



TORAH



חומש דברים

THE TORAH

*With an Interpolated English Translation
and Commentary Based on the Works of*

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

זצוקללה"ה נבג"מ זי"ע

Chumash Devarim

The Book of Deuteronomy

Parshat Va'etchanan



Kehot Publication Society

770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn NY 11213

5772/2012

THE TORAH - CHUMASH DEVARIM
WITH AN INTERPOLATED ENGLISH TRANSLATION
AND COMMENTARY BASED ON THE WORKS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

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Chabad of California

A project of
Chabad of California
741 Gayley Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024
310-208-7511 / Fax 310-208-5811

Published by
Kehot Publication Society
770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, New York 11213
718-774-4000 / Fax 718-774-2718
editor@kehot.com

Order Department:
291 Kingston Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11213
718-778-0226 / Fax 718-778-4148
www.kehot.com

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ISBN: 978-0-8266-0193-3
ISBN: 978-0-8266-0195-2 (set)

Published in the United States of America



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Overview

As we have pointed out, the Book of Deuteronomy is in effect a restatement of the first four books of the Torah, couched in such a way as to make them relevant for the generation that was about to enter the Land of Israel. As such, the first *parashah* of Deuteronomy, *parashat Devarim*, parallels Genesis, the first book of the Torah. Just as the Book of Genesis describes the historical background for the Torah in general, detailing the necessity for the creation of the Jewish people, so does *parashat Devarim* describe the historical background for the restatement of the Torah in the Book of Deuteronomy, detailing the events that necessitated the forty-year detainment in the desert and the rise of a new generation that would enter the land.

The present *parashah*, *parashat Va'etchanan*, parallels Exodus, the second book of the Torah. The Book of Exodus laid the theological underpinnings of the Jewish people's existence: their distinction from other peoples (the Exodus), their unique covenant with God and attendant belief system (the Giving of the Torah), and their purpose as a people (to make the world a home for God, as encapsulated in the Tabernacle). In a parallel manner, *parashat Va'etchanan* describes the spiritual uniqueness of the new generation (as we will discuss presently), restates the covenant with God on their level (the repetition of the Ten Commandments), and transforms the imperative to make the world God's home into the basic, central statement of Judaism: the *Shema*.

This explains why, in *parashat Va'etchanan*, Moses recounts historical events that *preceded* those he reviewed in *parashat Devarim*. Although the events reviewed in *parashat Devarim* took place later chronologically, in terms of the thematic development of the Book of Deuteronomy they come first: they provide the rationale for the repetition of the drama of Mount Sinai and the Giving of the Torah that forms the subject of *parashat Va'etchanan*.



Parashat Va'etchanan opens with Moses' description of how, at the end of the forty-year detour in the desert, he once again pleaded with God to let him enter the Land of Israel, and how God refused his request. In light of what we have just said, it would seem that this should form part of the historical material reviewed in the preceding *parashah*, which concludes with the events immediately preceding Moses' prayer. Why then, is it placed here, at the beginning of *parashat Va'etchanan*?

Moses knew that the generation standing before him was not on the same level of spiritual perception as that of the preceding generation, who had witnessed the miracles of the Exodus and the Giving of the Torah. He therefore understood that their confrontation with the materiality of the physical world would be a struggle, and that it would take time—perhaps a long time—until they would accomplish the purpose for which they were entering the land. He therefore wanted to accompany them into the land in order to boost their Divine consciousness, as much as possible, to his level. True, they had not seen what he and his generation had seen, but they might be inspired by the intensity of his communion with God. If he would cross the Jordan with them, it might give them the strength to conquer the land and take possession of it in the fullest, most spiritual sense.

As we will see,¹ the spiritual perception of the generation of the desert compared to that of the generation of the conquest was like that of sight compared to hearing. When we see something, we do not need to be convinced of what we saw: we know it to be so; after all, we *saw* it. In contrast, when we hear something (or hear *about* something), we may be convinced of what we heard, but our conviction can be overturned by persuasion and argument. Seeing is a direct perception and therefore incontrovertible, whereas hearing is indirect and therefore subject to challenge. Thus, even if the Jews of the generation entering the Land of Israel would not doubt the truth of their Jewish beliefs for a moment, the façade of materiality would still have a louder voice in their minds than it ever could have had in their parents'. The reality of God and the subordination of the physical to the spiritual had simply not been burned into their souls with the same intensity.

Thus, Moses wanted to impart this spiritual sight to the new generation. "God, You took the initiative to *show* Your servant Your magnanimity.... Please let me cross over and *see* the good land...."² Had he been able to see the land from within with *his* eyes, it would have looked different to the entire Jewish people.

But God only let him see the land from afar. "Ascend to the peak of Mount Nebo and lift up your eyes westward, northward, southward, and eastward, and see it, but only from afar, with your eyes—for you will not cross this Jordan River."³ Resigned to the fact that his people would not attain this level of Divine perception, he instructed them to at least "*listen* to the decrees and the laws that I am teaching you,"⁴ thus setting the tone for the rest of his address to them, and indeed, for the rest of the Book of Deuteronomy.



But why did God refuse Moses' request to enter the land? Why did He not want the Jewish people to attain Moses' level of spiritual perception, which would enable them to accomplish their task in the land that much swifter and better?

The answer, of course, is that despite the advantages of sight over hearing, there is also an advantage of hearing over sight. True, when we see something, our sense of the reality of what we see is much stronger than when we only hear about it. However, this experience of certainty is solely due to the force of the experience and not to any work we have done in refining our perception. It is a certainty imposed upon us from without rather than one that solidifies gradually from within. Therefore, its effect on us as people, albeit powerful, is superficial and ephemeral. Once we are no longer looking at what we saw, our

1. On 4:35 & 39.
2. Deuteronomy 3:24-25.
3. *Ibid.*, v. 27
4. *Ibid.*, 4:1.

experience of it begins to fade, eventually becoming weak enough to be challenged.

In contrast, the conviction of truth we arrive at indirectly engages us to a much greater and more profound degree. In the course of reaching this conviction, we have to struggle with the arguments and perceptions posed by the world, which challenge and conflict with this truth. By answering and overcoming these tests, we are changed in the process.

Since, as we know, the purpose of creation is that Divine consciousness permeate reality to the greatest extent possible, that our entire being be filled with the knowledge of God, it is clear that in order for this to be accomplished, it was imperative that Moses *not* accompany the Jewish people across the Jordan. When we will have refined reality to the greatest extent possible by dint of our own efforts, we too will be granted the spiritual perception of Moses, as it is written, "And the glory of God will be revealed, and all flesh will *see* it together."⁵



Nonetheless, as we have learned,⁶ the prayer of a righteous person is always fulfilled in some way. So, Moses' request that the Jewish people be given his level of spiritual vision was indeed granted on some level. Thus, each of us possesses an inner vision of reality that affords us absolute certainty with regard to issues of Jewish faith. Based on this inner sight, this unshakable inner conviction, we can withstand any of the worldly deceptions with which material reality challenges us; we can preserve our own Divine consciousness and disseminate it throughout the world, as well. This undertone of certainty enables us to enter our own promised land, our arena of life-challenges, and confidently stride forward toward the ultimate and final Redemption.⁷

5. Isaiah 40:5.

6. On Exodus 27:20.

7. Based on *Likutei Torah* 4:3cd; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 9, pp. 57, 81-83; *Sichot Kodesh* 5737, vol. 2, pp. 340-348.

ONKELOS

3:23 וְצַלִּיתִי קִדְּמֵי בְּעֵדְנָא הֵהִיא לְמִימְרֵי: 24 יְיָ אֱלֹהִים אֵת שְׂרִיתָא לְאַחֲזָא יֵת עֲבָדְךָ יֵת רְבוּתְךָ וְיֵת יָדְךָ תִּשְׁפֹּטָא דִּי אֵת הוּא אֶלְהָא דְשִׁכְנֵיתְךָ בְּשִׁמְיָא מְלַעְלָא וְשִׁלִּיט בְּאַרְעָא וְלִית דִּיעֲבֹד בְּעוֹבְדֵיךָ וּבְגִבּוֹרֵתֵיךָ: 25 אֶעֱבֹד בְּעֵן וְאַחֲזִי יֵת אֲרַעָא טַבְתָּא דִּי בְּעֵבְרָא דִּירְדְנָא טוֹרָא טַבָּא הֲדִין וּבֵית מִקְדָּשָׁא: 26 וְהוּא רִגּוּ מִן קִדְּמֵי יְיָ עָלֵי בְדִלְכוֹן וְלֹא קִבֵּל מִנִּי וְאִמַר יְיָ לִי סִגִּי לָךְ לֹא תוֹסֵף לְמַלְלָא קִדְּמֵי עוֹד בְּפִתְגָמָא הֲדִין: 27 סֵק לְרִישׁ רְמֵתָא זֻקוֹף עֵינֵיךָ לְמַעֲרָבָא וּלְצַפּוֹנָא וּלְדוֹמָא וּלְמַדְבָּרָא וְחֲזִי בְּעֵינֵיךָ אֲרִי לֹא תַעֲבֹר יֵת יְרְדְנָא הֲדִין:

3:23 וְאֶתְחַנֵּן אֶל־יְהוָה בְּעֵת הַהוּא לֵאמֹר: 24 אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה אַתָּה הַחֲלוֹת לְהִרְאוֹת אֶת־עַבְדְּךָ אֶת־גְּדֻלָּתְךָ וְאֶת־יָדְךָ הַחֲזִיקָה אֲשֶׁר מִיֵּאֵל בַּשָּׁמַיִם וּבְאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲשֶׂה כְּמַעֲשֵׂיךָ וּכְגִבּוֹרֹתֶיךָ: 25 אֶעֱבֹדֶנָּה וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן הַהַר הַטּוֹב הַזֶּה וְהַלְבָּנִן: 26 וַיִּתְעַבֵּר יְהוָה בְּלִי לְמַעַנְכֶם וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֵלַי וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי רַב־לָךְ אֶל־תּוֹסֵף דַּבֵּר אֵלַי עוֹד בְּדַבַּר הַזֶּה: 27 עֲלֶה | רֹאשׁ הַפְּסָגָה וְשֵׂא עֵינֶיךָ יְמִינָה וּצַפְנָה וְתִימְנָה וּמִזְרְחָהּ וּרְאֵה בְּעֵינֶיךָ כִּי־לֹא תַעֲבֹר אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה:

