יפוצו מעיינותיך חוצה

אור תורה

Or Torah

The Teachings of the Maggid of Mezeritch on

Parshas HaShavua

מאת

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The Complete Parshiyos

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A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

The Nature of this Work

This volume presents an original English elucidation and commentary, prepared through a combination of advanced language and translation technology and experienced human editorial oversight. The methods employed were carefully configured to adhere to Orthodox Jewish *hashkafa* and to preserve fidelity to the original Hebrew text, and portions of the work were reviewed by an experienced translator and editor of Torah literature. Even so, this edition does not carry the authority of a translation prepared and certified by a full team of rabbinic scholars.

Usage and Limitations

This translation is intended as a tool to help advanced learners access the depth of the original work. It is **not** intended to replace the original Hebrew source, nor to serve as a substitute for study under a qualified teacher.

Because the nuance of Torah study often transcends any single method of preparation, we ask the reader to keep two things in mind:

1. **Verification:** Any novel insight, ruling, or conclusion drawn from this translation should be checked against the original Hebrew.
2. **Consultation:** All practical questions or derived lessons should be discussed with and verified by a qualified rabbinic authority before being relied upon.

The goal of this edition is to make these teachings accessible to a wider audience, but the responsibility for accurate understanding and practical application remains with the reader.

יהי רצון מלפני אבינו שבשמים, שזכות הוצאת ספר קדוש זה לאור עולם, והפצת תורתו הקדושה של הרב המגיד נ"ע, תעמוד לנו ולכל יוצאי חלצינו, ותמשיך ברכה והצלחה מרובה בטוב הנראה והנגלה על בנינו היקרים

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המברכים ומתברכים,

אריה וזוגתו **לאה** שיחיו

ניסקי

אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְנוּ וַנֵּדָעֵם, וַאֲבוֹתֵינוּ סִפְּרוּ־לָנוּ.
לֹא נְכַחֵד מִבְּנֵיהֶם, לְדוֹר אַחֲרוֹן מְסַפְּרִים תְּהִלּוֹת ה',
וְעֻזּוֹזוֹ וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה.
תהלים ע"ח, ג-ד

In Honor of Our Beloved Parents

Ian and Carol Ratner שיחיו

Mel and Karen Rom שיחיו

With tremendous *hakaras hatov* for everything you do for us, and for being such wonderful role models.

Our blessing to our children is that they should continue to hear the praises of Hashem that we grew up hearing in your homes.

With love,

Myles and Shira Ratner

תולדות

Parashas Toldos

Section 1

Two Kinds of Love in Avraham and Yitzchak

Summary

Derush: The Torah opens the account of Yitzchak with an apparent redundancy, "These are the offspring of Yitzchak son of Avraham; Avraham begot Yitzchak," and the Midrash pairs it with "The crown of the elderly are grandchildren, and the glory of children are their fathers." Why is what Yitzchak generated named first, before what Avraham generated? The Maggid answers by distinguishing two kinds of love.

Torah Basis: *Bereishis* 25:19 read together with *Mishlei* 17:6 in *Midrash Tanchuma*, along with *Mishlei* 27:19, 23:15 and 8:30, *Yeshayahu* 49:3, *Iyov* 41:3 and *Shir HaShirim* 8:8, plus the *Zohar* on the Jewish people arising in the divine thought.

Kabbalistic Framework: a love awakened from above, which is "father," and a love aroused from below, which is "offspring" and which in turn generates a further, greater love in the father. Delight (*taanug*) produces joy, and joy produces that new love. Since Hashem precedes time, the delight He takes in every tzaddik's Torah and deeds was already present when the Jewish people arose in His thought.

Avodah: Serving Hashem out of gratitude for one's own existence makes a person "righteous for himself." The complete level is to cause delight above, to have "breasts with which to nurse."

בַּמִּדְרָשׁ וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת יִצְחָק בֶּן אַבְרָהָם. אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת יִצְחָק. — **It is stated in the Midrash: "These are the offspring of Yitzchak son of Avraham; Avraham begot Yitzchak" (*Bereishis* 25:19).** *Midrash Tanchuma* opens its exposition of the parshah with this verse, whose second clause seems to add nothing to the first. That redundancy is the peg on which the entire derush hangs.[1] **הה"ד עֲטֶרֶת זְקֵנִים בְּנֵי בָנִים. וְתִפְאֶרֶת בָּנִים אֲבוֹתָם** — **This is what the verse says: "The crown of the elderly are grandchildren, and the glory of children are their fathers" (*Mishlei* 17:6).** The two halves of the verse describe two directions of honor, from grandchild upward to grandfather and from father downward to son. The Midrash treats the Torah's doubled phrase as expressing the same pair. **לֹא ניצול אַבְרָהָם מִכִּבְשַׁן הָאֵשׁ. אֶלָּא בִּזְכוּתוֹ שֶׁל יַעֲקֹב וְכוּ'** — **Avraham was saved from the fiery furnace only through the merit of Yaakov, and so on.** This is the Midrash's illustration of "the crown of the elderly are grandchildren": the grandfather is rescued by what his descendant would one day be. The merit that saved him lay entirely in the future, yet it was already effective. **מוּבָן עפ"ז הַפָּסוּק כַּמַּיִם פָּנִים אֶל פָּנִים וְגוֹ'.** — **On this basis the verse "As water reflects face to face..." (*Mishlei* 27:19) can be understood.** The verse's plain sense is that one heart mirrors another. Here it supplies the principle of the whole passage: love directed at a person awakens a corresponding love in him, which reflects back at its source.[2] **וְהִנֵּה נַמְשִׁיל לָזֶה עד"מ רְאוּבֵן שֶׁאוֹהֵב לִשְׁמְעוֹן**

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1 *Midrash Tanchuma*, *parshas Toldos* 4; cf. *Bereishis Rabbah* 63:2.

2 The Kehot edition reads הפנים here, matching the wording of *Mishlei* 27:19 more closely.

אַהֲבָה עַזָּה. — Let us illustrate this with an analogy: Reuven loves Shimon with a powerful love. The Maggid begins with two ordinary men rather than father and son, so that the mechanics of reflected love can be seen on their own. **וּמֵחֲמַת שֶׁשִּׁמְעוֹן רוֹאֶה שֶׁרְאוּבֵן אוֹהֵב אוֹתוֹ בְּיוֹתֵר. נִתְעוֹרֵר אֵצֶל שִׁמְעוֹן ג"כ אַהֲבַת רְאוּבֵן. — Because Shimon sees that Reuven loves him so intensely, a love for Reuven is awakened in Shimon as well.** The second love is not self-generated. It is a response, produced by the first. **נִמְצָא כִּי אַהֲבַת רְאוּבֵן שֶׁאוֹהֵב לְשִׁמְעוֹן נִקְרָא אָב. — It emerges that Reuven's love for Shimon is called "father."** The terms "father" and "offspring" are being redefined as functions rather than as persons: whatever generates is "father." **וְאַהֲבַת שִׁמְעוֹן שֶׁאוֹהֵב לִרְאוּבֵן נִקְרָא תּוֹלְדָה מִפְּנֵי שֶׁנּוֹלְדָה אַהֲבַת שִׁמְעוֹן מִכֹּחַ אַהֲבַת רְאוּבֵן. — And Shimon's love for Reuven is called "offspring," since Shimon's love was born out of the force of Reuven's love.** With this, the words "offspring" and "begot" in the verse become available as names for stages of love, which is what allows the derush to read *Bereishis* 25:19 the way it will. **וְהִנֵּה יֵשׁ אַהֲבַת אָב לְבָנוֹ בִּשְׁנֵי עִנְיָנִים. — Now, a father's love for his son exists in two forms.** The analogy now moves to an actual father and son, where both loves can be located in one relationship. **הָא' הָאָב אוֹהֵב לְבָנוֹ מֵחֲמַת הַטִּבְעוּת וְזֶה הָאָב גּוֹרֵם שֶׁגַּם הַבֵּן אוֹהֵב אֶת הָאָב. — The first: the father loves his son by nature, and this love of the father causes the son to love the father in return.** Natural paternal love owes nothing to the son's conduct. It is prior, unearned, and it is what awakens the son's answering love. **וְיֵשׁ אַהֲבָה גְּדוֹלָה מִזּוֹ אַחֶרֶת שֶׁרוֹאֶה אֶת בְּנוֹ הוֹלֵךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ הַיָּשָׁר. וּמַצְדִּיק מַעֲשָׂיו וְחָכָם בְּכָל הַחָכְמוֹת. — And there is another love, greater than this, when he sees his son walking in the straight path, acting righteously, and wise in every wisdom.** This second love is a response to something actual in the son, and it is therefore, in the terms just established, an "offspring" of the son.[3] **כמ"ש חָכַם בְּנִי יִשְׂמַח לִבִּי גַּם אָנִי. — As it says, "When my son is wise, my own heart will rejoice" (*Mishlei* 23:15).** The verse is quoted in paraphrase. Its point for the derush is the words "my own heart too": the son's wisdom produces something new in the father. **אָז יֵשׁ לְהָאָב תַּעֲנוּג גָּדוֹל מִזֶּה וּמִזֶּה נִתְהַוֶּה הַשִּׂמְחָה. — Then the father has great delight from this, and from this delight joy comes into being.** *Taanug*, delight, is the deeper of the two, and joy emerges out of it. **כִּי הַשִּׂמְחָה בָּאָה מֵהַתַּעֲנוּג. שֶׁאֵין אָדָם שׂוֹמֵחַ כ"א יֵשׁ לוֹ תַּעֲנוּג מֵאֵיזֶה דָּבָר בָּאָה לוֹ הַשִּׂמְחָה — For joy comes from delight, since a person does not rejoice unless he has delight in something, and from that his joy comes.** Joy is never primary. It is always the outward expression of a delight already present. **וּמֵחֲמַת גודל הַתַּעֲנוּג וְהַשִּׂמְחָה שֶׁיֵּשׁ לוֹ מִן הַבֵּן. נִתּוֹסֶפֶת וְנוֹלֶדֶת לְהָאָב עוֹד אַהֲבָה יוֹתֵר גְּדוֹלָה אֶל הַבֵּן. — And because of the magnitude of the delight and joy he has from his son, a further and greater love toward the son is added and born in the father.** The full sequence is now complete: the father's natural love awakens the son's love, the son's righteousness produces delight, the delight produces joy, and the joy gives birth to a second paternal love greater than the first. **הִנֵּה זֶה הַמָּשָׁל שייך לִבְנֵי אָדָם. — This analogy applies to human beings.** The Maggid now marks the point at which the analogy fails when transferred upward. **כִּי קודם לֵידַת הַבֵּן אוֹ אַף אַחַר לֵידָתוֹ עדיין אֵינוֹ יוֹדֵעַ מַה טִּיבוֹ וּמַה יִּהְיֶה מַעֲשֵׂה הַבֵּן — For before the son is born, and even after his birth, the father does not yet know his character or what the son's conduct will be.** A human father is bound by time, so the second love must wait for the son to prove himself. **ע"כ אֵין לְהָאָב עדיין אַהֲבָה כ"כ שֶׁהוּא הַב' הַנִּזְכָּר רַק אַהֲבָה הָא' שֶׁהוּא מֵחֲמַת טִבְעוֹ. — Therefore the father does not yet have that great a love, the second one mentioned, but only the first love, which comes from his nature.** In a human relationship the two loves are necessarily sequential. **אֲבָל אֵצֶל הש"י ב"ה נֶאֱמַר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר בְּךָ אֶתְפָּאָר. — But with regard to Hashem, blessed is He, it says, "Israel, in whom I take glory" (*Yeshayahu* 49:3).** The verse speaks of Hashem taking pride in the Jewish people, which is precisely the second love, the delight a father takes in what his son actually is. **כִּי אֶצְלוֹ ית' הֶעָבָר וְהֶעָתִיד הַכֹּל בְּשָׁוֶה. לְפִי שֶׁהוּא קודם הַזְּמַן. — For with Him, past and future are all alike, since He precedes time.** Because time itself is created, the limitation that forces the two loves apart in a human father does not apply above. **קודם שֶׁהָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיָה גָּלוּי לְפָנָיו ית' כָּל צַדִּיק וְצַדִּיק עִם כָּל מַעֲשָׂיו וְתוֹרָתוֹ — Before the Jewish people existed,**

[3] The Kehot edition has אחרת, "another," already at this point, so that the phrase reads "and there is another love, greater than this one." Cf. §46 and §192.

every single tzaddik, with all his deeds and his Torah, was revealed before Him. The tzaddik's righteousness is not future to Hashem. It is present, and so the delight it produces is present as well. **ומתחילה תיכף כְּשֶׁעָלָה יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמַחֲשָׁבָה לְפָנָיו. הָיָה כְּבָר שַׁעֲשׁוּעַ וְתַעֲנוּג כְּבָיָכוֹל לְפָנָיו יתי' מִכָּל צַדִּיק וְצַדִּיק וּמַעֲשָׂיו.** — **From the very outset, as soon as the Jewish people arose in His thought, He already had, as it were, delight and pleasure before Him from every single tzaddik and his deeds.** The *Zohar*'s teaching that the Jewish people arose in the divine thought before creation supplies the moment being described. Even at that stage, before there was any world, the "second" love was already in force. **וְהַגַּם רְאָיָה לָזֶה מַה שֶּׁמָּצִינוּ שֶׁהקב"ה מִשְׁתַּעֲשֵׁעַ בְּתוֹרָתוֹ שֶׁל צַדִּיק כמ"ש רז"ל כְּשֶׁעָלָה מֹשֶׁה לַמָּרוֹם. מָצָא לְהקב"ה שֶׁאוֹמֵר אֶלְעָזָר בְּנִי אוֹמֵר פָּרָה וְכוּ'. קודם בְּרִיאַת ר"א כַּמָּה מֵאוֹת שָׁנִים.** — **There is even a proof for this in what we find, that the Holy One, blessed is He, takes delight in the Torah of the tzaddik, as our Sages taught: when Moshe ascended on high he found the Holy One, blessed is He, saying, "My son Elazar says: a cow...", and this was several hundred years before R. Elazar came into the world.** The teaching is quoted for one detail: Hashem was already savoring a ruling that its author would not utter for centuries. Delight in a tzaddik's Torah is not deferred until the tzaddik exists.[4] **וְכֵן מ"ש רז"ל כָּל מַה שֶּׁתַּלְמִיד וָתִיק עָתִיד לְחַדֵּשׁ ג"כ כָּךְ הוּא. הקב"ה אָמַר לְמֹשֶׁה כָּךְ וְכָךְ** — **The same applies to what our Sages said, that everything a worthy student will one day innovate was already included at Sinai. So it is here too: the Holy One, blessed is He, told Moshe that such and such**

