָמִים יֵשׁ שֶׁהָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד בְּמַעֲלוֹת הָרוֹמְמוּת, וְלִפְעָמִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד בְּמַדְרֵגוֹת תַּחְתּוֹנוֹת, "At times the world stands at exalted levels, and at times the world stands at lower levels. , [9] וְעַתָּה שֶׁאֲנִי בָּעוֹלָם הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד בְּמַדְרֵגוֹת הָרוֹמְמוּת Now that I am in the world, the world stands at exalted levels." In the passage the compiler quotes in the note, the author of *Degel Machaneh Efraim* explains this as the effect of a leader on his generation. People who bind themselves to a true *tzaddik* follow him, as a body follows its head. When such a leader is present, the whole world therefore rises with him.

עַד כָּאן לְשׁוֹן הַטָּהוֹר שֶׁל אא"ז זללה"ה: These are the pure words of my grandfather, of blessed memory.

(*Degel Machaneh Efraim*, *parshas Balak*, on 'Now it shall be said')

THE MAIN IDEA

A generation rises or falls with its leader. When a true tzaddik leads and people bind themselves to him, the whole world stands higher.

Teaching 10

Bereishis as Yarei Boshes: Shame Before the King's Greatness

בְּרֵאשִׁית

"In the beginning" (*Bereishis* 1:1)

בְּרֵאשִׁית. "*Bereishis*" ("In the beginning"). וְאִיתָא בַּזוֹהַר הַקָּדוֹשׁ (תִּיקּוּנֵי זוהר"ק תִּיקּוּן ז') יְרֵא בוּשָׁת, The holy *Zohar* (*Tikkunei Zohar*, *tikkun* 7) says [that this word spells] *yarei boshes*, "fear and shame." The six letters of בראשית rearrange into two words. *Yud*, *reish*, and *alef* spell יראּ, "fear." *Beis*, *shin*, and *tav* spell בשת, "shame." The Hebrew here writes בושת with a *vav*, the fuller spelling of the same word. The *vav* is not one of the six letters, since the anagram uses only the letters of בראשית.

פֵּי' כְּמָשָׁל אֶחָד שֶׁיּוֹשֵׁב לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ שֶׁיֵּשׁ לוֹ בּוּשָׁה גְּדוֹלָה מִפָּנָיו, This means: it is like a man who sits before the king and feels great shame before him, עַד שֶׁאֵינוֹ מְחַשֵּׁב אִם הַמֶּלֶךְ אוֹהֵב אוֹתוֹ, כְּדֵי שֶׁיֶּאֱהָבֶנּוּ, so much that he does not think about whether the king loves him, which would lead him to love [the king in return]. אֶלָּא מְחַשֵּׁב גְּדוּלָּתוֹ כְּדֵי שֶׁיֵּבוֹשׁ מִמֶּנּוּ, Rather, he thinks about the king's greatness, so that he will feel shame before him. The shame of the parable is the embarrassment of a small person in the presence of someone very great. It does not come from guilt.

וְזֶהוּ בְּרֵאשִׁית יְרֵא בוּשָׁת: And this is "*Bereishis*": *yarei boshes*. The teaching places this shame in the first word of the Torah.

(*Keser Shem Tov*, part 2, fol. 3b; see also *Likkutei Amarim*, fol. 2d, s.v. "Isa baZohar")

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[9] In the same *sefer* (fol. 41), the *Degel Machaneh Efraim* explains these words. When a *tzaddik* and sage leads the generation, and people attach themselves to him and cleave to him, they all become wise. Everything follows the head, and the body is drawn after the head. When a person has intelligence and wisdom, even the things he does with his hands and other limbs are done wisely, because everything follows the mind. This is the sense of "Your camp shall be holy" (*parshas Ki Seitzei*): all the limbs of the body (*Zohar*, *parshas Noach*, 76a) should be in the aspect of *Chochmah*, which is called holy. So too, when the world cleaves to a sage and *tzaddik* who does everything with pure wisdom, everyone acts wisely. Thus Antoninus said to Rebbi (*Avodah Zarah* 10b), "I know that the least among you revives the dead," because they cleaved to Rebbi, who was a great sage. The *Degel* adds a wordplay he saw in a *sefer*. The letters of ישראל also spell לי ראש, "I have a head." When the people have a head and leader, they stand at the level of Yisrael, at exalted levels. The name יעקב contains עקב, "heel." It describes the time when they have no head, Heaven forbid, and then the world stands at lower levels. See further below, *parshas Vayishlach*, end of note 3. In *parshas Va'eschanan* the *Degel* also writes: "I heard from my master, my grandfather, of blessed memory: when there is a *tzaddik* in the world, he unites all the physical matters of the world, both actions and words." The main discussion of raising words appears below in this *parsha*, from teaching 106 onward. See also *parshas Pinchas*, teaching 3.