RASHI

הֲדִין בְּחֻזְקָה: אֲשֶׁר מִי אֵל וְגו'. אֵינֶךָ דוֹמָה לְמִלְךָ בְּשֵׁר וְדָם, שֵׁישׁ לוֹ יוֹעֲצִין וְסִנְקֵתֵי־רִדִין הַמִּמְחִין בִּידוֹ בְּשִׂרְוֶצָה לַעֲשׂוֹת חֶסֶד וְלַעֲבֹר עַל מְדוּתֵי, אַתָּה — אֵין מִי יִמְחָה בְּיָדְךָ אִם תִּמְחַל לִי וְתִבְטַל גְּזֻרְתְּךָ. וּלְפִי פְּשׁוּטוֹ: "אַתָּה הַחֲלוֹת לְהִרְאוֹת אֶת עַבְדְּךָ" מִלְּחַמַּת סִיחוֹן וְעוֹג, כְּדַכְּתִיב: "רְאֵה הַחֲלֵתִי תַת לְפָנֶיךָ", הֲרֵאֵנִי מִלְּחַמַּת שְׁלֹשִׁים וְאַחַד מְלָכִים: 25 אֶעֱבֹדָה נָא. אֵין "נָא" אֶלְא לְשׁוֹן בְּקֶשֶׁה: הַהַר הַטּוֹב הַזֶּה. זו יְרוּשָׁלַיִם: וְהַלְבָּנִן. זֶה בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ: 26 וַיִּתְעַבֵּר ה'. נִתְמַלֵּא חֶמָה: לְמַעַנְכֶם. בְּשִׁבְלִיכֶם אַתֶּם גְּרַמְתֶּם לִי. וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר: "וַיִּקְצִיפוּ עַל מִי מְרִיבָה, וַיִּרַע לְמִשְׁהָ בְּעֵבְרִים": רַב לָךְ. שְׁלֵא יֹאמְרוּ: הָרַב כְּמָה קֶשֶׁה, וְהַתְלַמִּיד כְּמָה סָרְבָן וּמִפְצִיר. דַּבַּר אַחֵר: "רַב לָךְ", הָרַבָּה מִזֶּה שְׁמוֹר לָךְ, רַב טוֹב הַצִּפּוֹן לָךְ: 27 וַיֹּרְאֵה בְּעֵינֶיךָ. בְּקֶשֶׁת מִמְּנִי: "וַיֹּרְאֵה אֶת הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה", אֲנִי מְרַאֶה לָךְ אֶת כְּלָה, שְׁנַאֲמַר: "וַיֹּרְאֵהוּ ה' אֶת כָּל הָאָרֶץ":

23 וְאֶתְחַנֵּן. אֵין "חֲנוּן" בְּכָל מְקוֹם אֶלְא לְשׁוֹן מִתְּנַת חֲנָם, אֵף עַל פִּי שֵׁישׁ לְהֶם לְצַדִּיקִים לְחֵלוֹת בְּמַעֲשֵׂיהֶם הַטּוֹבִים, אֵין מִבְּקָשִׁים מֵאֵת הַמְּקוֹם אֶלְא מִתְּנַת חֲנָם. לְפִי שְׁאֵמַר לוֹ: "וְחֲנַתִּי אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֲחֹן", אֵמַר לוֹ בְּלִשׁוֹן "וְאֶתְחַנֵּן". דַּבַּר אַחֵר: זֶה אֶחָד מִמַּעֲשֵׂי הַשְׁנוֹנוֹת שֶׁנִּקְרָא "תְּפִלָּה", כְּדֹאֵיתָא בְּסַפְרֵי: בְּעֵת הַהוּא. לְאַחַר שֶׁכָּבַשְׁתִּי אֶרֶץ סִיחוֹן וְעוֹג, דְּמִיִּתִּי שְׁמָא הָתֵר הִנְדַּר: לֵאמֹר. זֶה אֶחָד מִשְׁלֹשָׁה מְקוֹמוֹת שְׁאֵמַר מִשֶּׁה לְפָנֶי הַמְּקוֹם: אֵינִי מִנִּיחָךְ עַד שֶׁתוֹדִיעֵנִי אִם תַּעֲשֶׂה שְׂאֵלְתִי אִם לֹא: 24 ה' אֱלֹהִים. רְחוּם בְּדִין: אַתָּה הַחֲלוֹת לְהִרְאוֹת אֶת עַבְדְּךָ. פֶּתַח לְהִיּוֹת עוֹמֵד וּמִתְפַּלֵּל אֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁנִּגְזְרָה גְּזֻרָה. מִמֶּךָ לְמִדְּתִי שְׁאֵמַרְתָּ לִּי: "וְעַתָּה הִנִּיחָה לִּי", וְכִי תוֹפֵס הִיִּיתִי בָּךְ? אֶלְא לְפִתּוֹחַ פֶּתַח, שְׁבִי הִנֵּה תְלוּי לְהַתְפַּלֵּל עֲלֵיהֶם, כְּמוֹ כֵן הִיִּיתִי סְבוּר לַעֲשׂוֹת עֲבָשׁ: אֶת גְּדֻלָּתְךָ. זֶה מִדַּת טוֹבָה, וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר: "וְעַתָּה יִגְדַּל נָא בַּח אֲדוֹנָי": וְאֵת יָדְךָ. זֶה יְמִינְךָ, שְׁהִיא פְּשׁוּטָה לְכָל בְּאֵי עוֹלָם: הַחֲזִיקָה. שְׂאֵתָה כּוֹבֵשׁ בְּרַחֲמִים אֶת מִדַּת

1. שמות לג, יט. 2. שמות לב, י. 3. במדבר יד, יז. 4. דברים ב, לא. 5. פסוק כה. 6. דברים לד, א.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

resistance. This miraculous conquest would have been a direct continuation of the miraculous Exodus from Egypt, which had stricken the nations occupying the Land of Israel with intense fear, as the Jews proclaimed at the Song of the Sea: "Nations heard and became angered; terror gripped those who dwell in Philistia. The chieftains of Edom became disoriented; trembling seized the mighty men of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away."¹¹

However, now that Joshua was going to lead them, the Israelites would have to battle the Canaanite nations without relying on open miracles, and this would require them to evince self-sacrifice. They would now have to summon their deepest inner strength and dedication to their purpose in order to win the wars.

This is another example that demonstrates how the purpose of revealing Divinity to the greatest extent possible in the world—here evinced by the

11. Exodus 15:14-15.

God's Forgiveness

3:23 Moses continued, "Seeing that God had allowed me to assign the territory that we conquered on the eastern side of the Jordan River to some of the tribes,¹ I thought that He might now be reconsidering His decree not to let me enter the land, thus intending to let me finish dividing it among all the tribes. I therefore thought it an opportune time to reiterate my profound desire to enter the Land of Israel." Moses prayed for this clemency in consideration of his many good deeds,² but—as righteous people typically do—he also solicited God's absolute, undeserved mercy,³ feeling that his merits were not sufficient to warrant his prayer being accepted. **"I both prayed to God and entreated Him at that time, saying,**

24 'God, I know that You are merciful even when meting out justice,⁴ for when the people sinned by making the Golden Calf, **You took the initiative to show me, Your servant, Your magnanimity;** that **Your right hand,** which metes out loving-kindness, is **stronger** than Your left hand, which metes out strict justice, and can overcome it; and that it is our prayers that make Your mercy override Your justice.⁵ That is why I am praying to You now and requesting mercy. **For who is like You, God, in heaven or on earth, who can match Your deeds and Your might?** Mortal kings have advisors who convince him not to be lenient or merciful, but You can do whatever You please. And I see now that You have begun to let me conquer the land.

25 My request: Please let me cross over the Jordan River, complete the conquest of the land, **and see the good land that is on the other side of the Jordan River,** including **the good mountain** that You will choose as the location of the Temple **and** the constructed and functioning Temple itself, which is termed "**the Lebanon [Levanon]**" because it whitens [from *lavan*, "white"] the sins of the people. Please tell me whether You will grant this request."⁶

26 But God was angry with me because of my improper response to **you** when you complained against Him at Kadesh,⁷ **and He therefore did not heed me. God said to me,** "Your entreaty in this regard **suffices** for Me to understand how important this matter is **for you. Speak to Me no more regarding this matter,** so that people should not consider Me harsh and you pestering. Furthermore, a reward for your merits much **better** than what you are requesting **awaits you** in the afterlife."⁸

27 However, I will allow you to see not only the "good" parts of the land, that is, its exceptional parts, as you requested, but all of it.⁹ **Ascend to the peak of Mount Nebo and lift up your eyes westward, northward, southward, and eastward, and see it,** but only from afar, **with your eyes—for you will not cross this Jordan River.**

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

27 You will not cross this Jordan River: As we have mentioned previously,¹⁰ had Moses himself led the people into the Promised Land, their entry would

have been miraculous: they would have been led by the Clouds of Glory and the pillar of fire, and the nations occupying the land would have offered no

1. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 9, p. 9, note 39. 2. Cf. Leviticus 26:3. 3. Cf. Exodus 33:19; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 24, p. 31, note 29. 4. This is indicated by the Names by which Moses addresses God: *Adni* ("Lord") and *Havayah* (indicating God's attribute of mercy), the latter vocalized as *Elokim* (indicating His attribute of justice). 5. Exodus 32:10. 6. Rashi on v. 23, above, and on Numbers 12:13. 7. Numbers 20:1-13; above, 1:37. 8. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 24, p. 15, note 34, and p. 32. 9. Below, 34:1. 10. Overview to *parashat Shelach*.

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28 ופקד ית יהושע ותקפהי ואלמתי ארי הוא יעבר קדם עמא הדין והוא יחסן יתהון ית ארעא די תחיו: 29 ויתיבנא בחילתא לקבל בית פעור: 40 ובען ישראל שמע לקמיא ולדינא די אנא מאלף יתכון למעבד בדיל דתחון ותיעלון ותירתון ית ארעא די יי אלהא דאבהתכון יהב לכון: 2 לא תוספון על פתגמא די אנא מפקד יתכון ולא תמנעון מנה למשר ית פקודיא די אלהכון די אנא מפקד יתכון: 3 עיניכון חזאה ית די עבד יי בבעל פעור ארי כל גברא די אזול בתר בעל פעור שציה יי אלהך מבינה: 4 ואתון דאדבקתון בדחלתא די אלהכון קמיין בלכון יומא דין:

28 ויצו את יהושע וחזקוהו ואמצהו כִּי־הוא יַעֲבֹר לַפְּנֵי הָעָם הַזֶּה וְהוּא יִנְחִיל אוֹתָם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר תִּרְאֶה: 29 וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּנֵי־אֵל מוֹל בַּיִת פְּעוֹר: פ 4:1 וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל שָׁמַע אֶל־הַחֲקִים וְאֶל־הַמְּשֻׁפְטִים אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מַלְמֵד אֶתְכֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת לְמַעַן תִּחְיוּ וּבְאֵתְם וִירְשֶׁתֶם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם נָתַן לָכֶם: 2 לֹא תוֹסִפוּ עַל־הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מַצְוֶה אֶתְכֶם וְלֹא תִגְרְעוּ מִמֶּנּוּ לְשִׁמּוֹר אֶת־מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מַצְוֶה אֶתְכֶם: 3 עֵינֵיכֶם הִרְאוֹת אֶת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה יְהוָה בְּבַעַל פְּעוֹר כִּי כָל־הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הִלֵּךְ אַחֲרַי בְּעַל־פְּעוֹר הִשְׁמִידוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךְ מִקְרַבְךָ: 4 וְאַתֶּם הַדְּבָקִים בִּיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם חַיִּים כְּלָכֶם הַיּוֹם:

— RASHI —

הוא העומד במקומו ומשלח את בני למלחמה, "למה זה אתה נפל על פניך", לא כף אמרתי למשה רבך: אם הוא עובר — עוברין, ואם לאו — אין עוברין: 29 וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּנֵי־אֵל וּגו'. ונצמדתם לעבודה זרה, ואף על פי כן — "ועתה ישראל שמע אל החקים", והכל מחול לך, ואני לא זכיתי למחל לי: 2 לא תסיפו. כגון חמש פרשיות בתפלין, חמשת מינין בלולב, וחמש ציציות, וכן "ולא תגרעו":

28 ויצו את יהושע. על הטרחות ועל המשאות ועל המריבות: וחזקוהו ואמצהו. בדבריה, שלא ירף לבו לומר, "כשם שנענש רבי עליהם, כך סופי לענש עליהם", מכטיחו אני כי הוא יעבר והוא ינחיל: כי הוא יעבר. אם יעבר לפנייהם ינחלו, ואם לאו לא ינחלו. וכן אתה מוצא כששלח מן העם אל העי והוא ישב — "וינו מהם אנשי העי" וגו', וכיון שנפל על פניו, אמר לו: "קם לך". "קם לך" כתיב, אתה

Pe'or, how God, your God, exterminated from your midst every individual who abandoned God and followed Ba'al Pe'or.

4 In contrast, all of you who are alive today are lovingly attached²¹ to God, your God.²²

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Israelites' unshakable dedication to their Divine mission—was better served by Moses *not* crossing the Jordan along with the Jewish people.²³

1 So now, O Israel: As has been pointed out previously,²⁴ the name "Israel" connotes the victor in battle, he who has "striven with God and with men and has prevailed."²⁵ It is specifically "now," i.e., during the present order—when the Divine soul must combat the innate drives of the animal soul—that the Jewish people are referred to as "Israel," with regard to their victory in this struggle. In the

World to Come, however, when physical reality will reveal its true Godly source and this battle will no longer be necessary, the Jewish people will no longer be referred to by this name. We are taught that since the Divine soul will then be able to manifest itself unhindered, the righteous will then be identified using God's own Name—every Jew will be a transparent conduit for Divinity into the world.²⁶ Therefore, Moses begins by saying, "Now, O Israel...."²⁷

4 Whereas you, who cleave to God: One could

21. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 14, p. 55. 22. See below, 29:1-5 and 31:9; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 14, pp. 55, 101. 23. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 9, pp. 57-58, 82; *Sefer HaSichot* 5751, pp. 741-743. 24. On Genesis 32:29. 25. Genesis 32:29. 26. *Bava Batra* 75b; *Torah Or, Shemot*, vol. 7, p. 2536. 27. *Likutei Torah* 4:38a.

28 Instead, prepare your successor to cross the river and lead the people into the land. **Command Joshua** not to be fazed by the people's troublesomeness, mistrust of their leaders, and general litigiousness.¹² **Strengthen him and encourage him**, lest he fear that just as I am denying you entrance into the land because of your shortcomings, so will I eventually do the same to him. **For** despite any shortcomings he may have, **he will** nevertheless **cross over** the Jordan River **before this people**, and **he will apportion to them the land that you will merely see**. I am making his success dependent on one condition: that **he travel before this people**, leading them into battle himself; only then **will he** be able to conquer and **apportion the land to them**. They will lose any battles he does not lead.'

29 After we conquered the territory of Sichon and Og and I apportioned it to some of your tribes—which, as I mentioned, is what inspired me to ask God to reconsider allowing me to enter the Promised Land—we moved on to the plains of Moab, where we are presently located. **We abided in the valley opposite** Shitim, also known as **Beit Pe'or** ['the house of Pe'or'], where some of you were lured into committing lechery and idolatry.¹³ Despite this, you have been forgiven for your sins and will soon cross over into the Promised Land, whereas I did not merit to be forgiven and will therefore not cross over into it. See, then, how gracious God has been to you.

The Importance of the Commandments

4:1 So now, O Israel, listen to the rules and to the ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, in order that you may live and enter and take possession of the land that God, God of your forefathers, is giving you.

2 The commandments are perfect; you do not need to try to enhance them in any way. **Do not add anything to what I command you, nor subtract from it, in order to observe the commandments of God, your God, that I am commanding you** exactly as they should be observed. For example, you will eventually be commanded to put four written passages of the Torah in your *tefilin*,¹⁴ do not instead put five in them. Since there are only four passages in the Torah that mention *tefilin*, adding a fifth passage about something else in order to 'expand' the scope of the commandment will on the contrary mitigate the impact of the commandment.¹⁵ Similarly, do not hold five different types of plants on *Sukot* instead of four;¹⁶ since only the four that God specified have the property of augmenting joy, holding a different type of plant, which does not share this property, would mitigate the effect of holding the other four.¹⁷ A further example: do not attach five tassels onto a four-cornered garment instead of four tassels;¹⁸ since the tassels are intended to remind you of the four expressions God used when He described how He was going to take you out of Egypt,¹⁹ adding a fifth tassel might make you think of something else, thereby mitigating the impact of this commandment.²⁰ By the same token, in each of these cases, do not use three items instead of four.

3 You have seen with your own eyes what God did in the incident involving Ba'al

12. Above, 1:12. 13. Numbers 25:1-9. 14. Below, 6:8, 11:18. 15. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 9, p. 53, note 24. 16. Leviticus 23:40. 17. *Sichot Kodesh* 5729, vol. 2, pp. 418, 420. 18. Numbers 15:37-41. 19. Numbers 15:41. 20. *Sichot Kodesh* 5729, vol. 2, p. 418.

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5 חזו דאלפית יתכון קמיא ודיניא כמא די פקדני יי אלהי למעבד פן בגו ארעא די אתון עלין לתמן למירתה: 6 ותשרון ותעבדון ארי היא חקמתכון וסוכלתנותכון לעיני עממיא די ישמעון ית כל קמיא האלין וימרון לחוד עם חכים וסוכלתן עמא רבא הדין: 7 ארי מאן עם רב די לה אלהא קריב לה לקבלא עלותה בעדן עקתה פני אלהא בכל עדן דאנתא מצלין קדמוהי: 8 ומאן עם רב די לה קמיין ודינין קשטיין ככל אורייתא הדא די אנא יתב קדמיכון יומא דין: 9 לחוד אסתמר לה וטר נפשך לחדא דלמא תנשי ית פתגמיא די חזאה עיניך ודלמא יעדון מלכך כל יומי חזיר ותהודענן לבניך ולבני בניך: 10 יומא די קמתא קדם יי אלהך בחרב פד אמר יי לי גנש קדמי ית עמא ואשמענן ית פתגמי די יילפון למדחל קדמי כל יומיא די אנן קמיין על ארעא וית בניהון ילפון: 11 וקריבתון וקמתון בשפולי טורא וטורא בער באשא עד צית שמיא חשוכא עננא ואמיטתא: 12 ומליל יי עמכון מגו אשא קל פתגמיין אתון שמעין ודמות ליתכון חון אלהין קלא: 13 וחזי לכון ית קמיה די פקיד יתכון למעבד עשרא פתגמיין וכתבנן על תרין לוחי אבניא:

◆ שני 5 ראה | למדתי אתכם חקים ומשפטים כאשר צוני יהוה אלהי לעשות כן בקרב הארץ אשר אתם באים שמה לרשתה: 6 ושמרתם ועשיתם כי הוא חקמתכם ובינתכם לעיני העמים אשר ישמעון את פלי החקים האלה ואמרו רק עם-חכם ונבון הגוי הגדול הזה: 7 כי מי-גוי גדול אשר-לו אלהים קרבים אליו כיהוה אלהינו בכל-קראנו אליו: 8 ומי גוי גדול אשר-לו חקים ומשפטים צדיקים ככל התורה הזאת אשר אנכי נתן לפניכם היום: 9 רק השמר לה ושמו נפשך מאד פן תשכח את-הדברים אשר-ראו עיניך ופן-יסורו מלבבך כל ימי חייך והודעתם לבניך ולבני בניך: 10 יום אשר עמדת לפני יהוה אלהיך בחרב באמר יהוה אלי חקלה-לי את-העם ואשמעם את-דברי אשר ילמדון לראה אתי פליתימים אשר הם חיים על-האדמה ואת-בניהם ילמדון: 11 ותקרבון ותעמדון תחת ההר וההר בער באש עד-לב השמים חשך ענן וערפל: 12 וידבר יהוה אליכם מתוך האש קול דברים אתם שמעים ותמונה אינכם ראים וזלתי קול: 13 ויגד לכם את-בריתו אשר צוה אתכם לעשות עשרת הדברים ויכתבם על-שני לחות אבנים:

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מתוך שכחה, תחשבו שוטים: 10 יום אשר עמדת. מוסב על מקרא שלמעלה ממנו — "אשר ראו עיניך יום אשר עמדת בחרב", אשר ראיתם את הקולות ואת הלפידים: ילמדון. ילפון לעצמם: ילמדון. ואלפון לאחרים:

6 ושמרתם. זו משנה: ועשיתם. כמשמעו: כי הוא חקמתכם ובינתכם וגו'. בזאת תחשבו חקמים ונבונים לעיני העמים: 8 חקים ומשפטים צדיקים. הגונים ומקבליים: 9 רק השמר לה וגו' פן תשכח את הדברים. אז כשלא תשכחו אותם ותעשו על אמדתם, תחשבו חקמים ונבונים, ואם תעזתו אותם

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true, Divine personalities can shine forth in all their unique individuality.

The same principle applies "quantitatively": the more we surrender our apparent individuality to God's omnipresence, thereby connecting to our

true source of life, the more our earthly, limited lives take on something of the eternal longevity of spiritual beings. Indeed, Rabbi DovBer, the Maggid of Mezeritch,³⁵ teaches that the angels' immortality is due to their consummate fear of Heaven resulting from their constant awareness of God.³⁶

35. Cited also in *Pelach HaRimon, Shemot*, p. 283. 36. *Siddur im Dach* 82cd.

◆ **Second Reading 5** Behold, as God, my God, commanded me to, I have taught you rules and ordinances for you to abide by when you will live in the land that you are entering in order to possess.

6 You must safeguard these rules and ordinances—i.e., make sure you are performing them properly—by constantly studying the Torah's instructions how to perform them, and then you must perform them, for that is what will attest to your wisdom and your understanding in the eyes of the peoples, who will hear all these rules and say, 'Only this great nation is such a wise and understanding people.'