עָתִיד תַּלְמִיד פְּלוֹנִי לְחַדֵּשׁ בְּדוֹרוֹ — **a particular student is destined to innovate in his generation.** The novel Torah of a student not yet born is already spoken by Hashem to Moshe, which is exactly the point the Maggid needs. **כִּי תּוֹרַת הַצַּדִּיק וּמַעֲשָׂיו הוּא הַשַּׁעֲשׁוּעַ וְתַעֲנוּג לְפָנָיו יתי'** — **For the Torah of the tzaddik and his deeds are the delight and pleasure before Him.** This is the object of the second love: not the tzaddik's mere existence, but his Torah and his conduct. **נִמְצָא כִּי זֶה הַתַּעֲנוּג וְהַשִּׂמְחָה וְאַהֲבָה נוֹלָדָה לוֹ לְהָאָב מִכֹּחַ בְּנוֹ** — **It emerges that this delight, joy and love are born in the father by the force of his son.** The delight above is genuinely generated from below, which is why the son can be called the one who "begot." **וְזֶהוּ מ"ש בַּזוֹהַר הק' יִשְׂרָאֵל מִתְפַּרְנְסִים וְכוּ'.** — **This is the meaning of what the holy *Zohar* says, that the Jewish people provide sustenance, and so on.** The *Zohar*'s striking formulation is that the Jewish people are the ones who provide sustenance above. The Maggid explains it through the delight a father draws from his son.[5] **כְּמָשָׁל הָאָב שֶׁיֵּשׁ לוֹ תַּעֲנוּג מִבְּנוֹ חֲבִיבוֹ. אֲזַי מגודל הַתַּעֲנוּג וְהַשִּׂמְחָה אוֹמֵר הָאָב. כְּדֶרֶךְ הַבְּרִיּוֹת אוֹמְרִים בְּלָשׁוֹן זֶה אֲנִי נַעֲשֶׂה מֵהַתַּעֲנוּג הַזֶּה בָּרִיא וְשָׁמֵן.** — **It is like the analogy of a father who has delight from his beloved son: out of the magnitude of the delight and joy, the father says, "This delight is making me healthy and fat."** The common idiom is doing real work here: delight is spoken of as food, as something that nourishes the one who receives it. **כָּךְ מגודל הַתַּעֲנוּג וְהַשַּׁעֲשׁוּעַ שֶׁיֵּשׁ להקב"ה כְּבָיָכוֹל כְּמוֹ שֶׁמְּפַרְנְסִים אוֹתוֹ** — **So too, given the magnitude of the delight and pleasure the Holy One, blessed is He, has, it is as though, so to speak, they are sustaining Him.** The *Zohar*'s language is thus not a claim that Hashem lacks anything. It expresses how great the delight is that the tzaddik's Torah and deeds produce. **וְזֶהוּ וָאֶהְיֶ' אֶצְלוֹ אָמוֹן.** — **This is the meaning of "And I was beside Him as a nurse" (*Mishlei* 8:30).** Torah speaks in the first person in that chapter. The Maggid reads *amon* as *omein*, one who nurses and rears, so that the Torah is describing itself as sustaining Hashem, as it were. **וְהִנֵּה רש"י ז"ל פירש כִּי הַתּוֹרָה נִתְגַּדְּלָה בְּחֵיקוֹ שֶׁל הקב"ה אַלְפַּיִם שָׁנָה וְכוּ'.** — **Rashi explained that the Torah was reared in the bosom of the Holy One, blessed is He, for two thousand years, and so on.** Rashi takes *amon* passively, as a child being raised. On that reading the Torah is the nursling and Hashem is the one who rears. **אֲבָל פְּשַׁט הַכָּתוּב מַשְׁמָע שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה נַעֲשָׂה אוֹמֵן להקב"ה וְקָשֶׁה הַדָּבָר לאומרו. הלוא הקב"ה קַדְמוֹן לְכָל הַקְּדוּמִים** — **But the plain sense of the verse implies that the Torah became a nurse**

[4] *Zohar* vol. 1, 24a, on the Jewish people arising in the divine thought; *Midrash Tanchuma*, *parshas Chukas* 8; cf. *Vayikra Rabbah* 22:1 and §57. The Kehot edition reads והנה here, "now," which introduces the proof rather than conceding it.

[5] *Zohar* vol. 3, 7b; cf. §60. The Kehot edition reads מפרנסים, "the Jewish people sustain [Him]," which is the reading the derush goes on to explain.

to the Holy One, blessed is He, and such a thing is difficult to say, for surely the Holy One, blessed is He, precedes all that is primordial. The difficulty is theological: how can anything nurture Him who has no antecedent and no need? **אֲבָל לְפִי דַּרְכֵּנוּ יתורץ שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה מְשֻׁבַּחַת א"ע שֶׁהָיְתָה אוֹמֶן לְהקב"ה כ"י.** — **But according to our approach it is resolved: the Torah praises itself for having been a nurse to the Holy One, blessed is He, as it were.** The whole passage has established in what sense this can be said, since delight was already compared to nourishment. **דהיינו גודל הַתַּעֲנוּג וְהַשַּׁעֲשׁוּעַ שֶׁהָיָה לוֹ ית' מִן הַתּוֹרָה דהיינו מְתוֹרַת כָּל צַדִּיק וְצַדִּיק וּמַעֲשָׂיו הַטּוֹבִים שֶׁהֵם הַמִּצְוֹת הַכְּתוּבִים בַּתּוֹרָה,** — **That is, the magnitude of the delight and pleasure He had from the Torah, meaning from the Torah of every single tzaddik and from his good deeds, which are the mitzvos written in the Torah,** "Torah" in the verse is not an abstraction. It is the Torah as it will be learned and lived by particular people. **זֶה נַעֲשָׂה לוֹ ית' כִּבְיָכוֹל אוֹמֵן וּפַרְנָסָה וְכוּ' וְזֶהוּ וָאֶהְיֶה אֶצְלוֹ אָמוֹן.** — **this became for Him, as it were, a nurse and sustenance, and so on. This is "And I was beside Him as a nurse."** The pairing of "nurse" with "sustenance" confirms that *omein* is being taken in the sense of one who provides and nourishes. **וְיָדוּעַ כִּי שֵׁם אהי' מוֹרֶה עַל הֶעָתִיד.** — **It is known that the Name *Ekyeh* indicates the future.** *Ekyeh* means "I shall be." The Maggid now presses on the verse's form: Torah says *va'ehyeh*, "and I shall be," not "I was."[6] **וְהָכִי פִּי' וָאֶהְיֶה כְּלוֹמַר אע"פ שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה עֲתִידָה לִיתֵּנָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל ועדיין לֹא ניתנה. וא"כ מַהוּ הַשַּׁעֲשׁוּעִים, לָכֵן אָמַר אֶצְלוֹ.** — **This is the meaning of "and I shall be": even though the Torah was still destined to be given to the Jewish people and had not yet been given, so what were these delights? For this reason it says "beside Him."** The future form registers the problem, and the word "beside Him" answers it. **הַיינו אֶצְלוֹ ית' כִּבְיָכוֹל. הַכֹּל שָׁוֶה הֶעָבָר וְהֶעָתִיד. וְהַכֹּל גָּלוּי לְפָנָיו ית' לָכֵן הָיִיתִי אֵלָיו אוֹמֵן וְשַׁעֲשׁוּעַ כַּנִּזְכָּר.** — **That is, with Him, as it were, past and future are all alike, and everything is revealed before Him. Therefore I was to Him a nurse and a delight, as explained.** "Beside Him" locates the delight within His own perspective, where the not-yet-given Torah is fully present, and so it can nourish Him already. **ונחזור לָעִנְיָן שֶׁיֵּשׁ אַהֲבָה שֶׁהוּא אָב. וְיֵשׁ אַהֲבָה שֶׁהוּא תּוֹלָדָה** — **Let us return to the matter: there is a love that is "father," and a love that is "offspring."** The Maggid now turns the distinction into a measure of a person's own service. **וְהִנֵּה הָאָדָם שֶׁמִּתְעוֹרֵר לַעֲבוֹדָתוֹ ית' מֵחֲמַת שֶׁרוֹאֶה אַהֲבַת הַבּוֹרֵא עָלָיו. שֶׁבָּרָאוֹ וְיִצָּרוֹ וּמְקַיְּמוֹ וּמְחַיֵּהוּ. וְנוֹתֵן לוֹ דֵּי סִיפּוּקוֹ** — **Consider a person who is aroused to His service because he sees the Creator's love toward him, that He created him, formed him, sustains him, gives him life, and provides all his needs.** This is service that begins from an awareness of what has already been given. **וּמֵחֲמַת זֶה נִתְעוֹרֵר לוֹ אַהֲבַת הַבּוֹרֵא ב"ה וְעוֹבְדֵהוּ.** — **Because of this, love of the Creator, blessed is He, is awakened in him, and he serves Him.** His love is a response, the counterpart of Shimon's love for Reuven. In the terms established above, it belongs to the category of "offspring," an awakening from above. **וז"ש מִי הִקְדִּימַנִי וַאֲשַׁלֵּם לוֹ** — **This is the meaning of "Who has anticipated Me, that I should repay him?" (*Iyov* 41:3).** In its plain sense the verse denies that anyone can put Hashem in his debt. Here it characterizes this level of service exactly: such a person never came first, because everything in his love was given to him beforehand. **הֲגַם שֶׁזֶּה ג"כ עֲבוֹדָה מִיקָּרֵי. עכ"ז הוּא מִיקָּרֵי צַדִּיק לְעַצְמוֹ.** — **Although this too is called service, nevertheless he is called a tzaddik for himself alone.** The Maggid does not dismiss this avodah. He measures it: it is real, but it terminates in the one performing it. **אֲבָל אֵינוֹ כְּמוֹ מִדַּת הַצַּדִּיק לְהַשְׁפִּיעַ לְזוּלָתוֹ** — **But he does not possess the quality of the tzaddik who bestows upon others.** The higher level is defined by what it gives, not by what it receives. **וע"י הַצַּדִּיק אָמַר הַכָּתוּב אָחוֹת לָנוּ קְטַנָּה וְשָׁדַיִם אֵין לָהּ.** — **And concerning such a tzaddik Scripture says, "We have a little sister, and she has no breasts" (*Shir HaShirim* 8:8).** Two details of the verse are being read: "little," and the absence of the organs of nursing.[7] **וְיָדוּעַ שֶׁזֶּה אוֹמְרִים הַמַּלְאָכִים שֶׁנִּק' חַבְרַיָּא לְיִשְׂרָאֵל** — **It is known that these words are spoken by the angels, who are called companions to the Jewish people.** The line is not a slur from outside. It is spoken by those who observe

[6] *Zohar* vol. 3, 65b. The Kehot edition reads שם אהיה הוא מורה here, a fuller phrasing with the same sense.

[7] The Kehot edition reads ועל זה, "and concerning this," in place of וע"י.

the Jewish people from above and note what is missing.[8] **וְכַאֲשֶׁר יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵם בְּמַדָּה זוֹ שֶׁאֵין לָהֶם אַהֲבָה רַק מֵחֲמַת אִתְעָרוּתָא דִּלְעֵילָּא אוֹמְרִים אָחוֹת לָנוּ קְטַנָּה. — When the Jewish people are at this level, having love only because of an arousal from above, the angels say, "We have a little sister."** An arousal from above is the "father" love: it is given to them, not generated by them. **כְּלוֹמַר אָחוֹת לְשׁוֹן דְּבֵיקוּת וְהִתְחַבְּרוּת ר"ל אע"פ שֶׁהֵם דְּבֵקִים ומחוברים בהש"י — That is, "sister" (*achos*) denotes clinging and joining. The meaning is that even though they do cling and are joined to Hashem,** The Maggid reads *achos* from the root of joining, so the verse concedes a genuine bond before it registers the deficiency. **אעפי"כ קְטַנָּה הִיא הַמַּדָּה הַזֹּאת מִפְּנֵי שֶׁאֵין לָהֶם רַק מֵחֲמַת אִתְעָרוּתָא דִּלְעֵילָּא. וְהֵם מִיקְרֵי צַדִּיקִים לְעַצְמָן. — still this quality is "little," because they have it only from an arousal above. They are called tzaddikim for themselves.** "Little" is thus not an accusation of sin but a statement of scale.