THE MAIN IDEA

A person who stands before Hashem can think about how much Hashem loves him, or about how great Hashem is. When he thinks about Hashem's greatness, he feels a humble shame before the King, and the Torah's very first word points to that feeling.

Teaching 11

The Twenty-Two Letters Hidden Inside Every Physical Thing

כְּמוֹ שֶׁיֵּשׁ כ"ב אוֹתִיּוֹת בְּדִיבּוּרֵי תּוֹרָה וּתְפִלָּה, כָּךְ יֵשׁ בְּכָל עִנְיְנֵי הַחוֹמֶר וְהַגַּשְׁמִיּוּת שֶׁבָּעוֹלָם גַּם כֵּן כ"ב אוֹתִיּוֹת, וּכְמוֹ שֶׁאָמְרוּ בש"ס דִּבָּרְכוֹת (דנ"ה ע"א) יוֹדֵעַ הָיָה בְּצַלְאֵל לְצָרֵף אוֹתִיּוֹת שֶׁנִּבְרְאוּ בָּהֶם שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ וכו' Just as there are twenty-two letters in the words of Torah and prayer, so too there are twenty-two letters in all the material and physical things in the world,[10] On a page of Torah or in a *siddur*, a person sees the letters. In a stone or a loaf of bread he does not see them, yet the same letters are there.

שֶׁבָּהֶם נִבְרָא הָעוֹלָם וְכָל אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ, וּכְמוֹ שֶׁאָמְרוּ בש"ס דִּבָּרְכוֹת (דנ"ה ע"א) יוֹדֵעַ הָיָה בְּצַלְאֵל לְצָרֵף אוֹתִיּוֹת שֶׁנִּבְרְאוּ בָּהֶם שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ וכו' and through them the world and everything in it was created. As the Sages said in the Gemara, in *Berachos* (55a): "Betzalel knew how to combine the letters through which heaven and earth were created," and so on. Betzalel was the craftsman who built the *Mishkan*. If heaven and earth came into being through letters, then letters lie inside every created thing.

רַק שֶׁהָאוֹתִיּוֹת מְלוּבָּשׁ בְּחוֹמֶר עִנְיְנֵי הָעוֹלָם, בְּכַמָּה כִּיסּוּיִין וּלְבוּשִׁין וּקְלִיפּוֹת, Only, the letters are clothed in the matter of worldly things, under many coverings, garments, and ***klipos***. *Klipos* are husks or peels. The letters sit inside physical matter like fruit inside its peel. The eye sees only the covering.

וּבְתוֹךְ הָאוֹתִיּוֹת שׁוֹרָה רוּחָנִיּוּת הקב"ה, חֲרֵי שֶׁכְּבוֹדוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ מָלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר בָּהּ, And within the letters dwells the spirituality of the Holy One, blessed is He. So His glory, may He be blessed, fills the whole earth and everything in it. The wording echoes the angels' proclamation that "the whole earth is full of His glory." Here the phrase follows from the letters: G-d's presence fills each thing because He dwells in the letters that make it.