7 For what great nation is there that has a god as near to it as God, our God, is to us whenever we call upon Him?

8 And what great nation is there that has rules and ordinances as just and relevant as this entire Torah, which I am setting before you this day?

9 Therefore, be wary and guard yourself carefully lest you forget what you have learned and start observing God's rules and ordinances incorrectly, for if you do, you will appear foolish rather than wise. In addition, take care lest you forget the foundation underlying your observance of these rules and ordinances, namely, **the things that you saw with your own eyes** at Mount Sinai when God gave you the Torah, and lest these things depart from your heart all the days of your life—and you must impart them as well to your children and to your children's children:

10 the Divine revelation you experienced on the day you stood before God, your God, at Mount Horeb, when God said to me, 'Assemble the people for Me; I will let them hear My words, in order that they learn to revere Me all the days that they live on the earth, and in order that they teach their children to revere Me, as well.'

11 You approached and stood at the foot of the mountain;²⁸ the mountain burned with fire that rose up to the midst of heaven,²⁹ and it was enveloped by three degrees of obscurity: darkness, a normal cloud, and a thick cloud.³⁰

12 God spoke to you out of the midst of the fire.³¹ You heard the sound of the words but saw no image; you only heard God's voice.

13 He told you the terms of His covenant³²—the Torah—that He commanded you to observe, and summarized it³³ in the Ten Commandments, and He inscribed the Ten Commandments on two stone tablets.³⁴

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very well imagine that the deeper and more complete the relationship we forge with God, the more our own individual concerns and personalities will be diminished. The Torah here teaches us that the opposite is actually true: Our true life and vitality are directly commensurate with the depth of our attachment to the source of all life, God. In fact, what we normally mistake as our personality or "persona" is largely rooted in the animal drives of our secondary, animal souls. The individual nature of this personality is merely an illusion; inasmuch

as we share the same animal drives with the rest of humanity, the personality born of these drives is, at best, a variation on the same, common theme everyone else is living out, and at worst, a vain attempt to establish a sense of self-worth through feigned individuality. In contrast, since God is infinite, the avenues by which His Divinity can manifest itself in reality are also infinite; thus, it is only our Divine personality that is truly unique. It follows that the more we allow our normative personalities to dissolve as we draw closer to God, the more our

28. Exodus 19:17. 29. Exodus 19:18. 30. Exodus 19:16. 31. Exodus 20:1. 32. Exodus 19:5, 20:1. 33. Exodus 20:1. 34. Exodus 31:18.

— ONKELOS —

14 וַיְהִי פֶקֶדֶן יְיָ בְּעִדְנָא הַהִיא לְאֵלֶּפָא יִתְכוּן קִימִין וְדִינִין לְמַעְבְּדוֹן יְתֵהוּן בְּאַרְעָא דִּי אַתּוּן עֲבָרִין לְתַמְנָן לְמִירְתָּהּ: 15 וְתַסְתַּמְרוּן לְחֻדָּא לְנַפְשִׁיתְכוּן אַרְי לֹא חִזִּיתוּן כָּל דְּמוֹת בְּיוֹמָא דִּי מַלִּיל יְיָ עִמְכוּן בְּחֵרֵב מְגוּ אִשָּׁא: 16 דְּלִמָּא תַחְבְּלוּן וְתַעֲבְדוּן לְכוּן צִלְם דְּמוֹת כָּל צוּרָה דְּמוֹת דְּכַר אוּ נֹקְבָא: 17 דְּמוֹת כָּל בְּעִירָא דִּי בְּרַח בְּאוּרִי רְקִיעַ שְׁמַיָּא: 18 דְּמוֹת כָּל רַחֲשָׂא דִּי בְּאַרְעָא דְּמוֹת כָּל נוּגֵי דִּי בְּמַיָּא מְלָרַע לְאַרְעָא: 19 וְדְלִמָּא תִזְקוּף עֵינֵיהּ לְשִׁמְיָא וְתַחֲזִי יָת שְׁמֵשָׁא וְיָת סִיְהֵרָא וְיָת כּוּכְבָּיָא כָּל חִילֵי שְׁמַיָּא וְתַסְעִי וְתַסְגִּיד לְהוֹן וְתַפְלַחְנוּן דִּי זְמִין יְיָ אֱלֹהֵךָ יְתֵהוּן לְכָל עַמְמַיָּא דְּתַחֲתָא כָּל שְׁמַיָּא: 20 וְיִתְכוּן קָרִיב יְיָ לְדַחֲלֵתָהּ וְאַפְקֵי יִתְכוּן מְכוּרָא דְּפְרוּזָלָא מִמַּעְרִים לְמַהוּי לַה לְעַם אַחְסָנָא בְּיוֹמָא הַדִּין: 21 וּמִן קָדָם יְיָ הָוָה רְגוּ עָלֵי עַל פְּתַנְמִיכוּן וְקִיִּים בְּדִיל דְּלֹא לְמַעְבְּרֵי יָת יְרֻדְנָא וּבְדִיל דְּלֹא לְמִיעַל לְאַרְעָא טַבְתָּא דִּי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵךָ יֵהֵב לָךְ אַחְסָנָא: 22 אַרְי אֲנָא מְאִית בְּאַרְעָא הַדָּא לִית אֲנָא עֵבֶר יָת יְרֻדְנָא וְאַתּוּן עֲבָרִין וְתִירְתוּן יָת אַרְעָא טַבְתָּא הַדָּא: 23 אַסְתַּמְרוּ לְכוּן דְּלִמָּא תַתְנַשּׁוּן יָת קִימָא דִּי אֱלֹהֵכוּן דִּי גֹר עִמְכוּן וְתַעֲבְדוּן לְכוּן צִלְם דְּמוֹת כָּלָא דִּי פְקֻדָּךְ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵךָ:

14 וְאוֹתֵי צוּרָה ה' בַּעַת הַהוּא לְלַמֵּד אֶתְכֶם חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים לַעֲשׂוֹתְכֶם אֹתָם בְּאַרְצֵי אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם עוֹבְרִים שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ: 15 וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם מְאֹד לְנַפְשֵׁיכֶם כִּי לֹא רְאִיתֶם כָּל־תְּמוּנָה בַּיּוֹם דְּבָר יְהוָה אֵלֵיכֶם בְּחֵרֵב מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ: 16 פְּרִי־תִשְׁחַתּוּן וַעֲשִׂיתֶם לָכֶם פְּסֶל תְּמוּנַת כָּל־סֹמֶל תַּבְנִית זָכָר אוּ נְקֵבָה: 17 תַּבְנִית כָּל־בְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר בְּאַרְצֵי תַבְנִית כָּל־צִפּוֹר כַּנֶּף אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲוֹף בַּשָּׁמַיִם: 18 תַּבְנִית כָּל־רֶמֶשׂ בְּאֲדָמָה תַבְנִית כָּל־דְּגָה אֲשֶׁר־בַּמַּיִם מִתַּחַת לְאַרְצֵי: 19 וּפְרִי־תִשָּׂא עֵינֶיךָ הַשְּׁמַיְמָה וְרְאִיתְ אֶת־הַשָּׁמַשׁ וְאֶת־הַיָּרֵחַ וְאֶת־הַכּוֹכָבִים כֹּל צִבְיַת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְנִדְחַת וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִית לָהֶם וְעַבַדְתֶּם אֲשֶׁר חָלַק יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֹתָם לְכָל הָעַמִּים תַּחַת כָּל־הַשָּׁמַיִם: 20 וְאַתְּכֶם לָקַח יְהוָה וַיּוֹצֵא אֶתְכֶם מִכּוּר הַבְּרוּז לְמַעְרָיִם לְהִזִּית לּוֹ לְעַם גִּתְלָהּ בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה: 21 וַיְהוֶה הַתְּאַנְף־בִּי עַל־דְּבִרְיֶכֶם וַיִּשְׁבַּע לְבַלְתִּי עֲבָרִי אֶת־הַיָּרְדֵּן וּלְבַלְתִּי־בֹא אֶל־הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ גִּתְלָהּ: 22 כִּי אֲנֹכִי מֵת בְּאַרְצֵי הַזֹּאת אֵינְנִי עוֹבֵר אֶת־הַיָּרְדֵּן וְאַתֶּם עוֹבְרִים וַיִּרְשַׁתֶּם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה הַזֹּאת: 23 הַשְׁמִרוּ לָכֶם פְּרִי־תִשְׁבַּחוּ אֶת־בְּרִית יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר בְּרַת עִמְכֶם וַעֲשִׂיתֶם לָכֶם פְּסֶל תְּמוּנַת כָּל אֲשֶׁר צוּרָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

— RASHI —

הוא אומר: "כי החליק אליו בעיניו, למצא עונו לשנא": 20 מכור. הוא כלי שמוקקין בו את הזקב: 21 התאנף. נתמלא רגזו: על דבריכם. על אודותיכם ועל עסקיכם: 22 כי אנכי מת וגו' אינני עבר. מאחר שמת מהיכן יעבר? אלא אף עצמותי אינם עוברים: 23 תמונת כל. תמונת כל דבר: אשר צורך ה'. אשר צוף עליו שלא לעשות:

14 וְאוֹתֵי צוּרָה ה' בַּעַת הַהוּא לְלַמֵּד אֶתְכֶם. תוֹרָה שְׁבַעֲלֵ פֶה: 16 סֹמֶל. צוּרָה: 19 וּפְרִי תִשָּׂא עֵינֶיךָ. לְהִסְתַּכֵּל בְּדָבָר וּלְתַת לֵב לְטַעוֹת אַחֲרֵיהֶם: אֲשֶׁר חָלַק ה' וְגו' לְכָל הָעַמִּים. לְהַאִיר לָהֶם. דְּבַר אַחֲרֵי לְאֵלֹהוֹת, לֹא מְנַעַן מִלְטַעוֹת אַחֲרֵיהֶם, אֶלָּא הַחֲלִיקֶם בְּדַבְרֵי הַכְּלִיָּהִם לְטָרְדָם מִן הָעוֹלָם. וְכֵן

7. תהלים לז, ג.

yourselves a sculpted image, that is, the likeness of anything – which God, your God, has forbidden you to do.

14 **God commanded me at that time**, during my first forty days on Mount Sinai after the Giving of the Torah, **to teach you the oral explanation of the rules and ordinances, so that you should perform them**³⁷ properly in the land into which you are crossing in order to possess.

Entrance to the Promised Land Contingent upon Loyalty to God

15 **You must guard yourselves carefully** against the temptation to depict what you experienced at Mount Sinai in any visual form, **for you did not see any image of God on the day that God spoke to you at Mount Horeb from the midst of the fire.**

16 Be careful **lest you become degenerate and make a sculpted image for yourselves to worship:**³⁸ **the representation of any form, whether it be the likeness of a male or a female human being;**

17 **the likeness of any beast that is on the earth; the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the sky;**

18 **the likeness of anything that crawls on the ground; or the likeness of any fish that is in the water lower than the earth** surrounding it.