אֲבָל אֵינָם צַדִּיקִים לְהַשְׁפִּיעַ לְעֵילָּא לִגְרוֹם שַׂעֲשׁוּעַ וְתַעֲנוּג וְשִׂמְחָה לָעֶלְיוֹנִים. — But they are not tzaddikim who bestow upward, causing delight, pleasure and joy in the supernal realms. This is the whole burden of the derush applied to avodah: the complete tzaddik generates something above, exactly as the righteous son generates a new love in his father. **וְזֶהוּ וְשָׁדַיִם אֵין לָהּ כְּלוֹמַר שָׁדַי"ם לְהָנִיק וּלְהַשְׁפִּיעַ לְזוּלָתָם. — This is "and she has no breasts," meaning breasts with which to nurse and to bestow upon others.** The image of nursing links this back to the Torah as *omein*, the one who nurses and sustains. What the "little sister" lacks is precisely what the Torah of the tzaddik supplies above. **מַה נַּעֲשֶׂה לַאֲחוֹתֵינוּ. לַהֲבִיאָם אֶל הַמַּדָּה הַנִּזְכֶּרֶת — "What shall we do for our sister?" (ibid.), that is, how shall we bring them to the complete level described.** The angels' question is read as a concern to raise the Jewish people from responsive love to generative love. **וּבָזֶה יִתּוֹרַץ וְיוּבַן גַּם הַמִּדְרָשׁ שֶׁהִתְחַלְנוּ. וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת יִצְחָק וגו' אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת יִצְחָק — With this, the Midrash with which we began is also resolved and understood: "These are the offspring of Yitzchak... Avraham begot Yitzchak."** The Maggid now returns to the verse's redundancy with the two loves in hand. **פִּי' הַכָּתוּב מְסַפֵּר בְּשִׁבְחָם. שֶׁהִגִּיעוּ לְמַעֲלַת הַשְׁלֵימוּת שֶׁהֵם ב' מִינֵי אַהֲבָה בָּהֶם. — The explanation is that the verse is recounting their praise, that they attained the level of completeness, in that both kinds of love were present in them.** The doubled phrase is not repetition. Each clause names a different love. **וְזֶהוּ וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת יִצְחָק בֶּן אַבְרָהָם. ר"ל שֶׁיִּצְחָק הוּא לְשׁוֹן צְחוֹק וְשִׂמְחָה — This is "These are the offspring of Yitzchak son of Avraham." The name Yitzchak denotes laughter and joy.** The name itself carries the theme, since joy is the middle term between delight and the new love it generates. **הוֹלִיד ר"ל שֶׁגָּרַם וְהוֹסִיף לְאַבְרָהָם תַּעֲנוּג וְשִׂמְחָה וְאַהֲבָה מְגוּדָּל צִדְקָתוֹ. — "Begot" means that through the greatness of his righteousness he caused and added delight, joy and love in Avraham.** The clause is read with Yitzchak as the one who generates and Avraham as the one in whom something is born. It is the son's righteousness that does the begetting. **כִּי מתחילה לֹא הָיָה לְאַבְרָהָם רַק אַהֲבָה הָרִאשׁוֹנָה שֶׁהוּא הוֹלָדַת אַבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק. שֶׁהוּא אַהֲבָה הַנִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם — For at first Avraham had only the first love, which is Avraham's begetting of Yitzchak, the love called "Avraham."** Chesed, the natural outflowing love, is Avraham's own middah, and it corresponds to the father's love by nature.[9] **ואח"כ עָלָה לְמַעְלָה. וְגָרַם תּוֹלָדָה לְאַבְרָהָם. — Afterward he rose higher and generated an "offspring" for Avraham.** The son's own ascent produces a new love in the father, and that love is the true "offspring" the verse names. **וז"ש עֲטֶרֶת זְקֵנִים בְּנֵי בָנִים. — This is the meaning of "The crown of the elderly are grandchildren."** The Mishlei verse is now read with the same two-stage structure. **ר"ל כִּי כְּמוֹ שֶׁזֶּה הַפִּ' מְדַבֵּר בתחילה מִשֶּׁכַּח תּוֹלְדוֹת יִצְחָק. ואח"כ מִתּוֹלְדוֹת אַבְרָהָם — Meaning that just as the verse in the Torah speaks first in praise of the offspring of Yitzchak and only afterward of the offspring of Avraham,** The Torah's word order is itself the proof: what Yitzchak generated is named before what Avraham generated. **אע"פ שֶׁהוֹלָדַת יִצְחָק שְׁנִיָּה לְהוֹלָדַת אַבְרָהָם מאוחרת מִמֶּנּוּ. — even though Yitzchak's begetting is second to Avraham's begetting and later than it,** In sequence the natural love comes first and the generated love second. **אַף עַל**

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[8] *Zohar* vol. 2, 80b; *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 8:1; the reading of אחות as clinging and joining is cited in the Alter Rebbe's *Likkutei Torah*, *parshas Behar*.

[9] The Kehot edition reads ליצחק, "Avraham's begetting of Yitzchak," which is the sense the passage requires.

— פִּי כֵן מַזְכִּיר הַכָּתוּב תְּחִילָה הוֹלָדַת יִצְחָק לְאַבְרָהָם. מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהוּא הַמַּעֲלָה הַיּוֹתֵר שְׁלֵימָה שֶׁאֵין לְמַעְלָה הֵימֶנָּה. Scripture nevertheless mentions first Yitzchak's begetting of love in Avraham, because that is the more complete level, than which there is none higher. Rank overrides chronology. The verse orders the two loves by greatness, not by time. **וּלְכָךְ מַזְכִּיר תְּחִילָה אע"פ שֶׁהוּא מאוחרת. — This is why it is mentioned first, even though it comes later.** The inversion in the verse is therefore deliberate and is the very thing the derush set out to explain.[10] **כֵּן הַפְּ' הַזֶּה. עֲטֶרֶת זְקֵנִים בְּנֵי בָנִים. שֶׁהוּא הַמַּעֲלָה הַיּוֹתֵר גְּדוֹלָה — So too with this verse: "The crown of the elderly are grandchildren," which is the greater level, is placed first.** The same principle of ordering governs the Mishlei verse. **ומ"ש עֲטֶרֶת זְקֵנִים בְּנֵי בָנִים. ר"ל הִגְדִּיל הַתַּעֲנוּג וְהַשִּׂמְחָה. שֶׁהַבֵּן גּוֹרֵם לָאָב. הוּא נִקְרָא בְּנֵי בָנִים. — And when it says "the crown of the elderly are grandchildren," the meaning is that the son magnified the delight and joy for his father, and this is what is called "grandchildren."** The delight itself is the new entity in the verse's genealogy. **כִּי מתחילה הוֹלִיד הָאָב אֶת הַבֵּן. ואח"כ הוֹלִיד וְגָרַם לָאָב הַתַּעֲנוּג. הֲרֵי הַתַּעֲנוּג הַבֵּן. — For at first the father begot the son, and afterward the son begot and produced the delight for the father. The delight is therefore the son's own child.** Two generations of "begetting" are counted: the father begets the son, and the son begets the delight. **וְנַעֲשָׂה הַתַּעֲנוּג עֲטָרָה לְרֹאשׁ הַזָּקֵן. שֶׁהוּא כְּמוֹ אֲבִי אָבִיו לְהַתַּעֲנוּג הַהוּא — And so the delight becomes a crown upon the elder's head, for he stands to that delight as its grandfather.** This is the literal fit with "the crown of the elderly are grandchildren." Relative to the delight, the father is a grandfather, and the delight crowns him. **ואח"כ אָמַר וְתִפְאֶרֶת בָּנִים אֲבוֹתָם. שֶׁהִיא אֵינוֹ כ"כ רַק יֵשׁ לוֹ : אַהֲבָה רִאשׁוֹנָה מֵחֲמַת הִתְעוֹרְרוּת וְהוֹלָדַת אָבִיו — Only afterward does it say, "and the glory of children are their fathers," which is not as great, for the son has only the first love, produced by his father's arousal and begetting.** The second half of the verse describes the lower level, the love a son has merely because his father awakened it. Set beside the whole passage, this is the "little sister" who has not yet come to nurse.

Section 2

Chesed Gives Birth to Rachamim

Summary

Derush: *Bereishis* 25:19 says "And these are the offspring of Yitzchak son of Avraham, Avraham begot Yitzchak." The closing clause seems to add nothing, since the verse has already identified Yitzchak as Avraham's son. The Maggid reads it instead as a statement about how the *middos* generate one another.

Torah Basis: The verse itself, together with the standard identifications in the *Zohar* of Avraham with Chesed, Yitzchak with din, and Yaakov with rachamim.

Kabbalistic Framework: Rachamim, the middle *middah* of Tiferes, is not simple Chesed. It arises only where Chesed encounters restraint, when *din* has come to rest on a person. That meeting is what the verse describes: Avraham, Chesed, produces Yaakov's *middah* "with Yitzchak," reading the word *es* as "with" rather than as the sign of the direct object.

Avodah: Judgment that settles on a person is not an end in itself. It is precisely the condition under which Chesed turns into mercy.

אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת יִצְחָק — "Avraham begot Yitzchak." The Maggid opens with the verse's closing clause (*Bereishis* 25:19) rather than its beginning, because this is the phrase that carries the difficulty: having already called Yitzchak "son of Avraham," why add that Avraham begot him? **פֵּי' כִּי מִדַּת הָרַחֲמָנוּת וְהַחֶסֶד**

[10] The Kehot edition reads מזכירה, the feminine form, with the verse itself as the subject.

נוֹלָד — **The meaning is that the middah of mercy and of Chesed is born** The subject of the sentence is *rachamim*, the middle *middah* of Tiferes, considered together with its source in Chesed. **כְּשֶׁשּׁוֹרֶה דִּין עַל הָאָדָם** — **when din rests upon a person.** Mercy has no occasion to appear where nothing is being withheld. It emerges specifically where judgment has taken hold, which is the *middah* of Yitzchak. **נוֹלָד הָרַחֲמָנוּת מִצַּד הַחֶסֶד** — **Mercy is born from the side of Chesed.** The birth is from Chesed, not from *din*. Judgment supplies the circumstance, while the compassion itself flows from the right side. This is why Tiferes is described as inclining toward Chesed even as it restrains it. **זֶהוּ וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת יִצְחָק.** — **This is the meaning of "And these are the offspring of Yitzchak."** The verse's word *toldos*, "offspring," is taken in its literal sense of what is generated: what comes forth from Yitzchak, from a state of *din*, is a new *middah*. **אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת יִצְחָק.** — **"Avraham begot Yitzchak."** The clause is quoted again, now to be parsed. **פֵּירוּשׁ אַבְרָהָם שֶׁהוּא חֶסֶד** — **That is, Avraham, who is Chesed,** Avraham is Chesed throughout the *Zohar*'s usage, the unrestrained impulse to bestow good. **הוֹלִיד מִדַּת יַעֲקֹב שֶׁהוּא הָרַחֲמָנוּת** — **gave birth to the middah of Yaakov, which is rachamim,** Yaakov is Tiferes, the middle line, and mercy is its inner experience. The Maggid supplies Yaakov here even though the verse does not mention him, because rachamim is the offspring that the verse's "begetting" produces. **: אֶת יִצְחָק** — **together with Yitzchak.** The pivot of the whole reading: since "the *middah* of Yaakov" has already been named as the object of "begot," the words *es Yitzchak* can no longer be the direct object. They are read as "with Yitzchak," meaning that Chesed produced mercy in partnership with judgment.[11]

Section 3

The Letters of Eileh Toldos Yitzchak

Summary

Derush: The verse "And these are the offspring of Yitzchak son of Avraham" (*Bereishis* 25:19) opens with the seemingly superfluous word *eileh*. The Maggid reads its three letters as the stages by which wisdom becomes speech, and takes "offspring" to mean precisely what that process brings forth.

Torah Basis: The verse itself, together with "and I will teach you wisdom" (*Iyov* 33:33), which supplies the link between the letter alef and *Chochmah*. The *Zohar*'s identification of the alef with *Chochmah* and *Tikkunei Zohar*'s identification of the lamed with thought stand behind the reading.

Kabbalistic Framework: Alef is *Chochmah*, the first point of insight. Lamed is thought, where that point spreads out. Hei, the number five, is the five places of articulation in the mouth, that is, speech. Avraham is *Chesed* and Yitzchak *Gevurah*, so "Yitzchak son of Avraham" is awe generated within love.

Avodah: Love and awe must be held together, since only their union produces anything.

וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת יִצְחָק בֶּן אַבְרָהָם. — **"And these are the offspring of Yitzchak son of Avraham."** The verse that opens the parsha (*Bereishis* 25:19). The word "these" appears to add nothing, since "the offspring of Yitzchak" would have said as much. The Maggid therefore treats *eileh* not as a pointing word but as a word whose three letters themselves spell out how anything is brought forth. **כִּי אֵל"ה הָאָל"ף הוּא הַחָכְמָה כְּמוֹ וַאֲאַלֶּפְךָ חָכְמָה.** — **In the word eileh, the alef is Chochmah, as in "and I will teach you wisdom."** The proof is drawn from the verb in *Iyov* 33:33, built on the very letters of alef, where what is transmitted is wisdom itself. *Chochmah* is the first flash of insight, a bare point in which everything is present but nothing

[11] *Zohar* vol. 1, 47b, on Avraham as Chesed; *Zohar* vol. 3, 38a, on Yaakov as rachamim; cf. *Maggid Devarav L'Yaakov* §35 and the close of §1 above.

yet spread out, and the alef, the first and simplest letter, corresponds to it. **וְהַלָּמ"ד הוּא הַמַּחֲשָׁבָה — the lamed is thought,** *Tikkunei Zohar* assigns the lamed to thought. This is the second stage: the compressed point of *Chochmah* is turned over inwardly and extended, so that what was folded into the flash becomes articulated to the one thinking it. **וְע"י ה' מוֹצָאוֹת הַפֶּה. — and through the five places of articulation of the mouth.** The hei, whose value is five, points to the five organs of speech: throat, palate, tongue, teeth and lips. With this the sequence in *eileh* is complete, running from insight, through thought, to spoken word.