לֵית אֲתַר פָּנוּי מִינֵיהּ, כַּמְבוֹאָר בַּתִּיקּוּנִים (תיקון כ"ו) רַק שֶׁהוּא בְּהֶסְתָּרָה. וְכַאֲשֶׁר אַנְשֵׁי הַדַּעַת יוֹדְעִים מִזֶּה הַהֶסְתָּרָה אֵינוֹ אֶצְלָם הֶסְתָּרָה וְשִׁינּוּי, "There is no place empty of Him," as explained in the *Tikkunei Zohar* (*Tikkun* 26). Only, He is in concealment. And when people of understanding know about this concealment, for them it is no concealment and no change.[11] The hiding exists only in a person's perception. Once he knows that G-d is hidden inside the thing, he sees through the covering. "Change" seems to mean that G-d does not appear any different to him in a material thing than in the words of Torah. The fuller version in the footnote calls this state equanimity.

וְזֶהוּ שֶׁאָמַר בַּתִּיקּוּנִים הנ"ל אֲבָל אִינּוּן דְּתַלְיָין מֵהקב"ה לָא אִישְׁתַּנֵּי מֵהֶם וכו': This is what the ***Tikkunei***

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[10] The compiler notes that this passage comes from *Toldos Yaakov Yosef*, where it does not say outright that the author heard it from the Baal Shem Tov. However, the *Leket Imrei Peninim* printed at the end of *Otzar HaChaim*, and *Heichal HaBerachah*, copy it in the Baal Shem Tov's name and expand on it at length (fol. 206b). That version opens "I heard from my teacher" and gives the same teaching. It adds that the G-dliness inside the letters brings everything into being, "like the snail whose garment is part of itself" (*Bereishis Rabbah* 21:5). It also says that those attached to G-d have earned equanimity, without any change. It goes on: a person, like the letters, has matter and form. The bodies of the letters are "stones," and the light of the *sefiros* and of the Infinite inside them is their soul. The chief intent in Torah and prayer is to draw that light into the letters one speaks, so that they can rise and fulfill one's request. Here it cites *Chesed LeAvraham*, and notes that *Ben Poras Yosef* (fol. 21b) says "as I received from my teacher, and also found in *Chesed LeAvraham*." See also below, *parshas Noach*, note 15, and *parshas Va'eschanan*, teaching 38. Holy thoughts also raise the letters found in the material world. When a person lifts letters and sparks from the lower levels, he makes them into adornments for the Divine Presence, and this gives Hashem great satisfaction (see below in this *parsha*, note 154). For this reason Hashem tests the *tzaddikim* and refines them, so that they will not follow evil desire and will raise the life in all things through holy unifications (see below, *parshas Lech Lecha*, note 2, and *parshas Yisro*, teaching 39 and its note). The passage then reads the word *Bereishis* in terms of the letters. The *alef* is the Master of the world, clothed in the *yud* of *Chochmah* and the *beis* of *Chochmah* and *Binah*, and it shines down to the lowest levels to raise souls through the Jewish people. All creatures came into being through the twenty-two letters, and each letter includes all twenty-two (see below, *parshas Noach*, note 82). A creature made through a letter closer to the Source stands higher. One made through *tav*, the last letter, stands lowest. Yet when such a creature draws close to Hashem, it rises from *tav* to *alef* (citing *Zohar* vol. 3, 128b). Through *tav* the worlds of *Malchus* of *Malchus* were created, and at their end they mix with *klipah*. Even so, "if someone asks you, 'Where is your G-d?', tell him, 'In the great city of Rome"' (*Yerushalmi Taanis* ch. 1), because nothing exists apart from Hashem. So the *tzaddikim* may be hidden, poor, and suffering, and trampled by the mixed multitude and by those whose Torah study is a deadly poison. Still, the Holy One does not hide from them at all. In every descent they find an ascent through great faith.

[11] See below, *parshas Vayeilech*, teachings 4, 5, and 6, where the compiler quotes material on the words "I will surely hide."

***Zohar* cited above says: "But those who are attached to the Holy One, blessed is He, He does not change for them," and so on.** The Aramaic תליין literally means "hang on," so it describes those who depend on the Holy One and cling to Him. The word "but" sets them against everyone else. For others, He does appear changed and hidden.

(*Toldos Yaakov Yosef*, beginning of *parshas Bereishis*, fol. 8c)

THE MAIN IDEA

Every physical thing is built from the same holy letters as Torah and prayer, and G-d dwells inside them under many coverings. A person who knows that G-d is hiding there no longer finds Him hidden.