19 Be careful, too, **lest you lift up your eyes toward heaven** in search of something to worship **and see the sun, the moon, the stars, or all the host of heaven, which God, your God, appointed to give light to all people who dwell under the entire heaven**—i.e., all the peoples of the earth,³⁹ **and be lured to prostrate yourselves before them and worship them.** In addition to serving as luminaries, God specifically created the celestial bodies to test humanity to see if they would succumb to the temptation to worship them. But whereas He allowed the other nations to err in this matter and to escape the consequences for the time being, He will not be so generous with you.

20 For, as you see, **God took you and brought you out of the iron crucible, that is, out of Egypt**, where He refined the dross out of you and forged you **into a people** whom He can call **His heritage, as you are today.**

21 As I have said,⁴⁰ the reason I am not entering the Promised Land is because **God was angry with me at Kadesh because of you, and He swore that I would not cross the Jordan River and that I would not come into the good land that God, your God, is giving you as an inheritance.**

22 **For I must die and be buried in this land; I will not even cross the Jordan River in a coffin. You, however, have been forgiven and will cross it, and you will take possession of this good land.**

Residence in the Promised Land Contingent upon Loyalty to God

23 Backsliding into idolatry will not only keep you from entering and conquering the Promised Land; it will also prevent you from remaining in it. **Beware, then, lest you forget the covenant of God, your God, that He made with you, and make for**

37. Rashi on 29:11, below. 38. Cf. Rashi on Genesis 6:11. 39. *Hitva'aduyot* 5745, vol. 5, p. 3031. 40. Above, 1:37-38, 3:26.

— ONKELOS —

24 אַרִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֶךָ מִיִּמְרָה אֲשָׂא אֲבָלָא הוּא אֵל קָנָא: 25 אַרִי תוֹלְדוֹן בְּנִין וּבְנֵי בְנִין וְתַתְּעַקְוֹן בְּאַרְעָא וְתַחְבְּלוֹן וְתַעֲבְדוֹן צִלְם דְּמוֹת כִּלְאָ וְתַעֲבְדוֹן דְּבִישׁ קָדָם יְיָ אֱלֹהֶךָ לֹאֲרָגוּא קְדָמוּהִי: 26 אִסְתְּדִית בְּכוּן יוֹמָא דִּין יְתִי שְׂמִיא וְיִת אַרְעָא אַרִי מִיבְדִּי תִבְדוֹן בְּפִרְיעַ מַעַל אַרְעָא דִּי אַתּוֹן עֲבָרִין יְתִי יִרְדְּנָא לְתַמְנָן לְמִירְתָהּ לֹא תוֹרְכוּן יוֹמִין עֲלֵה אַרִי אֲשַׁתְּצָאָה תִשְׁתַּעֲזוּן: 27 וְיַבְדֵּר יְיָ יִתְכוּן בְּעַמְמִיא וְתִשְׁתַּאֲרוֹן עִם דְּמַמְנָן בְּעַמְמִיא דִּי יַדְבֵּר יְיָ יִתְכוּן לְתַמְנָן: 28 וְתַפְלְחוּן תַּמְנָן לְעַמְמִיא פְּלַחֵי טַעֲוֹתָא עוֹבְדֵי יְדֵי אֲנָשָׁא אַעָא וְאַבְנָא דִּי לֹא חוּן וְלֹא שְׁמַעִין וְלֹא אֲבָלִין וְלֹא מְרִיחוּן: 29 וְתַחְבְּעוּן מִתַּמְנָן יְתִי דְחַלְתָּא דִּי אֱלֹהֶךָ וְתִשְׁפַּח אַרִי תְבַעֵי מִן קְדָמוּהִי בְּכַל לִבְךָ וּבְכַל נַפְשֶׁךָ: 30 כּוּד יַעוֹק לֵךְ וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוֶיךָ כֹּל פְּתַגְמִיא הַאֲלִין בְּסוּף יוֹמִיא וְתַתּוּב לְדַחְלְתָא דִּי אֱלֹהֶךָ וְתַקְבֵּל לְמִיִּמְרָה: 31 אַרִי אֱלֹהָא רַחֲמָנָא יְיָ אֱלֹהֶךָ לֹא יִשְׁבַּקְךָ וְלֹא יַחְבִּלְךָ וְלֹא יִתְנַשֵּׁי יְתִי קִימָא דְאַבְהֵתְךָ דִּי קִיִּים לְחוּן: 32 אַרִי שְׂאֵל בְּעֵן לְיוֹמִיא קְדָמָי דְהוּוּ קְדָמְךָ לְמִן יוֹמָא דִּי בְרָא יְיָ אָדָם עַל אַרְעָא וְלְמַסְיַפֵּי שְׂמִיא וְעַד סִיפֵי שְׂמִיא הִהוּוּ כְּפִתְגָמָא רַבָּא דְדִין אוֹ הַאֲשַׁתְּמַע כְּתוּהָ: 33 הַשְׁמַע עִמָּא קַל מִיִּמְרָא דִּי מְמַלֵּל מְגוֹ אֲשָׂא כְּמָא דְשַׁמְעַת אַתָּא וְאַתְקִים:

24 כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אִישׁ אֲכֹלָה הוּא אֵל קָנָא: פ

25 כִּי־תוֹלִיד בָּנִים וּבְנֵי בָנִים וְנוֹשְׁנֶתֶם בְּאַרְצֵי וְהִשְׁחַתֶּם וַעֲשִׂיתֶם פְּסָל תְּמוֹנֹת כָּל וַעֲשִׂיתֶם הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְהַכְעִיסוֹ: 26 הַעִידְתִּי בְכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ כִּי־אָבֵד תֵּאבְדוּן מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם עֹבְרִים אֶת־תֵּירֶדֶן שָׂמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ לֹא־תֵאָרִיבֶן יָמִים עָלֶיהָ כִּי הִשְׁמַד תִּשְׁמַדוּן: 27 וְהִפִּיץ יְהוָה אֶתְכֶם בְּעַמִּים וְנִשְׁאַרְתֶּם מִתִּי מִסָּפָר בְּגוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר יִנְהַג יְהוָה אֶתְכֶם שָׂמָּה: 28 וְעַבְדְּתֶם־שָׁם אֱלֹהִים מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי אָדָם עֵץ וְאִבֶּן אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יֵרָאוּן וְלֹא יִשְׁמַעוּן וְלֹא יֵאָכְלוּן וְלֹא יִרְחוּן: 29 וּבְקִשְׁתֶּם מִשָּׁם אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּמִצֵּאתָ כִּי תִדְרָשׁוּן בְּכָל־לִבְכֶּךָ וּבְכָל־נַפְשֶׁךָ: 30 בְּצַר לְךָ וּמִצְאֹוד כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים וְשִׁבְתָּ עַד־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְשָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹלִי: 31 כִּי אֵל רַחוּם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא יִרְפֶּךָ וְלֹא יִשְׁחִיתֶךָ וְלֹא יִשְׁכַּח אֶת־בְּרִית אֲבֹתֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לָהֶם: 32 כִּי שְׂאֵל־נָא לְיָמִים רִאשׁוֹנִים אֲשֶׁר־הָיוּ לְפָנֶיךָ לְמִן־הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אָדָם עַל־הָאָרֶץ וְלִמְקַצֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם וְעַד־קַצֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם הִנְהִיחָה כְּדָבָר הַגְּדוֹל הַזֶּה אוֹ הַנִּשְׁמַע כְּמָהוּ: 33 הַשְׁמַע עִם קוֹל אֱלֹהִים מְדַבֵּר מִתּוֹךְ־הָאִישׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַעְתָּ אֶתְּהָ וַיְחִי:

— RASHI —

לָהֶם: 31 לֹא יִרְפֶּךָ. מִלְּהַחֲזִיק בְּךָ בְּיָדָיו, וְלִשׁוֹן "לֹא יִרְפֶּךָ" לִשׁוֹן לֹא יַפְעִיל הוּא — לֹא יִתֵּן לְךָ רַפְיוֹן, לֹא יַפְרִישׁ אוֹתְךָ מֵאֲצִלוֹ. וְכֹן: "אֲחֻזְתִּיו וְלֹא אֲרַפְנוּ", שְׂלֵא נִנְקַד "אֲרַפְנוּ". כָּל לִשׁוֹן רַפְיוֹן מוֹסֵב עַל לִשׁוֹן מַפְעִיל וּמִתְפַּעֵל, כְּמוֹ: "הִרְפָּה לֵה", תֵּן לֵה רַפְיוֹן. "הִרְף מִמְּנִי"¹⁰, הִתְרַפָּה מִמְּנִי: 32 לְיָמִים רִאשׁוֹנִים. עַל יָמִים רִאשׁוֹנִים: וְלִמְקַצֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם. וְגַם שְׂאֵל לְכָל הַבְּרוּאִים אֲשֶׁר מְקַצֵּה אֵל קַצֵּה, וְהוּוּ פְּשׁוּטוֹ. וּמְדַרְשׁוֹ: מְלַמֵּד עַל קוּמְתוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם שֶׁהִיטָה מִן הָאָרֶץ עַד הַשָּׁמַיִם, וְהוּא הַשְׁעוֹר עֲצָמוֹ אֲשֶׁר מְקַצֵּה אֵל קַצֵּה: הִנְהִיחָה כְּדָבָר הַגְּדוֹל הַזֶּה. וּמָהוּ הַדְּבָר הַגְּדוֹל? "הַשְׁמַע עִם" וְגו':

24 אֵל קָנָא. מְקַנָּא לְנַקֵּם, אִינְפְּרִינְדֵּר־א בְּלַעֲזָא, מִתְחַרָּה עַל רָגוֹז לְהַפְרַע מַעוּבְדֵי עַבּוּדָה וְרָה: 25 וְנוֹשְׁנֶתֶם. רָמוֹז לָהֶם שֵׁיגְלוֹ מִמְּנָה לְסוּף שְׂמוּנָה מְאוֹת וְחַמְשִׁים וּשְׁתַּיִם שָׁנָה, כְּמַנְיֵן "וְנוֹשְׁנֶתֶם". וְהוּא הַקְּדִים וְהַגְּלָם לְסוּף שְׂמוּנָה מְאוֹת וְחַמְשִׁים וְהַקְּדִים שְׁתֵּי שָׁנִים ל"וְנוֹשְׁנֶתֶם", כְּדִי שְׂלֵא יִתְקַים בְּהֶם: "כִּי אָבֵד תֵּאבְדוּן". וְהוּוּ שְׁנַצְמַרִי: "וַיִּשְׁקַד ה' עַל הָרַעַה וַיְבִיאָהּ עֲלֵינוּ כִּי צָדִיק ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ" — צָדָקָה עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ, שְׂמַהֲרָה לְהַבִּיאָה שְׁתֵּי שָׁנִים לְפָנֵי זְמַנָּה: 26 הַעִידְתִּי בְכֶם. הִנְנִי מְזַמְּנִים לְהִיּוֹת עִידִים שְׂהַתְרִיתִי בְכֶם: 28 וְעַבְדְּתֶם שָׁם אֱלֹהִים. כְּתַרְגוּמוֹ — מִשְׁאַתֶּם עוֹבְדִים לְעוֹבְדֵיהֶם, כְּאֵלוֹ אַתֶּם עוֹבְדִים

8. כלעס. 9. דברים ד, כו. 10. דניאל ט, יד. 11. שיר השירים ג, ד. 12. מלכים ב, ד, כו. 13. דברים ט, יד.