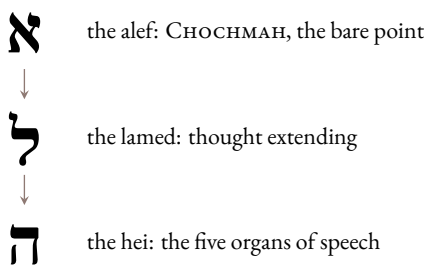


Diagram 1 · *The word eileh: from the point of Chochmah to the five organs of speech*

הֵם תּוֹלְדוֹת אֲצֶל יִצְחָק בֶּן אַבְרָהָם. — These are the offspring, in the case of Yitzchak son of Avraham. Speech is where things actually come into being, since the world was made by utterances, so the three stages compressed into *eileh* are what the verse calls "offspring": they are the generative chain itself, not its products. How this chain is bound specifically to "Yitzchak son of Avraham" is left unstated in this first reading, and the second reading supplies it.[12] **פֵּי' אַחֵר וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת — Another explanation of "And these are the offspring":** The Maggid now rereads the same words, no longer as a chain of faculties but as a statement about how the world came to be.

הוּא בְּרִיא"ת עה"ז ע"י יִצְחָק בֶּן אַבְרָהָם — this refers to the creation of this world, which came about through Yitzchak son of Avraham, The verse is heard as describing what "these offspring" are: the bringing forth of this world. The agency named is the pairing "Yitzchak son of Avraham." **היינו ע"י הִתְכַּלְלוּת אַהֲבָה וְיִרְאָה : — that is, through the interinclusion of love and awe.** Avraham is *Chesed*, the inner experience of which is love, and Yitzchak is *Gevurah*, whose inner experience is awe. The verse does not name them side by side but as son and father, which is exactly interinclusion: the restraining awe of *Gevurah* is generated within, and contained inside, the outpouring love of *Chesed*. Love alone sets no limit and so yields nothing definite, and awe alone withholds, so a world emerges only where the two are folded into each other.[13]

[12] *Zohar* vol. 1, 26b; *Zohar* vol. 2, 136b; *Tikkunei Zohar* 55 (89a). On *eileh* treated as a term in its own right, cf. *Sha'ar HaHakdamos*, in the discussion of the Name B"N.

[13] cf. §1; *Or HaEmes* 33a-b.

Section 4
Why Yitzchak Loved Esav

Summary

Derush: Why did Yitzchak love Esav (*Bereishis* 25:28)? The Maggid answers from the name Yitzchak itself, which the midrash traces to laughter and joy, that is, to delight. Since delight that never lapses ceases to register as delight, the bearer of delight is drawn precisely to what is distant, and so Yitzchak loves the far son and asks that son to bring him "delicacies."

Torah Basis: *Bereishis* 25:28 and 27:4; the teaching of Reish Lakish and its resolution in *Yoma* 86b that teshuvah out of love converts willful sins into merits; "From afar Hashem appeared to me" (*Yirmiyahu* 31:2) and "peace to the far one" (*Yeshayah* 57:19).

Kabbalistic Framework: *Taanug*, delight, understood as needing contrast, so that estrangement itself becomes the instrument of pleasure rather than its opposite.

Avodah: The distance opened by sin, when it turns into longing to rise, is what generates the delight above. This is why the sins themselves count as merits.

וַיֶּאֱהַב יִצְחָק אֶת עֵשָׂו — "And Yitzchak loved Esav" (*Bereishis* 25:28). In its plain sense the verse explains the preference by the game Esav brought his father. The derush asks a different question: what could draw Yitzchak specifically to Esav? **פֵּי' יִצְחָק הוּא לְשׁוֹן צְחוֹק וְשִׂמְחָה — The explanation: the name Yitzchak is an expression of laughter and joy.** The midrashic reading of the name from the root of laughter is what triggers the whole derush. **וְהוּא הַתַּעֲנוּג — and this is delight.** Laughter is what delight looks like from outside, so the name marks Yitzchak as the *middah* of *taanug*, delight itself. **וְתַעֲנוּג תָּמִידִי אֵינוֹ תַּעֲנוּג, — and a delight that is constant is no delight.** This is the axiom the derush turns on. Pleasure is felt only against a background of its absence. Unbroken, it stops being experienced at all. **לָכֵן וַיֶּאֱהַב יִצְחָק אֶת עֵשָׂו, — and this is why "Yitzchak loved Esav,"** The love now follows from the nature of delight rather than from any merit in Esav. **הַתַּעֲנוּג אוֹהֵב הַהִתְרַחֲקוּת. — for delight loves distance.** Esav is the son who stands at a remove. Distance is exactly what delight requires in order to be felt, so the bearer of delight is drawn to the distant one. **לָכֵן בָּא עֵשָׂו לְיִצְחָק. — That is why Esav comes to Yitzchak.** The movement runs from far to near, and that approach out of distance is what yields the delight. Yitzchak does not go out to Esav. **וְזֶהוּ וַעֲשֵׂה לִי מַטְעַמִּים. — This is the meaning of "and make me delicacies" (*Bereishis* 27:4).** *Matamim* is built on *taam*, taste. Yitzchak asks the distant son for "tastes," and what he is asking for is the delight that only distance supplies. **ר"ל כִּי יִתְרַבֶּה הַתַּעֲנוּג, — meaning that the delight should be increased.** The request is not for food but for intensification, since the delight grows in proportion to the remove from which it is brought. **וְזֶהוּ גְּדוֹלָה תְּשׁוּבָה שֶׁזְּדוֹנוֹת נַעֲשׂוּ לוֹ כִּזְכִיּוֹת אִם הוּא מֵאַהֲבָה. — And this is the meaning of "Great is teshuvah, for willful sins become like merits for him" (*Yoma* 86b), when it is out of love.** The Gemara resolves its own difficulty by distinguishing teshuvah out of fear, which reduces willful sins to unintentional ones, from teshuvah out of love, which converts them into merits. The mechanism just established explains why love in particular does this. **ר"ל כָּל מַה שֶּׁהוּא חָפֵץ לַעֲלוֹת. — That is, [it all depends on] how much he desires to ascend.** The Hebrew is elliptical, and the next clause supplies the sense: the operative measure is the strength of the returning person's longing. **וּכְפִי חֶפְצוֹ וְחִשְׁקוֹ כָּךְ מַרְבֶּה הַתַּעֲנוּג, — and in accordance with his desire and yearning, so does he increase the delight.** Sin sets a person at a distance, and it is from that distance that the yearning to rise is generated. The stronger the yearning, the greater the delight it produces above. **לָכֵן בָּזֶה הַזְּדוֹנוֹת בָּא לוֹ תַּעֲנוּג לָכֵן הֵם כִּזְכִיּוֹת — and so it is through these very willful sins that delight comes to him, and therefore they are like merits.** They are not merely erased. Having been the cause of the distance, they are the cause of the longing, and so they become the source of the delight itself. That is why they are credited as merits. **וְזֶהוּ מֵרָחוֹק ה' נִרְאָה לִי. — This is the meaning of "From afar Hashem appeared to me" (*Yirmiyahu* 31:2).** The prophet speaks of Hashem's enduring love for the Jewish people. Read here, the words state the cause:

it is out of the distance that He appears. **אִם אֲנִי מרוחק אָז הָי' נִרְאָה לִי — If I am the one who is distanced, then He appeared to me,** The verse is taken in the first person as the speech of the one who has become far. **כִּי שָׁלוֹם לְרָחוֹ"ק ע"י רִיחוּ"ק : — for "peace to the far one" (*Yeshayah* 57:19) comes about by way of the distance.** The Maggid marks the wordplay by spacing out the two words: *la'rachok*, "to the far one," and *richuk*, "distance," are the same letters. The peace promised to the distant one is not granted in spite of his distance but through it. The point of service follows: estrangement that turns into longing is precisely what produces delight above.[14]

Section 5

The Tzaddik Who Never Stands Still

Summary

Derush: "And the man grew great, and he went on growing greater until he became very great" (*Bereishis* 26:13) calls Yitzchak "the man" rather than by name, and doubles both the growing and the going. The Maggid asks why.

Torah Basis: The two declarations at the Simchas Beis HaShoeivah in *Sukkah* 53a, the dispute in *Berachos* 34b over whether complete tzaddikim or baalei teshuvah stand higher, Reish Lakish's two kinds of teshuvah in *Yoma* 86b, and the midrash that people preferred the dung of Yitzchak's mules to Avimelech's silver and gold.

Kabbalistic Framework: *Chochmah* as *ayin*, as *koach mah*, and as "old age"; the Arizal's rule about the inner dimension of a lower world becoming the outer dimension of the world above it; and *me'od* read as the letters of *adam*, whose value is *mah*, the middah by which the shattering of the vessels is repaired.

Avodah: The tzaddik's task is never to stand still on one level, and to keep his service burning with the fervor that only love produces, since habit deadens it.

בַּפָּסוּק וַיִּגְדַּל הָאִישׁ וַיֵּלֶךְ הָלוֹךְ וגדול עַד כִּי גָדַל מאוד, — On the verse, "And the man grew great, and he went on growing greater until he became very great" (*Bereishis* 26:13). The verse describes Yitzchak's prosperity in the land of the Philistines. Three features of its wording drive the entire derush: the anonymous "the man," the repetition of growth, and the repetition of going. **וְהִנֵּה יֵשׁ לְדַקְדֵּק לָמָּה קוֹרֵא אוֹתוֹ בְּפ' זֶה אִי"שׁ וַהֲלֹא בְּכָל הַפָּרָשָׁה קוֹרֵא אוֹתוֹ יִצְחָק וְכָאן קְרָאָהוּ אִי"שׁ. — One must examine why in this verse Scripture calls him "a man," when throughout the entire portion it calls him Yitzchak, yet here it calls him "a man."** The whole narrative names Yitzchak explicitly. The switch to the generic *ish* asks to be accounted for. **וְעוֹד מַהוּ כֶּפֶל הגדולות. וְכֶפֶל הַהֲלִיכָה — Furthermore, what is the point of the doubled expression of greatness, and of the doubled expression of going?** "He grew great" and "until he became very great" say greatness twice, and "he went on going" says going twice. **וְא"ל עפ"י מ"ש בְּגֶמ' הַלָּלוּ אָמְרוּ אַשְׁרֵי יַלְדוּתֵינוּ שֶׁלֹּא ביישה אֶת זִקְנָתֵינוּ. — This can be explained in light of what the Gemara teaches: some of them would say, "Happy is our youth, which did not shame our old age."** At the Simchas Beis HaShoeivah, the pious men and men of deed made this declaration. **וְהַלָּלוּ אָמְרוּ אַשְׁרֵי זִקְנָתֵינוּ שֶׁכִּפְּרָה עַל יַלְדוּתֵינוּ. — Others would say, "Happy is our old age, which atoned for our youth."** This second group is identified in the Gemara as the baalei teshuvah. **וְאֵלּוּ וְאֵלּוּ אוֹמְרִים. אַשְׁרֵי מִי שֶׁלֹּא חָטָא וְכוּ' — And both groups would say, "Happy is one who has not sinned..."** The passage concludes with a line both groups say together, which the Maggid will presently take apart. **הִנֵּה ר"ל אומרם זִקְנָתֵינוּ שֶׁכִּיפְּרָה כו'. — Now, [consider] what they mean by saying, "our old age, which atoned," and so on.**[15] The

[14] A parallel appears in *Or HaEmes* 33b. Cf. *Kesser Shem Tov* §121 on constant delight, and §§29-30 on this reading of "From afar."