Teaching 12

All Worlds, and Even the Letters, Are Garments and Thrones for One Another

אָמַר הַבַּעַל שֵׁם טוֹב ז"ל שֶׁכָּל הָעוֹלָמוֹת כּוּלָּם הֵם לְבוּשִׁים וְכִסֵּא זֶה לָזֶה, עַד בְּחִינָה הַתַּחְתּוֹנָה, The Baal Shem Tov, of blessed memory, said that all the worlds are garments and a throne for one another, down to the lowest level. A garment (לבוש) covers its wearer and lets him appear through it. A throne (כסא) is a seat on which a king rests. Each world clothes the world above it and serves as its seat. Through this chain, the higher light reaches the lowest level.

וְכֵן אֲפִילּוּ הָאוֹתִיּוֹת א"ב הֵם גַּם כֵּן כִּסֵּא זֶה לָזֶה: So too, even the letters of the *alef-beis* are a throne for one another. The Creator used the Hebrew letters to form the world. The compiler points to teaching 22 below, where a related teaching appears.

(*Chesed LeAvraham*, *parshas Bereishis*, section 2; see below, teaching 22)

THE MAIN IDEA

Every level of reality clothes and carries the level above it, all the way down to the lowest. Even the letters of the Hebrew alphabet hold one another up in the same way.

Teaching 13

Dovid's Blessing Let the Whole Assembly See That No Place Is Empty of Hashem

שָׁמַעְתִּי מֵאֲדוֹנִי אָבִי וְזֵקְנִי זי"ע זלה"ה פֵּירוּשׁ הַכָּתוּב (דה"י א' כ"ט פָּסוּק י') וַיְבָרֶךְ דָּוִד אֶת ה' לְעֵינֵי כָּל הַקָּהָל וְגוֹ', I heard from my master, my grandfather [the Baal Shem Tov], may his merit protect us, of blessed memory, an explanation of the verse (*Divrei HaYamim I* 29:10), "Dovid blessed Hashem before the eyes of the whole assembly..." The phrase לעיני כל הקהל ordinarily means only "in the presence of the whole assembly." The Baal Shem Tov takes the word לעיני, "before the eyes," literally.

שֶׁהֵרְאָה דָּוִד בְּחוּשׁ לְעֵינֵי כָּל הַקָּהָל שֶׁמְּלֹא כָל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ, וְלֵית אֲתַר פָּנוּי מִינֵיהּ, [It means] that Dovid showed the whole assembly, so that their own eyes perceived it, that "the whole earth is full of His glory," and that "there is no place empty of Him." The first phrase is the angels' praise in Yeshayahu's vision. The second is an Aramaic formula of the *Tikkunei Zohar*. Both state that Hashem is present everywhere. The word בחוש means that the people grasped this with their senses, and not only as an idea.

וּבַמֶּה הֶרְאָה זֶה לַכֹּל[12] בְּמַה שֶׁאָמַר לְךָ ה' הַגְּדוּלָּה וְהַגְּבוּרָה וכו' לְךָ ה' הַמַּמְלָכָה וכו', How did he show this to everyone? Through what he said: "Yours, Hashem, are the greatness and the might... Yours, Hashem, is the kingdom..." These words open the next verse, the blessing Dovid spoke. Each clause begins with לך, "Yours." In this way Dovid assigns every quality he names to Hashem.

וְאָז רָאוּ הַכֹּל וַאֲפִילּוּ הֲמוֹן הָעָם כִּי הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא הוּא שֹׁרֶשׁ כָּל הַדְּבָרִים וְהַוְיָתָם: Then everyone, even the common people, saw that the Holy One, blessed is He, is the root of all things and of their very existence. Dovid said that all greatness, might and kingship are Hashem's. So any greatness or strength a person meets in the world belongs to Hashem, and He is its source.

(*Degel Machaneh Efraim*, *parshas Re'eh*, the passage beginning "Ki yarchiv")

[12] See below, *parshas Shemos*, the compiler's note 18, where he copies a passage from *Heichal HaBerachah*, *parshas Ki Sisa*.