24 For God, your God, is, metaphorically, a consuming fire; He is a zealous God who does not tolerate infidelity.

25 When you have children and children's children, and you will be long established in the land, and you become corrupt and make a sculpted image, the likeness of anything, and do evil in the eyes of God, your God, to provoke Him to anger by worshipping it,

26 I invoke heaven and earth today as witnesses, i.e., reminders⁴¹—since they will be present then whereas I will not—that I am warning you that you will speedily and utterly perish from the land into which you are crossing the Jordan River to possess; you will not prolong your days upon it, but will be utterly destroyed.

27 God will scatter you among the peoples, and you will remain few in number among the nations to where God will lead you.

28 As slaves, you will serve idol-worshipping masters in your exile, so it will be as though you yourselves will be worshipping other deities there—man's handiwork, wood and stone—that can neither see, hear, eat, or smell.

29 But since God has irrevocably made you His people, you will eventually seek God, your God, from there, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul.

30 When you are distressed, and all these things happen to you in the end of the days of your exile, you will return to God, your God, and obey Him.

31 For God, your God, is a merciful God: He will not loosen His hold on you, allowing you to assimilate altogether, nor destroy you outright; neither will He forget the covenant of your forefathers, which He swore to them. As for His threat to utterly destroy you,⁴² He made this threat contingent on your being “long established” in the land.⁴³ He will therefore exile you before this condition has been fulfilled.⁴⁴

32 For please inquire regarding the early days that were before you—since the day that God created humanity on the earth—and ask everyone on earth, from one end of heaven to the other end of heaven, whether there was anything like this great phenomenon, or was the likes of it heard:

33 Did ever a people hear God's voice speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard,⁴⁵ and live?

❧ A CLOSER LOOK ❧

[31] He will exile you: The exact number of years implied by the word for “and you will be long established” (וְיִרְשְׁתֶּם) is alluded to by its numerical value, 852. Thus, as the year 3340 (the 852nd year after the Israelites' entry into the Promised Land) approached, the condition

of being “long established” in their land was about to be fulfilled. Therefore, in order to avoid having to fulfill His threat of utterly destroying them, God exiled the people two years early, in the year 3338.⁴⁶

41. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 19, pp. 332-333, notes 26 and 27. 42. Above, v. 26. 43. Above, v. 25. 44. Rashi on v. 25. 45. Exodus 20:1. 46. Rashi on v. 25.

— ONKELOS —
 34 או נסין די עבד יי לאתגלאה למפרק לה עם מגו עם גנסינ באתינ ובמופתין ובקרבא ובידא תקיפא ובדרעא מרממא ובחונינ רברבין ככל די עבד לכוון יי אלהיכם במצרים לעיניך: 35 את אתחזית למדע ארי יי הוא אלהים לית עוד בר מנה:

34 או | הנסה אלהים לבוא לקחת לו גוי מקרב גוי במסת באתות ובמופתים ובמלחמה וביד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה ובמוראים גדלים ככל אשר עשה לכם יהוה אלהיכם במצרים לעיניך: 35 אתה הראת לדעת כי יהוה הוא האלהים אין עוד מלבדו:

— RASHI —

נפלאות, שהביא עליהם מכות מפלאות: ובמלחמה. בים, שנאמר: "כי ה' נלחם להם": 35 הראת. כתרגומו "אתחזיתא", כשנתן הקדוש ברוך הוא את התורה, פתח להם שבעה רקיעים, וכשם שקרע את העליונים כך קרע את התחתונים, וראו שהוא יחידי, לכה נאמר: "אתה הראת לדעת":

34 הנסה אלהים. הכי עשה נסים שום אלוה "לבוא לקחת לו גוי וגו'". כל ההי"ן הללו תמידות הן, לכה נקודות הן בחטף פתח: הנדיה, הנשמע, הנסה, השמע: במסת. על ידי נסיונות הודיעם גבורותיו, כגון: "התפאר עלי" אם אוכל לעשות כן, הרי זה נסיון: באתת. בסימנים להאמין שהוא שלוחו של מקום, כגון: "מה זה בידך": ובמופתים. הם

14. שמות ח, ה. 15. שמות ד, ב. 16. שמות יד, כה. 17. דברים ד, לה.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

the necessity of bringing the awareness that "God is God" into "heaven above and earth below."

For the same reason, verse 35, which describes God's self-revelation, ends with the phrase, "there is no other reality besides Him"—implying that in the face of that revelation there is indeed nothing other than God at all; whereas verse 39, describing our upward climb to Divine knowledge, ends only with the words, "there is no other reality"—implying by contrast that from our perspective there is indeed a reality "besides Him" but that we are aware that it possesses no intrinsic existence on its own.

The Divine consciousness we were granted at the Giving of the Torah was loftier than any Divine consciousness that we can achieve on our own, since the former was powerful enough to annihilate all awareness of created reality whereas the latter is not. On the other hand, seeing God in everything when working out of the initial spiritual darkness of our physical world is a much greater feat than seeing Him in everything when everything has already been dissolved in His overpowering presence. In fact, seeing God in everything while still retaining consciousness of the world is possible only when we look at the world from the perspective of God's essence (rather than that of any revelation of Him, no matter how sublime), for God's essence transcends the dichotomy of revelation and concealment.

Verse 39 thus describes the progressive ascent in Divine consciousness we are bidden to follow: We are

to first "know" God through intellectual inquiry, contemplating His presence in the world. We are then to proceed to the much harder task of "considering it in your heart," that is, making this reality so relevant that we get emotionally involved in it. The Torah then describes how the content of our contemplation also ascends progressively: First we are to realize that "God is God," i.e., that God is both transcendent and immanent. We are then to realize that God's transcendence governs the spiritual worlds ("in heaven above"), which is relatively easy to conceive of; and then that it governs the physical universe ("upon earth below") as well, which is harder to conceive of. From there we are to ascend to the awareness that even though reality exists, it owes its existence entirely to God and is therefore nothing but an expression of Divinity ("there is no other reality").⁵⁷

There is no other reality besides Him.... There is no other reality: On a deeper level, it is possible to view the difference between the two closing phrases of these verses inversely: "There is nothing besides Him" implies that "besides Him"—meaning "without Him"—nothing can exist, but "with Him"—meaning "with His help"—reality does exist; it just owes its entire existence to Him. In other words, whereas God's existence is *intrinsic*, everything else's existence is *contingent* (upon His existence).⁵⁸ In contrast, "there is nothing else" implies that there is no other existence whatsoever. This is not meant to deny the existence of reality, but rather to imply that everything that exists is

57. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5704, pp. 219 ff; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 4, pp. 1334-1335; *Sefer HaMa'amarim Melukat*, vol. 4, pp. 38-39. 58. As Maimonides states in *Mishneh Torah, Yesodei HaTorah* 1:1-4.

34 Or has any god miraculously come and taken for himself a whole nation from the midst of another nation, daring the host nation to test him with trials,⁴⁷ or providing his emissary with signs confirming that a supernal power sent him,⁴⁸ or smiting the host nation with marvels—the plagues,⁴⁹ or waging war against it,⁵⁰ or—besides the other plagues, which only vexed the Egyptians but did not kill them—by figuratively using his mighty hand to kill their animals with an epidemic,⁵¹ or by figuratively using his outstretched arm to kill their firstborn,⁵² or by manifesting his great, awesome presence,⁵³ as all that God, your God, did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

35 Nonetheless, the miracles of the Exodus did not preclude the existence of some other (albeit lesser) deity. But when God gave you the Torah, **you were shown** that there is no other deity: He first ‘opened up’ the entire hierarchy of the spiritual worlds⁵⁴ **in order** for you **to know that God is the only God** in it, and then He ‘tore open’ both spiritual and physical reality so you could see that **there is no other** reality within creation **besides Him.**⁵⁵

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35 He ‘opened’...then ‘tore’: The existential difference between “heaven” (the spiritual worlds) and “earth” (the physical universe) is that the former manifest Divinity, each on their own level, whereas the latter denies Divinity, at least a priori. Therefore, in order to show the people that His is the sole presence within the spiritual worlds, it was enough for God to “open” these worlds up, i.e., to simply remove their natural spiritual opacity, enabling the people to “see” how the spiritual worlds manifest Divinity. In contrast, in order to show the people His presence within physical reality as well as to show them that His is the only true reality altogether—how all the worlds (down to ours, the entire physical universe) are really just part of God’s essence—God had to “tear open” heaven and earth, i.e., to overturn the external façade of independent existence pervading the entire hierarchy of creation.

By showing us both aspects of His relationship to reality, God enabled us to relate to Him in these same two general ways:

- Revealing His presence within the spiritual hierarchy of creation enabled us to elevate all aspects of life to their Divine source by orienting them toward their Divine purpose, thereby revealing their true, inner Divine essence. This includes the ability to refine our own intellect and emotions by focusing them on God, contemplating His creation and providence.
- Revealing His essence, beyond creation, enabled us to transcend the limits of nature by responding to critical challenges with self-sacrifice, overriding (“tearing”) the limits imposed both by our

intellect and emotions as well as by our natural instincts toward self-preservation and comfort-seeking.

The latter process works in reverse, as well: In order to overcome challenges and tests in our lives, we need to remind ourselves that “there is nothing other than Him,” i.e., that nothing can constitute a real obstacle to fulfilling God’s intentions, since everything, in the final analysis, is part of God’s essence. Evoking this awareness within ourselves elevates our Divine consciousness to the level of truly perceiving God’s essence everywhere. This, in turn, serves to hasten the messianic Redemption, when “the glory of God will be revealed and all flesh will see it together.”⁵⁶

35 & 39 There is no other reality besides Him....

There is no other reality: In verse 35, Moses tells the people that when God gave the Torah, He showed them that there is no other reality other than Him. In verse 39, Moses tells them that they should not rely on the recollection of this revelation but rather respond to it by striving to know God on their own, as well.