[15] The Kehot edition reads יש לדקדק here, "one must examine," making this the opening of a list of difficulties rather than a statement of the passage's meaning.

examination begins with the second group's formula. **הַלָּשׁוֹן מַשְׁמַע שֶׁאוֹתָן הָיוּ הַבַּעֲלֵי תְּשׁוּבָה, שֶׁעָשׂוּ תְּשׁוּבָה בִּימֵי זְקֻנוּתָם. — The wording implies that these were the baalei teshuvah, who repented in their old age.** "Our old age atoned for our youth" can only be said by someone whose repentance came late. **א"כ מַאי אַשְׁרֵי"י הֲלוֹא דהמע"ה אָמַר אַשְׁרֵי הָאִישׁ. — If so, in what sense are they "happy"? King Dovid, peace be upon him, said, "Happy is the man" (*Tehillim* 1:1).** The first difficulty: the word *ashrei* is reserved by Scripture and Chazal for something quite different from belated repentance. **וְאָמְרוּ רז"ל אַשְׁרֵי מִי שֶׁחוֹזֵר בִּתְשׁוּבָה כְּשֶׁהוּא אִישׁ — and Chazal expounded: happy is one who returns in teshuvah while he is still a "man,"** Reading *ashrei ish* as praise for the man who repents in his strength, not in his decline. **וְאָמְרוּ בַּגְּמ' מִפְּנֵי שֵׂיבָה תָּקוּם וְגוֹ'. — and they expounded on "Rise before the aged..." (*Vayikra* 19:32).** The step is compressed. The Maggid gathers two teachings that locate the praise elsewhere than in old-age repentance, and asks how the men who repented only in their old age can call themselves fortunate. **וְעוֹד אָמְרוּ שֶׁכִּיפְּרָה יַלְדוּתֵינוּ. דַּיּוֹ לְהַפְקִיעַ א"ע מֵעֵת תְּשׁוּבָתָם וָהָלְאָה — Furthermore, they said that it atoned for their youth. It should have been enough for them to clear themselves from the time of their teshuvah onward.** The second difficulty: teshuvah should release a person going forward. On what basis do they claim that their old age reached back and atoned for their youth? **וְעוֹד אֵלּוּ וְאֵלּוּ אוֹמְרִים אַשְׁרֵי מִי שֶׁלֹּא חָטָא א"כ בַּדָּבָר הַזֶּה מביישים לְאוֹתָם שֶׁשָּׁבוּ בִּימֵי זְקֻנוּתָם. — Furthermore, both groups say, "Happy is one who has not sinned." In saying this, they shame those who repented in their old age.** The third difficulty: if the baalei teshuvah themselves join in this praise of the sinless, they are shaming themselves, which contradicts their own boast. **וְעוֹד מַה שֶּׁמְּסַיְּמִין וּמִי שֶׁחָטָא יִמְחוֹל לוֹ, וַהֲלוֹא כְּבָר אָמְרוּ זְקֻנוֹתֵינוּ כִּיפְּרָה עַל יַלְדוּתֵינוּ. וְאֵיזֶה מְחִילָה הֵם צְרִיכִים — Furthermore, they conclude, "and whoever has sinned, may He forgive him." Yet they already said that their old age atoned for their youth, so what forgiveness do they still need?** The fourth difficulty: atonement already achieved leaves nothing to forgive. **וְאֶפְשָׁר לוֹמַר פָּשׁוּט דְּאִפְּלִיגוּ בַּגְּמָרָא ח"א בַּמָּקוֹם שֶׁהַצַּדִּיקִים גְּמוּרִים עוֹמְדִים אֵין בע"ת יְכוֹלִים לַעֲמוֹד. וח"א בַּמָּקוֹם שֶׁבע"ת עוֹמְדִים וְכוּ'. — It may be explained simply. The Gemara records a dispute: one authority holds that in the place where completely righteous men stand, baalei teshuvah cannot stand, while another holds that in the place where baalei teshuvah stand [the completely righteous cannot stand].** The two ends of the dispute give the Maggid the two categories he needs. **וי"ל מַר אָמַר חֲדָא וְכוּ' וְלָא פְּלִיגִי — One may say that each authority is speaking of a different case, and they do not really disagree.** The standard talmudic resolution: two statements, two subjects. **כִּי הֲלוֹא יָדוּעַ מ"ש רז"ל הַשָּׁב מֵאַהֲבָה זְדוֹנוֹת וְכוּ'. וְהַשָּׁב מִיִּרְאָה זְדוֹנוֹת נַעֲשׂוּ כִּשְׁגָגוֹת, — For it is well known what Chazal taught: for one who repents out of love, willful sins [become like merits], while for one who repents out of fear, willful sins become like unwitting ones.** Reish Lakish's two teachings about teshuvah supply the distinction that separates the two kinds of baal teshuvah. **מ"ד שֶׁצַּדִּיקִים גְּדוֹלִים יוֹתֵר מִבע"ת. מְדַבֵּר מֵאוֹתָם שֶׁשָּׁבוּ מִיִּרְאָה, כִּי בוודאי זְכִיּוֹת צַדִּיק מִנְּעוּרָיו מרובים הֵם יוֹתֵר מִבע"ת. — The authority who holds that the righteous are greater than baalei teshuvah is speaking of those who repented out of fear, for the merits of one who has been righteous from his youth are certainly more numerous than those of such a baal teshuvah.** Repentance out of fear only downgrades the sins to unwitting ones. It adds no merits, so the lifelong tzaddik's ledger is longer. **ומ"ד — And the authority who holds** [16]

שֶׁבע"ת הֵם יוֹתֵר גְּדוֹלִים מְדַבֵּר בְּאוֹתָן שֶׁשָּׁבוּ מֵאַהֲבָה, שֶׁזְּדוֹנוֹת נַעֲשׂוּ לוֹ כִּזְכֻיּוֹת. — that baalei teshuvah are greater is speaking of those who repented out of love, for whom willful sins became like merits. Here the sins themselves are converted into the positive column, which changes the arithmetic entirely. **ובוודאי לָזֶה יֵשׁ יוֹתֵר זְכִיּוֹת מִשֶּׁל צַדִּיק גָּמוּר. — Such a person certainly has more merits than a completely righteous man.** The claim is now a matter of simple counting. **כִּי הוּא הִרְבָּה לַחֲטוֹא בְּעוֹדוֹ רָשָׁע מִסְתָּמָא הָיוּ לוֹ יוֹתֵר זְדוֹנוֹת הַרְבֵּה וְעַתָּה כְּשֶׁעָשָׂה תְּשׁוּבָה מֵאַהֲבָה, נֶהֱפְכוּ לוֹ לִזְכֻיּוֹת — For he sinned a**

[16] *Sukkah* 53a; *Berachos* 34b; *Yoma* 86b. The teaching that one is fortunate to repent "while he is still a man" is in *Avodah Zarah* 19a, on *Tehillim* 112:1; the teaching cited on "Rise before the aged" (*Vayikra* 19:32) appears in *Zohar* vol. 3, 87b.

great deal while he was still wicked, so presumably he had very many willful sins, and now that he has repented out of love, they have been turned into merits for him. The very volume of his former sinning becomes the measure of his present merit. **וְעוֹד הַזְּכֻיּוֹת שֶׁעוֹשֶׂה אַחַר הַתְּשׁוּבָה נִמְצָא כִּי יֵשׁ לוֹ יוֹתֵר זְכֻיּוֹת מִן הַצַּדִּיק — Add to that the merits he earns after his teshuvah, and it turns out that he has more merits than the tzaddik.** Converted sins plus fresh mitzvos outweigh a lifetime of steady service. **וְשָׁמַעְתִּי טַעַם א' שֶׁהַבַּע"ת יוֹתֵר גָּדוֹל מִפְּנֵי שֶׁכְּבָר הִכִּיר חִימּוּם וְהִתְלַהֲבוּת עֲוֹנוֹת — I have also heard a further reason why the baal teshuvah is greater: he has already known the heat and burning excitement of sin,** The argument now shifts from quantity of merits to quality of service. **וּכְשֶׁעוֹשֶׂה תְּשׁוּבָה וְעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה וּבְמִצְוֹת עוֹשֶׂה הַכֹּל בְּהִתְלַהֲבוּת וְחֵשֶׁק גָּדוֹל מִפְּנֵי שֶׁיּוֹדֵעַ הֵיטֵב הַהִתְלַהֲבוּת. — so when he repents and occupies himself with Torah and mitzvos, he does everything with fervor and great longing, because he knows well what such burning is.** The capacity for passion, once trained on sin, is transferred intact to avodah. **משא"כ הַצַּדִּיק שֶׁלֹּא הִכִּיר זֶה מֵעוֹלָם, — The tzaddik, by contrast, never knew this.** He has no acquired experience of that inner heat to draw upon. **וְעוֹד אָמַר מוֹרִי וְרַבִּי הַטַּעַם, מִפְּנֵי שֶׁאֵצֶל הַצַּדִּיק נַעֲשׂוּ מַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים וְלִימּוּד תּוֹרָה הֶרְגֵּל. וְאֵינוֹ עוֹשֶׂה כ"כ בְּהִתְלַהֲבוּת. — My teacher and master gave a further reason: for the tzaddik, good deeds and Torah study have become habit, and so he does not perform them with as much fervor.** "My teacher and master" is the Baal Shem Tov. Habit is the specific liability of consistency: what one has always done, one does automatically. **אֲבָל הבע"ת אֶצְלוֹ הוּא דָּבָר חָדָשׁ. — For the baal teshuvah, however, it is all new.** Novelty keeps his service awake. **וְעוֹד אִם לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה הַכֹּל בדביקות יפול ממדריגתו. לָכֵן מִן הַהֶכְרֵחַ הוּא לוֹ לעבוד בּוֹרְאוֹ ית' בְּהִתְלַהֲבוּת גְּדוֹלָה. — Moreover, if he does not do everything with attachment [to Hashem], he will fall from his level. He therefore has no choice but to serve his Creator, blessed is He, with great fervor.** His position is unstable, and instability itself forces intensity. **וא"כ לְפִי טְעָמִים הַנִּזְכָּר גַּם הַשָּׁב מִיִּרְאָה הִכִּיר הִתְלַהֲבוּת. — According to these reasons, then, even one who repents out of fear has known such fervor.** The three reasons just given apply to any baal teshuvah, which threatens to erase the distinction the Maggid drew a moment ago. **אַךְ עכ"ז יָדוּעַ הוּא. כִּי עִיקַּר הִתְלַהֲבוּת הוּא מִגּוֹדֶל הָאַהֲבָה, — Even so, it is known that fervor comes essentially from the intensity of love.** Fervor is a function of *Chesed*. Its true source is love, not fear. **משא"כ הָעוֹבֵד מִיִּרְאָה אע"פ שֶׁיֵּשׁ לוֹ אֵשׁ הַהִתְלַהֲבוּת. אֵינוֹ כ"כ גְּדוֹלָה. כְּמוֹ הַצַּדִּיק הָעוֹבֵד מֵאַהֲבָה. — One who serves out of fear, though he has the fire of fervor, does not have it as strongly as the tzaddik who serves out of love.** So the distinction stands: the fear-driven baal teshuvah burns, but with a lesser flame than love produces. **ועפ"ז י"ל ג"כ הַלָּלוּ אוֹמְרִים אַשְׁרֵי זְקֵנוֹתֵינוּ מֵירִידֵי נַמִּי בְּאוֹתָן שֶׁשָּׁבוּ מֵאַהֲבָה. — On this basis we can also explain that those who say "Happy is our old age" likewise refer to those who repented out of love.** The Gemara's second group is now identified precisely, which answers the first difficulty about the word *ashrei*. **וּבָזֶה וְוַדַּאי כִּיפְּרָה יַלְדוּתָם — In their case their old age certainly did atone for their youth.** This answers the second difficulty. Since their sins were converted into merits, the atonement genuinely reached backward. **וְאַף שֶׁשָּׁבוּ בִּימֵי הַשֵּׂיבָה עכ"ז גְּדוֹלָה תְּשׁוּבָתָם שֶׁעָשׂוּ מֵאַהֲבָה. וּמִכֹּחַ זֶה גדל' הַהִתְלַהֲבוּת שֶׁלָּהֶם וּדְבֵקוּתָם מִפְּנֵי הַטְּעָמִים הַנִּזְכָּרִים. — Even though they repented in old age, their teshuvah was great, since it was done out of love, and consequently their fervor and attachment were great, for the reasons given.** Lateness is offset by the quality of the motive and by the three advantages of the baal teshuvah. **וּבָזֶה בְּוַדַּאי כִּיפְּרָה לָהֶם מִכֹּל וָכֹל. וְאֵין בָּהֶם רוֹשֶׁם חֵטְא כִּי אַדְרַבָּא נַעֲשָׂה זְכֻיּוֹת מֵהֶם, — Thus it atoned for them entirely, and no trace of sin remains in them. On the contrary, their sins were made into merits.** Not a residue removed, but a substance transformed. **וז"ש אַשְׁרֵי מִי שֶׁלֹּא חָטָא כִּי אִלּוּ וָאִלּוּ מַזְהִירִין וּמוֹכִיחִין לִשְׁאֲרֵי בע"ת אָמְרוּ אַשְׁרֵי מִי שֶׁלֹּא חָטָא. וַעֲלֵיהֶם — This is why they say, "Happy is one who has not sinned": both groups are warning and rebuking the other baalei teshuvah, those who repented [out of fear], and it is about them that they said, "Happy is one who has not sinned."** This answers the third difficulty. The closing line is not self-deprecation but instruction addressed to a third category of penitent. **וְגַם הָיוּ צְרִיכִין מְחִילָה וְכַפָּרָה כִּי חֲרֵי הַזְּדוֹנוֹת נַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם כִּשְׁגָגוֹת וְהַשּׁוֹגֵג צָרִיךְ כַּפָּרָה וז"ש וּמִי שֶׁחָטָא ימחול לוֹ. — They too still needed forgiveness and atonement, for their willful sins became like**

unwitting ones, and an unwitting sinner requires atonement. That is the meaning of "and whoever has sinned, may He forgive him." This answers the fourth difficulty. For the fear-driven penitent, sins downgraded to *shegagos* still call for a *korban*, so forgiveness is still needed. **ומ"ש אַשְׁרֵי יַלְדוּתֵינוּ שֶׁלֹּא בִּיְשָׁה זְקֻנוֹתֵינוּ אֵינוֹ מוּבָן. — But the statement "Happy is our youth, which did not shame our old age" is not understood.** Having settled the second group, the Maggid returns to the first. **כִּי הֲלוֹא אָמַרְנוּ שֶׁזֶּה מְדֻבָּר מִצַּדִּיקִים גְּמוּרִים מִתְּחִילָתָם א"כ מה"ת שֶׁיֵּבוֹשׁוּ מִפְּנֵי הַיַּלְדוּת שֶׁלָּהֶם וְהֲלוֹא כּוּלָּם שָׁוִים לְטוֹבָה — For we said that this refers to those who were completely righteous from the start. Why, then, should there be any reason for their old age to be shamed by their youth, when all of it was equally good?** The very formula presumes that their youth might have shamed their old age. For a lifelong tzaddik that presumption makes no sense. **אַךְ י"ל כִּי אוֹתָן הַצַּדִּיקִים הָלְכוּ וְנִתְגַּדְּלוּ מִמַּדְרֵיגָה לְמַדְרֵיגָה עַד רוּם הַמַּעֲלוֹת עַד שֶׁהִגִּיעוּ לְעוֹלַם הַחָכְמָה וּלְשַׁעַר איין — The answer is that those tzaddikim went on growing greater from level to level, to the very heights, until they reached the world of *Chochmah* and the gate of *ayin*.** *Chochmah* is the topmost reach of conscious attainment, and it is the point of *bitul*, where the self is experienced as nothing. That is "the gate of *ayin*." **כמ"ש וְהַחָכְמָה מֵאַיִן תִּמָּצֵא. — as it says, "And wisdom, from where is it found?" (*Iyov* 28:12).** The plain sense is a question, "where is wisdom to be found?" Read kabbalistically, *me'ayin* names the source: *Chochmah* is found from *ayin*. **חכמ"ה כ"ח — The word *Chochmah* [breaks into] koach** *

מ"ה כמ"ש וְנַחְנוּ מ"ה — *mah*, as it says, "and what are we?" (*Shemos* 16:7), *Chochmah* is *koach mah*, the power of "what," Moshe and Aharon's own expression of utter self-nullification. **וְחָכְמָה נִקְרָא זְקֻנָה זֶה קָנָה חָכְמָה וְנִקְרָא מ"ה ונק' אי"ן. — and *Chochmah* is called "old age," as in "this one has acquired wisdom," and it is called *mah*, and it is called *ayin*.** Three names for one rung. Chazal define *zaken* as one who has acquired wisdom, which lets "old age" in the Gemara's formula stand for *Chochmah* itself. Thus the two declarations at the Simchas Beis HaShoeivah are not only about two kinds of person but about two rungs in one person's ascent.[17] **וַהֲרֵי הָלְכוּ וְנִתְגַּדְּלוּ מְעַט מְעַט מִמַּדְרֵיגָה לְמַדְרֵיגָה. — So they went on growing greater, little by little, from level to level.** The ascent is gradual, which is what generates the problem of relative smallness. **וְאַף בִּהְיוֹתָם בְּמַדְרֵיגָה הא' שֶׁהִיא תַּחְתּוֹנָה לַעֲלִיּוֹתָם הָיוּ תֵּיכֶף בְּגֻדְלוּת וְלֹא הָיָה לָהֶם קַטְנוּת כְּלָל. — Even while they were on the first level, the lowest of their ascents, they were immediately in a state of greatness and had no smallness at all.** The printed בגלות is evidently בגדלות, "greatness," since the sentence's contrast is with *katnus*, smallness. **שֶׁהֲרֵי קוֹרְאִים אוֹתָן צַדִּיקִים מִתְּחִילָתָן. — since they are called righteous from the very start.** Their first rung was not deficient. It was already the service of a tzaddik. **עכ"ז כַּאֲשֶׁר עָלוּ לְמַדְרֵיגָה הַיּוֹתֵר עֶלְיוֹנָה. נָק' הַגְּדֻלוּת הָא' יַלְדוּת וְקַטְנוּת נֶגֶד עֶרֶךְ הַגְּדֻלוּת עוֹלָם שֶׁלְּמַעְלָה הֵימֶנּוּ. — Even so, once they rose to a higher level, that first greatness is called youth and smallness relative to the greatness of the world above it.** Greatness is measured against the world one now inhabits. What was full stature below is infancy above. **כְּמ"ש בִּכְתְבֵי הָאֲר"י זלה"ה. שֶׁפְּנִימִיּוּת עוֹלָם הַתַּחְתּוֹן נַעֲשֶׂה חִיצוֹן לָעוֹלָם הָעֶלְיוֹן מִמֶּנּוּ. — as is written in the writings of the Arizal, of blessed memory, that the inner dimension of the lower world becomes the external dimension in relation to the world above it.** The Lurianic rule about how adjacent worlds interlock supplies the mechanism: the highest, innermost point of a lower world registers only as the outermost layer of the world above. Applied to a person's ascent, his deepest attainment on one rung becomes the mere surface of the next. **וז"ש אַשְׁרֵי יַלְדוּתֵינוּ כְּלוֹמַר אע"פ שֶׁבְּעֶרְךְ זְקֻנוּתֵינוּ נָק' הַגְּדֻלוּת הָא' יַלְדוּת וְקַטְנוּת עכ"ז לֹא ביישה זְקֻנוּתֵינוּ כִּי הַמָּקוֹם הַתַּחְתּוֹן הָיְתָה גְּדֻלוּת גָּמוּר. — This is the meaning of "Happy is our youth": although relative to our old age that first greatness is called youth and smallness, still it did not shame our old age, for in its own lower place it was complete greatness.** The difficulty dissolves. "Youth" here is not sin but an earlier rung, and it carries no shame because it was whole in its own world. **וא"ל שֶׁזֶּה ג"כ פִּי' הֶמְשֵׁךְ הַפְּסוּק וַיִּגְדַּל**

[17] *Kiddushin* 32b for *zaken* as one who has acquired wisdom; *Zohar* vol. 3, 28a and 235b for *Chochmah* as *koach mah*; *Tikkunei Zohar* 70 (127a, 133b) and 42 (81b) for *Chochmah* as *mah* and as *ayin*. On habit dulling the tzaddik's service, cf. §456; on fervor deriving from love, cf. §44.

הָאִישׁ ר"ל תיכף שֶׁנַּעֲשָׂה אִישׁ שֶׁהוּא בֶּן י"ג שָׁנָה מִיָּד וַיִּגְדַּל הָיָה בְּגַדְלוּת. — **This also explains the sequence of our verse. "And the man grew great" means that as soon as he became a "man," that is, thirteen years old, he was immediately great.** Here is the answer to the first question. *Ish* is not a substitute for the name Yitzchak but a marker of age: the moment he reached the age of obligation he was already in *gadlus*, which is exactly the profile of "happy is our youth." **וְיֵלֶךְ הָלוֹךְ כָּפוּל הַהֲלִיכָה. שֶׁלֹּא עוֹמֵד בְּמַדְרֵיגָה א' מִיָּמָיו.** — **"And he went on going," the doubled expression of going, [teaches] that he never stood still on a single level all his life, but constantly went, one going after another, from world to world.** The doubled verb answers the second question, and it is the avodah of the passage: the tzaddik's standing is walking. **וְזֶהוּ הָלוֹךְ וגדיל עַד שֶׁהִגִּיעַ לְהַגְדלוּת גָּמוּר לְמַדְרֵיגַת הַחָכְמָה וְשַׁעַר אי"ן** — **This is "going and growing greater," until he reached complete greatness, the level of *Chochmah* and the gate of *ayin*.** Each new rung redefines the previous one as smallness, until the ascent arrives at *Chochmah*, where there is no self left to measure. **וְזֶהוּ עַד מְאֹ"ד שֶׁהוּא אוֹתִיּוֹת אָדָ"ם שֶׁהוּא גִּי' מ"ה כְּמוֹ וְנַחְנוּ מָ"ה.** — **This is "until he became very great (*me'od*)," whose letters are the letters of *adam*, which has the numerical value of *mah*, as in "and what are we?"** מאד and אדם share their letters, and אדם equals 45, the value of מה. The verse's final word thus names the destination of the whole ascent: the human being who has become "what?" **וּבְמִדַּת מָ"ה יָכוֹל לְתַקֵּן כָּל הַשִּׁבְירָה. וְיָכוֹל לַעֲלוֹת לְעֵילָא לְעֵילָא עַד רוּם הַמַּעֲלוֹת** — **With the middah of *mah* one can rectify the entire shattering, and one can rise higher and higher, to the very heights.** In the Arizal's account, the Name *Mah*, the filling of the divine Name that equals 45, is the light that repairs the vessels broken in the world of Tohu. In avodah this is *bitul*: only a person who is "what?" is not a vessel that can shatter, and only he can keep rising without limit.[18] **וְאֶפְשָׁר לוֹמַר שֶׁלָּזֶה רָמְזוּ רז"ל שֶׁאָמְרוּ עַל זֶה הַפָּסוּק וַיִּגְדַּל הָאִישׁ וגו' עַד שֶׁהָיוּ אוֹמְרִי' זֶבֶל פִּרְדוֹתָיו שֶׁל יִצְחָק וְלֹא כַּסְפּוֹ וּזְהָבוֹ שֶׁל אֲבִימֶלֶךְ.** — **It may be that this is what Chazal hinted at when they said on this verse, "And the man grew great...," that people were saying: the dung of Yitzchak's mules, and not the silver and gold of Avimelech.** The midrash on this very verse becomes the next text to be explained by the same distinction. **הִנֵּה אַף שֶׁהוּא מָשָׁל עכ"ז אֵינוֹ מוּבָן וְכִי בְּשׁוֹפְטִינֵי עָסְקִינַן הַמּוֹאֲסִים כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב וּבוֹחֲרִים זֶבֶל לְחֶלְקָם אַף אִם הַזֶּבֶל שָׁוֶה יוֹתֵר** — **Even granting that this is a figure of speech, it is still not understood. Are we dealing with fools who spurn silver and gold and choose dung as their portion, even if the dung is worth more?** A comparison of value would not be stated as an outright preference for refuse. **דְּעוֹד אָמְרָם וְלֹא כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב מַשְׁמָ' שֶׁאֵינָם רוֹצִים כְּלָל בְּכֶסֶף וְזָהָב וְהוּא כְּעֵין גּוּזְמָא.** — **Moreover, their words "and not the silver and gold" imply that they had no desire at all for silver and gold, which sounds like exaggeration.** The phrasing is exclusive, not comparative, and that is what needs accounting for. **וא"ל כִּי הַחִילוּק בֵּין הָעוֹבֵד הש"י מִנְּעוּרָיו. וּבֵין מִי שֶׁהִכִּיר אֶת בּוֹרְאוֹ וְשָׁב אֵלָיו בִּימֵי הַזִּקְנָה וְהַשֵּׁיבָה** — **The explanation lies in the difference between one who serves Hashem from his youth and one who came to recognize his Creator and returned to Him in old age.** The midrash is read as a comparison between two kinds of servant, and the Maggid now turns from the merits of the baal teshuvah to his characteristic danger. **כִּי מַה שֶּׁעוֹשֶׂה הבע"ת עטר' לְרֹאשׁוֹ עוֹשֶׂה הַצַּדִּי' עָקֵב לְסַנְדָּל.** — **What the baal teshuvah makes into a crown for his head, the tzaddik makes into the heel of his sandal.** The same deed occupies opposite positions in the two men's estimation of themselves. This will turn out to be the point of the dung and the gold. **כִּי הבע"ת אֵינוֹ מורגל לַעֲשׂוֹת מִצְוָה וּמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים וּבַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ אֵיזֶה פַּעַם הוּא מְחַשֵּׁב וּמְדַמֶּה בְּעַצְמוֹ שֶׁאֵין עוֹבֵד כְּמוֹתוֹ.** — **For the baal teshuvah is not accustomed to performing mitzvos and good deeds, and when he does perform one on occasion, he thinks and imagines that no one serves like him.** The very novelty that fuels his fervor also inflates his self-assessment. **מֵחֲמַת שבקושי וטורח גָּדוֹל עוֹשֶׂה אוֹתָם כִּי לֹא נִסָּה בָּזֶה. וּמִכֹּחַ זֶה הוּא חוֹשֵׁב שֶׁעוֹשֶׂה יוֹתֵר**

[18] *Etz Chaim*, *sha'ar* 14, ch. 9, for the relation between the inner dimension of a lower world and the outer dimension of the higher; cf. §24. *Niddah* 46a for *ish* as thirteen years old; *Tikkunei Zohar* 7b for *adam* as 45; *Etz Chaim*, *sha'ar* 10, ch. 1, on the Name *Mah* as the rectifying power; cf. §97.

מִן הַמּוּטָל עָלָיו. — On this account he thinks that he is doing more than is required of him. Difficulty persuades him that he is beyond obligation rather than behind it. **וְאֵינוֹ זוֹכֵר זֶה שֶׁשָּׁב לְעֵת זִקְנָתוֹ וְכִמְעַט הַזְּמַן אֵין סִיפּוּק לְתַקֵּן. — He does not remember that he returned only in his old age, and that there is hardly time enough to complete the rectification.** [19] The accounting he forgets is precisely the one that should press him: a lifetime of arrears and few years left. **וְהוּא אֵינוֹ מַרְגִּישׁ בָּזֶה וְהוֹלֵךְ לְאַט בַּעֲבוֹדָתוֹ — He does not sense this, and so he proceeds slowly in his service.** Self-satisfaction produces the opposite of the doubled "he went on going" of Yitzchak.