Thus, there is no mention of “heaven and earth” in verse 35 (as there is in verse 39), because when God pulled back the veil in order to show the people that He is the only reality, the focus was on the presence of God, not on the nature of reality: the force of God’s revelation was so overwhelming that all other reality simply disappeared from everyone’s consciousness. In contrast, when we, working from our earthly perspective, aspire to knowledge of God, the nature of reality is a very real issue; hence

47. Exodus 8:5. 48. Exodus 4:2. 49. Exodus 7:3, 11:9-10. 50. Exodus 14:25, 15:3. 51. Exodus 9:3; Rashi on 7:19, below. 52. Exodus 6:6. 53. Onkelos; *Hagadah shel Pesach*. 54. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 24, p. 44. 55. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 24, pp. 36-46. 56. Isaiah 40:5; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 24, pp. 36-46.

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36 מן שמיא אשמיעך ?ת קל מימרה לאלפותך ועל ארעא אחיך ?ת אשה רבתא ופתגמוהי שמענת מגו אשא: 37 וחלף ארי רחיס ?ת אבהתך ואתרעי בבגוהי בתרוהי ואפקך במימרה פחילה רבא ממצריים: 38 לתרכא עממין רברבין ותקיפין מנך מן קדמך לאעלותך למתן לך ?ת ארעוון אחסנא פיומא הדין: 39 ותדע יומא דין ותתיב ללך ארי ? הוא אלהא דשכינתה בשמיא מלעלא ושליט על ארעא מלרע לית עוד:

36 מן־השמים השמיעך את־קלו לִי־סַרְךָ וְעַל־הָאָרֶץ הִרְאֶךָ אֶת־אִשׁוֹ הַגְּדוּלָּה וּדְבַרְיוֹ שָׁמַעַתְּ מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ: 37 וְתַחַת כִּי אָהַב אֶת־אֲבֹתֶיךָ וַיִּבְחַר בְּזַרְעוֹ אַחֲרָיו וַיּוֹצֵאֲךָ בְּפָנָיו בְּכַחוֹ הַגָּדֹל מִמִּצְרַיִם: 38 לְהוֹרִישׁ גּוֹיִם גְּדֹלִים וְעַצְמִים מִמֶּךָ מִפְּנֵיךָ לְהַבְיִאֲךָ לְתַת־לֶךָ אֶת־אֲרָצָם נַחֲלָה כַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה: 39 וַיִּדְעַתְּ הַיּוֹם וְהַשַּׁבָּת אֶל־לִבְבְּךָ כִּי יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים בְּשָׁמַיִם מַמְעַל וְעַל־הָאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת אֵין עוֹד:

RASHI

בלשון יחיד, שהרי כתבם בלשון יחידים: "ויבחר בזרעו אחריי": 38 מנך מפיניך. סרסוהו ודרשוהו — להוריש מפניך גוים גדולים ועצומים מנך: כיום הזה. כאשר אתה רואה היום:

37 ותחת כי אהב. וכל זה תחת אשר אהב: ויוצאך בפניי. כאדם המנהיג בנו לפניו, שנאמר: "ויסע מלאך האלהים ההלך וגו' וילך מאחריהם". דבר אחר: "ויוצאך בפניו", בפני אבותיו, כמו שנאמר: "נגד אבותם עשה פלא". ואל תתמה על שהזכירם

18. שמות יד, יט. 19. תהלים עח, יב. 20. דברים ד, לו.

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ple, why a thief can pray to God for success in his theft: although he believes that God can influence the outcome of events supernaturally, this belief does not register in his consciousness as making any moral demands on his behavior.

It is therefore necessary to bring our ingrained belief in God into our conscious minds, similar to how our ingrained knowledge of Him is active in our conscious minds. This feat is accomplished by studying the Torah and fulfilling its commandments; it is the unique, spiritual property of the Torah and the commandments that they bridge this gap between God's infinite transcendence and our finite minds, enabling us to "know" what we initially only "believe."

This is why we are commanded in verse 39 to "make every effort to know," even though we were already "shown to know," as described in verse 35. At the Giving of the Torah, we were granted the "knowledge" of God's immanence; it is now up to us to also "know" God's transcendence. Because the means we use to attain this knowledge are the study of the Torah and the observance of its commandments, verse 39 adds the word "today," for only "today"—in our lifetimes—are we given this opportunity, whereas "tomorrow"—in the afterlife—this opportunity does not exist. This is also why, in the next

verse, Moses once again exhorts the people to fulfill the Torah's commandments, for as stated, the unique and special property of the Torah and its commandments is that they enable us to know God's transcendence, not only to believe that it exists.

Due to the world's (and our own) present imperfections, the gap between what we can know and what we can only believe is bridged to a greater or lesser extent, depending on our spiritual state. The more we are properly focused on the Torah and its attendant lifestyle, the more God's transcendence becomes part of our lives and the less we are subject to the limitations of nature. When we are distracted, we experience the gap between our knowledge and belief in God's transcendence.

This gap will be totally bridged only in the messianic future, when God will "remove the spirit of impurity from the earth"⁶⁸ and "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God."⁶⁹ Allegorically, "the earth" refers to our faculty of belief, which, like the lowly, inanimate earth, is devoid of the ardent feelings of the emotions or the intellectual stimulus of the mind. In the messianic future, our belief in God's transcendence ("the earth") will be transformed into ("filled with") knowledge of it, similar to how we can presently "know" His immanence.⁷⁰ [continues...]

vol. 1, p. 54; Sefer HaSichot 5752, vol. 2, p. 349, note 46, etc. 67. Sefer HaSichot 5701, p. 47; cf. Sefer HaMa'amarim Melukat, vol. 5, pp. 223-224. 68. Zachariah 13:2. 69. Isaiah 11:9. 70. Likutei Torah 4:4a-d; Likutei Sichot, vol. 4, pp. 1170-1171.

36 From heaven He let you hear His voice, to instruct you;⁵⁹ upon the earth, He showed you His great fire;⁶⁰ and you heard His words issuing out of the midst of the fire.⁶¹

37 He did all this because He loved your forefathers, and—for the same reason—He chose their seed after them to be His people. He therefore brought you out of Egypt, protecting you either by placing Himself in front of you⁶² or placing you in front of Him,⁶³ whichever was necessary, and showing your forefathers how He rescued you at the Sea of Reeds⁶⁴ with His great strength,

38 in order to drive out from before you nations who are greater and stronger than you, to bring you to their land and give you their land so you can pass it down as an inheritance, as you have already seen prior to today with regard to Sichon and Og.

39 You must therefore, in response to this revelation, make every effort to know today and consider in your heart that God is the only God, both in heaven above and upon earth below, and furthermore that all reality owes its existence to God: there is no intrinsic existence other than His.⁶⁵

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just a part of God. Thus, in this context, verse 39 describes a higher level of Divine consciousness than that discussed in verse 35.⁶⁶

In accordance with this interpretation, the difference between these two verses can be explained as follows:

It is important to realize that there can never be unequivocal, unassailable logical proof of God's existence, for two reasons. Firstly, the nature of intellect is such that any argument that is presented, no matter how sound, can be undermined by a counterargument. The most that we can achieve through reason is a degree of plausibility that enables us to live our lives in a consistent and honest way, but we can never achieve absolute certainty through reason alone. Secondly, if we could prove God's existence conclusively, doing so would preclude any possibility of free choice, and would thus undermine the whole purpose of creation.

Therefore, when God gave the Torah, He instilled within every individual Jew a "knowledge" of His existence that is not predicated on logical reasoning. Ever since that time, this surety has been part of our Divine soul; we therefore have no control over it and it does not result from any effort on our part. True, we are not always conscious of this innate knowledge, and if we allow the materialistic perspective of the physical world to overtake our consciousness, it will bury our innate surety under its skepticism and ridicule (this being what ensures free choice despite the surety of the knowledge). But if we train ourselves to see beyond the mate-

rial façade that the world presents us by periodically meditating on the logical reasons for God's existence, we can recover this God-given certainty.

This is why the gift of this knowledge is described as a visual experience: "You were *shown* to know." Seeing something fixes it in our minds with consummate certainty, and this knowledge of God's existence has been fixed in our psyches with a certainty akin to that associated with sight.

Yet this knowledge of God applies only to His immanence within creation. This is what was imprinted on our souls at the Giving of the Torah, and this is what we can recover through intellectual meditation. In contrast, we cannot *know* God's transcendence, since it is by definition totally beyond our ken; we can only *believe* in it.

But if, as we said, there can be no unassailable logical proof of God's existence as He is immanent within creation, then surely there can be no such proof of God's existence as He transcends creation. We can, of course, speculate and theorize about God's transcendence; even non-Jewish philosophers and theologians have done so extensively.⁶⁷ But absolute, concrete belief in God's transcendence is by definition beyond human reach.

God therefore imprinted the belief in His transcendence on the Jewish soul when the Torah was given, and it, too, is now part of every Jew's Divine soul. But since this transcendence is by definition removed from us, we don't immediately realize its ramifications in our lives. This explains, for exam-

59. Exodus 20:1. 60. Exodus 19:18. 61. Exodus 20:1. 62. Exodus 13:21-22. 63. Exodus 14:19. 64. Exodus 14:21; Rashi here and on Psalms 78:12. 65. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 4, p. 1334. 66. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, p. 202, note 86; *Hitva'aduyot* 5743, vol. 1, p. 292; *Hitva'aduyot* 5744, vol. 1, p. 37, p. 304, *Sefer HaSichot* 5748, vol. 1, p. 111, vol. 2, pp. 517-518; *Sefer HaSichot* 5749, vol. 2, p. 499; *Sefer HaSichot* 5750,

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40 ותטר ית קמזיה וית פקודיה די אנא מפקדך יומא דין די ייטב לך ולבניך בתרף ובדיל דתוריק יומין על ארעא די יי אלהך יתב לך כל יומיא: 41 בכן אפריש משה תלת קרוין בעברא דירדנא מרנח שמשא: 42 למערק לתמן קטולא די יקטול ית חברה בלא מנדעה והוא לא סני לה מאתמלי ומדקמזיה ויערוק לחדא מן קרויא האליו ויתקיים: 43 ית בצר במדברא בארע מישרא לשבטא דראובן וית ראמות בגלעד לשבטא דגד וית גולן במתנן לשבטא דמנשה:

40 ושמרת את הקיו ואת מצותיו אשר אנכי מצוך היום אשר ייטב לך ולבניך אחריך ולמען תאריך ימים על האדמה אשר יהוה אלהיך נתן לך כל הימים שלישי 41 אז יבדיל משה שלש ערים בעבר הירדן מזרחה שמש: 42 לנס שמה רוצח אשר ירצח את רעהו בבלידעת והוא לא שניא לו מתמל שלשם ונס אל אחת מן הערים האל וחי: 43 את בצר במדבר בארץ המישר לראובן ואת ראמת בגלעד לגדי ואת גולן בבשן למנשי:

— RASHI —

בעבר הירדן מזרחה שמש. באותו עבר שבמזרחו של ירדן: מזרחה שמש. לפי שהוא דבוק, נקודה ר"ש בחטףי²¹ — מזרח של שמש, מקום זריחת השמש:

41 אז יבדיל. נתן לב להיות חרד לדבר שיבדילם. ואף על פי שאינו קולטות עד שיבדלו אותן שבארץ כנען, אמר משה: מצוה שאפשר לקימה — אקימנה:

21. בשבא.