וְאֵינוֹ שָׂם עַל לִבּוֹ. — And he does not take it to heart. The subject is the baal teshuvah described just above, who proceeds slowly in his service and does not reckon with what still needs repairing. **כִּי כִמְעַט הַזְּמַן אֲשֶׁר יִחְיֶה עוֹד אֵין דַּי לְתַקֵּן אֲשֶׁר עוות בְּרִבּוֹת הַשָּׁנִים אֲשֶׁר עָבְרוּ — For the little time he still has to live is not enough to repair what he ruined over the many years that have passed.** [20] The years of damage are many, the years remaining few, and the deficit is precisely what he refuses to face. **וְלוּ אֶלֶף שָׁנִים יִחְיֶה אֵין מַסְפִּיק רַק הוּא מְדַמֶּה עַצְמוֹ לְצַדִּיק מֵעִיקָּרוֹ. — Even were he to live a thousand years it would not suffice, yet he likens himself to one who has been a tzaddik from the start.** The self-comparison is the root error of the whole passage, and it will return at the end in the image of the son who helps himself to his father's treasury. **וְאִם הוּא עוֹסֵק בְּתוֹרָה וּתְפִלָּה אֵיזֶה שָׁעוֹת בַּיּוֹם, וְאח"ז הוּא נִפְרָד וְהוֹלֵךְ בָּטֵל — He occupies himself with Torah and prayer for a few hours a day, and afterwards he detaches himself and goes about idle,** The word for detaching himself, *nifrad*, is the same root the Maggid will presently find in *pardosav*, the mules. Both men separate from holy occupation. The question is what happens in the interval. **בְּאָמְרוֹ שֶׁכְּבָר יָצָא יְדֵי חוֹבָתוֹ יוֹתֵר מִכְּדֵי צָרְכּוֹ כפליים, — saying that he has already discharged his obligation twice over, more than he needed.** Fixed hours are treated as a debt settled rather than as a life lived. **וכ"ז בָּא מֵחֲמַת שֶׁאֵינוֹ מורגל בַּעֲבוֹדַת הַבּוֹרֵא ב"ה. — All of this comes about because he is not habituated to the service of the Creator, blessed is He.** The whole diagnosis rests on habit, not on the quantity of study. **וּמָה גַּם שֶׁלִּפְעָמִים בָּא מֵחֲמַת זֶה לִידֵי גַּבְהוּת וּבְנָקֵל יָכוֹל ח"ו לִיפּוֹל מִמַּדְרֵגָתוֹ לְבֵירָא עֲמִיקָא — All the more so, since at times this brings him to haughtiness, and he can easily, G-d forbid, fall from his level into a deep pit.** Service performed as a settled account leaves the ego intact, and the higher the level so reached, the further the fall. **אֲבָל לֹא כֵן הַצַּדִּיק מֵתְּחִלָּתוֹ שֶׁהוּא מורגל וְדָשׁ בַּעֲבוֹדַת הַבּוֹרֵא וְהַהֶרְגֵּל נַעֲשֶׂה טֶבַע — Not so the tzaddik from his beginning, who is habituated and well practiced in the service of the Creator, and habit becomes second nature.** [21] Practice has reshaped what he is, so that service is no longer an act he performs at intervals. **וּמַה שֶּׁהוּא עוֹשֶׂה מִצְוֹת ומע"ט נִדְמֶה לוֹ לְמָעַט כִּי רְצוֹנוֹ לִהְיוֹת דָּבוּק תָּמִיד בקדושה בְּלִי הֶפְסֵק וְלַעֲלוֹת למדריגות עֶלְיוֹנוֹת, — The mitzvos and good deeds he performs seem to him very little, because he wants to be constantly attached to holiness without interruption and to rise to supernal levels.** Where the other counts hours and finds a surplus, this one measures against an unbroken attachment and finds a shortfall. **וְאַף אִם יוֹצֵא לִדְבַר הָרְשׁוּת לְעִנְיְנֵי צָרְכֵי עַצְמוֹ הוּא תָּמִיד דָּבוּק בהשי"ת. — Even when he goes out to permitted matters, to his own needs, he is always attached to Hashem.** This is the point the Midrash's odd word will be made to carry. **נִמְצָא כִּי אֵין הֶפְסֵק לַעֲבוֹדָתוֹ וְאֵין זְמַן וְקֵץ וּגְבוּל לַעֲבוֹדָתוֹ כִּי הִיא תְּמִידִית — It emerges that there is no break in his service, and no set time, end or limit to it, for it is continual.** "Limit" is the operative word: the other man's service is bounded by hours, this man's has no limits at all. **וְכָל הָעֲבוֹדָה שֶׁטָּרַח וְיָגַע הבע"ת עַד שֶׁיַּעֲשֶׂה אֵיזֶה דְּבַר הָעֲבוֹדָה עוֹשֶׂה זֶה הַצַּדִּיק בְּכָל עֵת וָרֶגַע — All the service that the baal teshuvah labors and struggles at before he manages a single act of service, this tzaddik performs at every moment.** The comparison is not of achievements but of effort: what costs one man exertion costs the other nothing. **וְלֹא**

[19] The Kehot edition reads במעט here, "in the little time [left] there is not enough to complete the rectification," which sharpens the point from "hardly any time" to the shortness of the time that remains. On the crown and the sandal's heel, see Yerushalmi *Shabbos* 1:3; the midrash on the mules is *Bereishis Rabbah* 64:7.

[20] The Kehot edition reads במעט here, "in the little time," which states plainly what our reading conveys by understatement, that the years remaining are as good as nothing against the years spoiled.

[21] The maxim appears in Rambam's ethical letter and in *Shevilei Emunah*, path 4, ch. 5; cf. §456.

עוֹד אֶפְשָׁר שֶׁהבע"ת יִהְיֶה לוֹ אֵיזֶה פְּנַיָּ' כְּמוֹ גַּבְהוּת וְכַיּוֹצֵא — **Furthermore, the baal teshuvah may well have some ulterior motive, such as haughtiness and the like,** Effort that is felt tends to be noticed, and what is noticed is easily credited to oneself. **אֲבָל זֶה כָּל מַעֲשָׂיו לש"ש וְאֵינוֹ מַחֲזִיק טוֹבָה לְעַצְמוֹ וְאֵין לוֹ גַּבְהוּת כְּלָל מִזֶּה —** **whereas with this one all his deeds are for the sake of Heaven, and he claims no credit for himself, and derives no haughtiness at all from them,** Nothing has been achieved, in his own estimation, that he might take credit for. **כִּי הֶעָבוֹדָה נַעֲשֵׂית לוֹ טִבְעִית וְאִי לָא עָבֵד יֵחֱלַשׁ —** **because the service has become natural to him, and if he does not serve he grows weak.** Service now functions in him the way food does in a body, which is also why he can take no pride in it. **וְאֶפְשָׁר שֶׁלָּזֶה רָמְזוּ רז"ל בְּאָמְרָם זֶבֶל פִּרְדוֹתָיו וְלֹא אָמְרוּ זֶבֶל בהמותיו כִּי הָיָה לוֹ מִקְנֶה צֹאן וּמִקְנֵה בָקָר.** **— Perhaps this is what our Sages alluded to when they said "the dung of his mules," rather than saying "the dung of his cattle," for he had flocks of sheep and herds of cattle.** Here is the oddity that drives the whole reading. The Midrash reports that people said the dung of Yitzchak's mules was worth more than Avimelech's silver and gold, yet the very next verse credits Yitzchak with flocks and herds, so those would have been the natural example.[22] **אַךְ רָמְזוּ בָּזֶה כִּי הִנֵּה הַפְּסוּק הַנִּזְכָּר מְדַבֵּר בְּעִנְיַן הַצַּדִּיק מִתְּחִלָּתוֹ כמ"ש וַיֵּלֶךְ הָאִישׁ וְגוֹ' כנז' —** **Rather, they were hinting at this: the verse in question speaks of the tzaddik from his outset, as it says, "and the man went..." as explained.** The verse is "The man grew great, and went on growing greater" (*Bereishis* 26:13), read earlier in this section as the continuous ascent of one who has served from the beginning. **וז"ש זֶבֶל פִּרְדוֹתָיו ר"ל לֹא מִיבַּעְיָא בְּעֵת שֶׁהַצַּדִּיק הַהוּא עוֹסֵק בְּדִבְרֵי קדושה הוּא דָּבוּק בּוֹ יִת' —** **This is the meaning of "the dung of his mules": it goes without saying that while that tzaddik is engaged in matters of holiness he is attached to Him, blessed is He,** *Pardosav* is heard as belonging to the root *pardo*, separation, so the phrase names not the animals but the tzaddik's periods of separation from holy occupation. **אֶלָּא אפילו אִם הוּא נִפְרָד מִדִּבְרֵי עֵסֶק הקדושה וְיוֹצֵא לִדְבַר הָרְשׁוּת לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלַאכְתּוֹ אוֹ מו"מ —** **but even when he separates from holy occupation and goes out to a permitted matter, to do his work or his business,**[23] The same verb, *nifrad*, that described the other man's daily detachment now describes the tzaddik's, and everything turns on what follows. **אֵינוֹ מַפְרִיד מַחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ וּדְבֵקוּתוֹ. כְּמוֹ שֶׁהָיָה דָּבוּק בְּעֵת לימודו אוֹ עֵסֶק קדושה. —** **he does not separate his thought and his attachment, but remains attached just as he was during his study or holy occupation.** The body has moved into the marketplace, the thought has not moved at all. **וז"ש זֶבֶל שֶׁהוּא לְשׁוֹן מָדוֹר וּבַיִת. כמ"ש יִזְבְּלֵנִי אִישִׁי. —** **This is the meaning of "zevel," which is an expression of dwelling and home, as it says, "my husband will dwell with me" (*Bereishis* 30:20).** Leah names Zevulun from *zevel* in the sense of a dwelling, and the Maggid takes the word in the Midrash in that sense: "the dwelling of his separations." **כְּלוֹמַר אע"פ שֶׁהוּא יוֹצֵא מֵעֵסֶק הקדושה לְמָדוֹר אַחֵר שֶׁהוּא עוֹלָם הֶעָשִׂיָּה עוֹלָם הפירוד. —** **That is, although he goes out from holy occupation into another dwelling, namely the world of asiyah, the world of separation,** *Asiyah* is where things stand apart from one another and from their source, so it is the fitting name for the domain a man enters when he leaves his learning for his trade. **עכ"ז הוּא דָּבוּק בְּמַחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ בַּיִּחוּדִים הַקְּדוֹשִׁים אפילו בְּעָמְדוֹ בַּמָּדוֹר הַתַּחְתּוֹן שָׁם בֵּיתוֹ בָּעֶלְיוֹנִים. —** **nevertheless in his thought he remains attached to the holy unifications, and even while standing in the lower dwelling his home is in the supernal realms.** The two senses now lock together. His *pardos*, his separations, have a *zevel*, a dwelling, and that dwelling is above. **כִּי הוּא צַדִּיק הַמְשַׂמֵּחַ אלקים. הַנק' יִצְחָק לְשׁוֹן צְחוֹק וְשִׂמְחָה שֶׁגּוֹרֵם בְּמַעֲשָׂיו הַטּוֹבִים ובכוונתו הַקְּדוֹשָׁה. תַּעֲנוּג וְשִׂמְחָה לְכָל הָעוֹלָמוֹת —** **For he is a tzaddik who gladdens G-d, the one called Yitzchak, from the term for laughter and joy, since by his good deeds and his holy intention he brings delight and joy to all the worlds** The phrase echoes the vine in Yosam's parable, whose wine "gladdens G-d and men" (*Shoftim* 9:13), the same chapter from which Avimelech son of Gideon will be drawn at the end of the derush. Yitzchak's name is read as *tzechok*, laughter, and the *taanug* his deeds arouse is the reason his refuse outweighs a king's treasure.

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[22] *Bereishis Rabbah* 64:7, on *Bereishis* 26:13; the flocks and herds are in the following verse.

[23] The Kehot edition reads מלאכה here, "work" in general, rather than "his work."

הָעֶלְיוֹנִים. — that are supernal. The sentence carries over from the previous paragraph. **וּלְכָךְ אָמְרוּ זֶבֶל פִּרְדוֹתָיו שֶׁל יִצְחָק וְלֹא כַסְפּוֹ וּזְהָבוֹ שֶׁל אֲבִימֶלֶךְ. — This is why they said, "the dung of Yitzchak's mules and not the silver and gold of Avimelech."** The comparison is now between two ways of holding one's non-holy hours, not between two men's wealth. **וְהוּא מְדַבֵּר בְּמִי שֶׁעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה וּבְמִצְוֹת בִּקְבִיעוּת עִתִּים. וְאַח"כ הוֹלֵךְ בָּטֵל. — Avimelech's silver and gold refer to one who occupies himself with Torah and mitzvos at fixed times and afterwards goes about idle.** His learning is genuine, which is why it is called silver and gold at all. What ruins it is the emptiness on either side of it. **וְזֶה גּוֹרֵם לוֹ. מִפְּנֵי שֶׁרוֹאֶה לְפָעָמִים. הַצַּדִּיק גָּמוּר ג"כ בָּטֵל מִן הַתּוֹרָה — What causes him to do this is that he sometimes sees the complete tzaddik also unoccupied with Torah,** The mistake is an observational one, and it is the same self-comparison that opened the passage. **אֲבָל אֵינוֹ יוֹדֵעַ כִּי אע"פ שֶׁהוּא בָּטֵל עכ"ז לֹא יִפָּרֵד מַחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ מִן הקדושה. — but he does not know that even while unoccupied, the tzaddik's thought never separates from holiness.** Idleness of the hands looks identical from outside. Idleness of the thought is what actually distinguishes them. **וְזֶה הָרוֹאֶה מְדַמֶּה א"ע אֵלָיו. וְהוֹלֵךְ בָּטֵל מִכֹּל וָכֹל מַמָּשׁ. — This observer likens himself to the tzaddik and goes about utterly and completely idle.** He copies the visible half of what he saw and drops the half that mattered. **וְאַף אִם חוֹזֵר אח"כ לְלִימוּדוֹ. אוֹ לַעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי קְדוּשָׁה. הוּא מָלֵא סִיגִים וּפְסוֹלֶת מִמַּחֲשָׁבוֹת זָרוֹת שֶׁנִּכְנְסוּ בּוֹ בִּהְיוֹתוֹ בָּטֵל. — Even when he afterwards returns to his study, or to holy occupation, he is full of dross and refuse from the foreign thoughts that entered him while he was idle.** The vacant hours are not neutral. They deposit *sigim* that he then carries back into his learning, so that even his fixed times are no longer clean. **וְזֶה נִקְרָא כַסְפּוֹ וּזְהָבוֹ שֶׁל אֲבִימֶלֶךְ כְּלוֹמַר אַף שֶׁהוּא עוֹסֵק בְּדִבְרֵי קְדוּשָׁה שֶׁל אָב"י מֶלֶךְ אָבִיו שֶׁבַּשָּׁמַיִם וּמֶלֶךְ עוֹלָם. — This is what is called "the silver and gold of Avimelech," meaning that although he occupies himself with the holy matters of Avi Melech, "my Father is King," his Father in Heaven and the King of the world,** The name is split into its two words and turned into a description of what he is handling: the property of the King who is his Father. **ר"ל שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת סְפוּנִי' וַחֲשׁוּבִים אֶצְלוֹ ית' כְּמוֹ כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב אֵצֶל מֶלֶךְ ב"ו. — that is, Torah and mitzvos are treasured and precious to Him, blessed is He, as silver and gold are to a mortal king.** Hence the metaphor of treasure, which sets up the image of the prince in the vaults. **גַּם שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה נק' כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב. כִּי עִיקָּרָהּ אַהֲבָה וְיִרְאָה הַנִּקְרָא כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב. — Torah is itself called silver and gold, for its essence is love and fear, which are called silver and gold.** Silver corresponds to love, drawing near, and gold to fear, which restrains, so that Torah studied without them is treasure stripped of its metal. **וְגַם אֵלָיו נִדְמֶה שֶׁהוּא לוֹמֵד בדוור"ח אֲבָל כ"ז לֹא יוֹעִיל לוֹ. — He too imagines that he is learning with fear and love, but none of this will help him,** He is not simply neglecting love and fear. He believes he has them, which is why the correction cannot come from within his own assessment. **כִּי כָּל עֲסָקָיו מעורב בְּסִיגִים וּמַחֲשָׁבָה זָרָה וּפְנִי' כַּנִּזְכָּר — because all his occupations are mixed with dross, with foreign thought, and with ulterior motive, as above,** [24] The three faults name a sequence: idleness admits the foreign thought, the foreign thought leaves dross, and the dross serves a motive that is no longer for the sake of Heaven. **וּמַה גַּם שֶׁבָּא לוֹ מִזֶּה ח"ו גַּבְהוּת וְגַדְלוּת. — all the more so since from this he comes, G-d forbid, to haughtiness and self-importance.** The same outcome as the baal teshuvah's in the previous paragraph, reached by a different route. **וּפְשִׁיטָא כַּאֲשֶׁר רוֹצֶה לִיכָּנֵס בְּפַרְדֵּס הַחָכְמָה בְּרָזִין דאורייתא. מְדַמֶּה בְּעַצְמוֹ שֶׁהוּא כֵּן הַמֶּלֶךְ. — And obviously, when he wants to enter the orchard of wisdom, into the secrets of the Torah, he imagines himself a prince rummaging through his father's stores of treasure.** The treasure metaphor is now cashed in. Approached with an unpurified motive, the esoteric dimension of Torah becomes an inheritance he presumes upon rather than a King's property he is admitted to. **כמ"ש הרד"ק זלה"ה עַל אֲבִימֶלֶךְ בֶּן גִּדְעוֹן שֶׁקָּרָא עַצְמוֹ אֲבִימֶלֶךְ. לֵאמֹר אָב"י מֶלֶךְ וְלוֹ יֵאָתֶה הַמְּלוּכָה וְהָרַג כָּל אֶחָיו. — So the Radak, of blessed memory, wrote concerning Avimelech son of Gideon, who called himself Avimelech, as if to say "my father is king," and therefore the kingship belongs to me,**

[24] The Kehot edition reads ומחשבות זרות here, "and foreign thoughts," in the plural, spreading the fault over many intrusions rather than one.

and he killed all his brothers. [25] The name that sounded like a claim of privilege ended in the murder of seventy brothers, which is exactly the trajectory of a man who treats his Father's treasury as his own entitlement. **כָּךְ דִּמְיוֹן זֶה הַסָּכָל הַלּוֹמֵד עִם פְּנִיּוֹת כַּנִּזְכָּר. ובוודאי יפול ממדריגתו לָאָרֶץ תַּחְתִּיּוֹת. — Such is the self-image of this fool who studies with ulterior motives, as above, and he will certainly fall from his level to the nethermost earth.** The fall foretold earlier as "a deep pit" is now stated at its full depth. **וְלָזֶה רָמַז זֶבֶל פִּרְדוֹתָיו וכו'. וְלֹא כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב וכו' — This is what is hinted at by "the dung of his mules..." and "not the silver and gold..."** The Midrash's comparison turns out to be a warning about which of the two men one is: the one whose separations have a dwelling above, or the one whose treasure is mixed with dross. **אֲלָא לְהִתְרַחֵק מִדְּבָרִי' סִכְלִיִּים וּשְׁטוּת כְּאֵלּוּ וְכַיּוֹצֵא בָּזֶה. וְלֵילֵךְ בְּדַרְכֵי הַיְשָׁרִים. וּמִן הַשָּׁמַיִם סייעהו אָמֵן כ"י — One must therefore keep far from such foolish and senseless notions and the like, and walk in the ways of the upright. And may Heaven assist him. Amen, so may it be His will.** The practical conclusion is modest: not to abandon fixed times of study, but to stop imagining that the hours between them are one's own.

Section 6

There Is No Fear of G-d in This Place

Summary

Derush: Avraham explains his fear in Gerar with the words "There is simply no fear of G-d in this place" (*Bereishis* 20:11). The Maggid presses the oddity: the sin Avraham dreaded was adultery, a corruption of love, so the missing quality should have been love of G-d, not fear.

Torah Basis: *Bereishis* 20:11 and 25:19, the teaching in *Bereishis Rabbah* that the Patriarchs are the chariot, and Mishlei's "faithful envoy" who "restores the soul of his masters."

Kabbalistic Framework: The *middos* of the Avos carry the argument. Avraham is love, Yitzchak fear, Yaakov compassion, so "Avraham begot Yitzchak" means that love must generate fear, and only through fear does it become Yaakov's compassion. Two grades of compassion are distinguished: one arising within *din*, one a father's, independent of merit.

Avodah: When an illicit desire or an evil thought presents itself, fear of Hashem both dissolves the desire and elevates it, since a person's thought is a chariot for Hashem and he is the messenger who must return it.

רַק אֵין יִרְאַת אלקי' בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה. — "There is simply no fear of G-d in this place." Avraham's explanation to Avimelech of why he had presented Sarah as his sister (*Bereishis* 20:11). Gerar's lawlessness is diagnosed as a missing *yirah*. **וְיֵשׁ לְדַקְדֵּק הָיָה לוֹ לוֹמַר רַק אֵין אַהֲבַת אֱלֹקִים בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה — A close reading raises a difficulty: he should have said, "There is simply no love of G-d in this place."** The diagnosis does not seem to match the danger. Avraham feared that they would kill him in order to take his wife. **כִּי הֲלֹא לֹא הָיָה לָהֶם רַק אַהֲבָה רָעָה שֶׁהוּא ניאוף. — After all, their only failing was a corrupt love, namely adultery.** Adultery is a distortion on the side of *Chesed*, love directed where it has no business going. By that logic the deficiency Avraham should have named is love of G-d, love that would have occupied the place their corrupt love had filled. **אַךְ כָּל דָּבָר צָרִיךְ לְהַעֲלוֹת בְּיִרְאָה — But everything must be elevated by means of yirah.** Here is the resolution. A desire that has fallen is not repaired by adding more love, which is the very *middah* that went astray. The corrective is *Gevurah*, the power that restrains and thereby lifts. This is why Avraham named the absence of fear. **כִּי אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת יִצְחָק. — For "Avraham begot**

[25] Radak on *Shoftim* 9:9; the killing of the brothers is in *Shoftim* 9:5. On Torah as silver and gold, *Bamidbar Rabbah* 12:4 and 14:12, *Bereishis Rabbah* 16:4; on love and fear as silver and gold, *Zohar* vol. 2, 148a. cf. *Kesser Shem Tov* §244; §306.

Yitzchak" (*Bereishis* 25:19). Avraham is *Chesed*, love, and Yitzchak is *Gevurah*, fear. Read as a statement about the *middos*, the verse says that love must give birth to fear, that a person's love is meant to produce the fear that will govern it. **פִּי' עִם יִצְחָק הוֹלִיד אֶת יַעֲקֹב — That is, together with Yitzchak he begot Yaakov,** Love alone does not reach Yaakov. Only love that has passed through Yitzchak arrives there. **פִּי' מִדַּת רַחֲמָנוּת. — meaning the middah of compassion.** Yaakov is *Tiferes*, *rachamim*, the blend of *Chesed* and *Gevurah*. So the sequence of the Avos maps the repair of a desire: love, then the fear that constrains it, and out of the two, compassion. **כִּי יֵשׁ רַחֲמָנוּת מֵחַמַת יִרְאָה שֶׁמִּתְנַהֵג עִם אָדָם לֹא טוֹב וּמְרַחֲמִים עָלָיו. — For there is a compassion that comes from fear, where one is dealing with a person unfavorably and yet has mercy on him.** This is the *rachamim* generated inside *Gevurah* itself. Precisely because judgment is being exercised, mercy is aroused within it. This is the compassion "begotten" by Yitzchak. **וְיֵשׁ רַחֲמָנוּת כְּמוֹ אָב עַל הַבֵּן. — And there is a compassion like that of a father for his son.** A second grade entirely, which does not depend on how the recipient is faring. **אע"פ שֶׁמִּתְנַהֵג עִמּוֹ טוֹב אעפ"כ יֵשׁ לוֹ רַחֲמָנוּת עַל בְּנוֹ. — Even though he deals with him favorably, he still has compassion for his son.** Paternal mercy is not a response to distress or to desert. It flows from the relationship, and so it operates even when nothing is withheld. **וְנַחֲזוֹר לְעִנְיָן רִאשׁוֹן לְמָשָׁל כְּשֶׁיֵּשׁ לְאָדָם אַהֲבָה רָעָה. — Let us return to the first point. Take, for example, a person who has a corrupt love.** The framework is now applied to the case in Gerar and to the reader's own experience. **וּכְשֶׁנּוֹתֵן אֶל לִבּוֹ יִרְאָה מֵהש"י אָז אֵין לוֹ תַּאֲוָה עוֹד. — When he takes the fear of Hashem to heart, the desire is gone.** Fear does not merely suppress the craving. Once *yirah* enters, the desire has nothing left to stand on. **וְזֶהוּ רַק אֵין — This, then, is the meaning of "There is simply no** The verse names exactly what Gerar lacked, the one faculty that could have dealt with the desire.[26]

יִרְאַת אֱלֹקִים — fear of G-d." The quotation, split across the paragraph break, completes Avraham's words. **שֶׁאִלּוּ הָיָה לָהֶם יִרְאָה הָיוּ יְכוֹלִים לְהַעֲלוֹת אֶת הָאַהֲבָה רָעָה. — Had they possessed fear, they would have been able to elevate the corrupt love.** The point is not only that fear would have prevented the sin. Fear would have taken the misdirected love and raised it, turning the very energy of the desire into service. **כִּי בְּבוֹא לְאָדָם מַחֲשָׁבָה רָעָה. — For when an evil thought comes to a person,** The arrival of the thought is treated as an event with a purpose, not as an accident. **צָרִיךְ לִירֹא וְלָשִׂים אֶל לִבּוֹ כִּי הַמַּחֲשָׁבָה שֶׁל אָדָם הוּא מֶרְכָּבָה לַה' יִת' — he must feel fear and take to heart that a person's thought is a chariot for Hashem,** The fear is aroused by realizing what has just been placed in his hands. Thought is not a private space. It is the vehicle in which the divine rides, and what he does with this thought is done to a chariot of Hashem. **ע"ד הָאָבוֹת הֵן הֵן הַמֶּרְכָּבָה כַּיָּדוּעַ. — along the lines of the teaching that the Patriarchs themselves are the chariot, as is known.** Reish Lakish's statement in *Bereishis Rabbah* 47:6, that the Avos were the chariot for the Divine Presence. Since the Avos are the *middos*, and a person's thought is where his own *middos* live, his thought stands in the same relation. **וְהוּא שָׁלִיחַ לְהַעֲלוֹת הַמַּחֲשָׁבָה כַּיָּדוּעַ — and he is a messenger charged with elevating that thought, as is known.** The thought has descended to him precisely so that he should return it upward. He is not its owner but its courier. **וְצָרִיךְ שֶׁיִּהְיֶה צִיר נֶאֱמָן. — He must therefore be a faithful envoy** Mishlei's image of the trustworthy messenger now defines the task exactly: a courier who delivers what was entrusted to him, unspoiled. **וְנֶפֶשׁ אֲדוֹנָיו יָשִׁיב. — who "restores the soul of his masters" (*Mishlei* 25:13).** In its plain sense the verse praises a reliable agent who revives the spirit of those who sent him. **כְּבֶיכוֹל אֶת ה' הוּא מֵשִׁיב : — As it were, it is Hashem whom he restores.** The Maggid reads "the soul of his masters" as its own subject. Since the thought is a chariot for Hashem, elevating it returns the Divine Presence that was riding in it to its place, and the words are taken with full weight, guarded only by "as it were."[27]

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[26] On reading "Avraham begot Yitzchak" as love generating fear, see also §32; on the two grades of compassion, §4.

[27] On the evil thought that comes in order to be elevated, see the teaching of the Baal Shem Tov in *Kesser Shem Tov* §222; cf. §115, §123.