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hearing over sight is that it perceives sound, which is invisible and thus relatively less “corporeal” than the visible objects perceived by sight. In this sense, although the people had “seen” God’s immanence, they had only “heard” about God’s transcendence. Moses, on the other hand, possessed the same knowledge of God’s transcendence as he did of His immanence; he did not need to believe in it. In this sense, he was living in the messianic future during his lifetime. As was explained in the Overview, Moses wanted God to enable the people to “see” His transcendence as well as just “hear” about it. He knew that

this would happen if God would allow him to enter the Promised Land, for the land, as we saw, is a metaphor for belief. This is the allegorical meaning of his request to “cross over and see the good land,”⁷⁵ i.e., to infuse it with the surety of sight, elevating it to the level of knowledge. However, as the Torah will relate,⁷⁶ God did not grant Moses’ request, because the world at large was not yet ripe for this level of Divine consciousness. As stated above, this will be achieved only in the messianic future. Moses could therefore only enjoy the people to “hear” God’s message.⁷⁷

	First Interpretation		Second Interpretation			
	Divine Consciousness	Focus of Contemplation	Divine Consciousness	Experience	Focus of Contemplation	Sense
“There is no other reality besides Him” (v. 35)	Only God exists	God’s revelation	Creation exists but only contingently	Knowledge	God’s immanence	Sight
“There is no other reality” (v. 39)	Creation exists but only contingently	God’s essence	Only God exists; creation is part of God	Faith	God’s transcendence	Hearing

Figure 2. Divine Consciousness at the Giving of the Torah

75. Above, 3:25. 76. Below, 5:20-28. 77. Or HaTorah, Devarim, pp. 62-64. See below, 4:1, and on 6:4.

40 In order to achieve this awareness, God has given you the Torah and its commandments;⁷¹ **you must therefore observe His rules and His commandments, which I am commanding you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you, and so that you may prolong your days upon the land that God, your God, is giving to you forever.**"

Cities of Refuge

◆ *Third Reading* 41 It was **then**, after Moses understood that God was not going to allow him to cross over into the Land of Israel,⁷² that **Moses decided to designate three cities on the side of the Jordan River that is toward the direction of the sunrise, i.e., to the east,**

42 **so that a murderer might flee there, provided that he murders his fellow man unintentionally, not having hated him in time past and not having premeditated the murder. He may flee to one of these cities in order that he might live.**⁷³

43 The cities that Moses designated were **Betzer in the desert, in the plain-country of the tribe of Reuben; Ramot in Gilead, the territory of the tribe of Gad; and Golan in the Bashan, the territory of the tribe of Manasseh** (see Figure 1). Moses knew that these cities would not begin to function as cities of refuge until the other three, to the west of the Jordan River, would also be designated, but he reasoned that designating them now would obviate the need for Joshua to do so after designating the three to the west of the Jordan River. He also knew that designating cities of refuge is a commandment that is performed only in the Land of Israel, and since God was not permitting him to enter the land, he was not sure (a) if his actions indeed had any legal significance, and (b) if God indeed wanted him to do this. Nevertheless, he designated them anyway, hoping thereby to at least partially fulfill this commandment.⁷⁴



Figure 1. Cities of Refuge in Transjordan

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

There is no other reality besides Him.... There is no other reality: As mentioned above, the Torah describes our knowledge of God's immanence using the metaphor of "sight." Sight is considered a

higher level of perception than hearing because it evokes a much more intense emotional response than does hearing, indicating that it touches the soul more deeply. On the other hand, the advantage of

71. *Likutei Torah* 4:4a-d. 72. Above, vv. 21-22, 3:26. 73. Numbers 35:9-34; Exodus 21:13. 74. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 39, pp. 14-21.

— ONKELOS —

44 וְדָא אורייתא די סדר משה קדם
בני ישראל: 45 אלין סהדוּתא
וקְימא ודינא די מליל משה עם
בני ישראל במפקהון ממצרים:
46 בעברא דירדנא בחילתא
לקבל בית פֿעור בארעא דסיחון
מלכא דאמראָה די יתב בחשבון די
מחא משה ובני ישראל במפקהון
ממצרים: 47 ויריתו ית ארעה
ות ארעא דעוג מלכא דמתנן
תרין מלכי אמראָה די בעברא
דירדנא מדנח שמשא: 48 מערער
די על פיה נחלא דארנן ועד טורא
דשיאן הוא חרמון: 49 וכל מישרא
עברא דירדנא למדנקא ועד ימא
דמישרא תחות משפך מרמתא:
50 וקרא משה לכל ישראל ואמר
להון שמע ישראל ית קְימא וית
דינא די אָנא ממלל קדמיכון
יומא דין ותלפון יתהון ותשרון
למעבדהון: 2 יי אלהנא גזר עמנא
קים בחרב: 3 לא עם אִבְהֵנא
גזר יי ית קְימא הָדא אִלְהִין
עמנא אִנְחֵנא אלין הכא יומא דין
כלנא קְימין: 4 ממלל עם ממלל
מליל יי עמכון בטורא מוגו אָשא:
5 אָנא הויתי קאם בין מימרא דיי
וביניכון בעדנא הדיא לחוֹנָה
לכון ית פתגמא דיי אַרי דחלתון
מקדם אָשא ולא סלקתון בטורא
למימרא: 6 אָנא יי אִלְהֵךְ די אפקתך
מארעא דמצרים מבית עבדוּתא:

44 וְזֹאת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר־שָׂם מֹשֶׁה לְפָנָי בְּנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
45 אֱלֹהֵי הָעֵדוּת וְהַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה
אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם: 46 בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן
בְּנִיאַ מוֹל בֵּית פְּעוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ סִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ הָאֱמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר
יֹשֵׁב בְּחֻשְׁבוֹן אֲשֶׁר הִכָּה מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּצֵאתְכֶם
מִמִּצְרַיִם: 47 וַיִּירָשׁוּ אֶת־אֶרְצוֹ וְאֶת־אֶרֶץ אֶ | עוֹג מֶלֶךְ־
הַבָּשָׁן שָׁנִי מֶלְכֵי הָאֱמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן מִזֶּרֶח
שָׁמֶשׁ: 48 מֵעֵרְעָר אֲשֶׁר עַל־שְׂפַת־נַחַל אֲרֵנָן וְעַד־הַר
שִׂיאָן הוּא חֶרְמוֹן: 49 וְכָל־הָעֵרְבָה עֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן מִזֶּרְחָה
וְעַד יַם הָעֵרְבָה תַּחַת אֲשֵׁדוֹת הַפְּסָגָה: פ

◆ רביעי 5:1 וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם
שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַחֻקִּים וְאֶת־הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי
דֹבֵר בְּאָזְנוֹכֶם הַיּוֹם וּלְמַדְתֶּם אֹתָם וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם לַעֲשׂוֹתָם:
2 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ כָּרַת עִמָּנוּ בְרִית בְּחֵרֵב: 3 לֹא אֶת־
אֲבֹתֵינוּ כָּרַת יְהוָה אֶת־הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת כִּי אֲתָנוּ אֲנַחְנוּ
אֱלֹהֵי פֶה הַיּוֹם כָּלְנוּ חַיִּים: 4 פְּנִיִם | בְּפָנִים דִּבֶּר יְהוָה
עִמָּכֶם בְּהָר מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ: 5 אָנֹכִי עֹמֵד בֵּין־יְהוָה וּבֵינֵיכֶם
בְּעֵת הַהוּא לְהַגִּיד לָכֶם אֶת־דְּבַר יְהוָה כִּי יִרְאוּכֶם מִפְּנֵי
הָאֵשׁ וְלֹא־עֲלִיתֶם בְּהָר בְּהָר לֵאמֹר: ם

In the public reading of the Ten Commandments, the cantillation indicated on p. 268 is used.

6 אָנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים:

— RASHI —

אמר משה: אל תאמרו: אני מטעה אתכם על לא
דבר, כדרך שהסרסור עושה בין המוכר ללוקח,
הרי המוכר עצמו מדבר עמכם: 5 לאמרו. מוסב על
"דבר ה' עמכם בהר מתוך האש לאמר אנכי ה'
וגו', ואנכי עומד בין ה' וביניכם:

44 וְזֹאת הַתּוֹרָה. זוֹ שְׁהוּא עֵתִיד לְסִדֵּר אַחַר פְּרֻשָׁה
זוֹ: 45 אֱלֹהֵי הָעֵדוּת וְגו' אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר. הֵם הֵם אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר
בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם, חוֹר וּשְׁנָאָה לָהֶם בְּעֵרְבוֹת מוֹאָב:
47 אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן. שְׁהוּא בְּמוֹרְחָה, שְׁהַעֲבָר הַשְּׁנִי
הָיָה בְּמַעְרָב: 3 לֹא אֶת אֲבֹתֵינוּ. בְּלִבְד "כָּרַת ה' וְגו'
כִּי אֲתָנוּ וְגו'": 4 פְּנִיִם בְּפָנִים. אָמַר רַבִּי בְּרַבְּהִי: כִּךְ

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

6-19 The Repetition of the Ten Commandments:
In preparation for the Giving of the Torah at Mount
Sinai, the people completed a thorough process of
spiritual and mental purification, thereby earning

the most intense revelation of God that the world
had ever witnessed. The force of this revelation
purged them completely of evil inclinations and the
effects of sin, enabling them to achieve consummate

Moses' Second Address

44 The following is the corpus of instruction that Moses now set before the Israelites.

45 These teachings are the very same testimonies, rules, and ordinances that Moses spoke to the Israelites when they went out of Egypt, i.e., at Mount Sinai,

46 but he reviewed them now, when the people were camped on the east side of the Jordan River, in the valley opposite Beit Pe'or, in the land they had conquered from Sichon, king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Cheshbon, and whom Moses and the Israelites smote after they went out of Egypt.

47 They took possession of his land, as well as the land of Og, king of the Bashan, i.e., all the lands of the two kings of the Amorites who were on the side of the Jordan River toward the east, the direction of the sunrise,

48 from their southern border at Aroer, which is on the edge of the Arnon gorge, northward up to Mount Sion, which is Mount Hermon,⁷⁸

49 and all the plain located across the Jordan River eastward, southward as far as the sea of the plain, the Dead Sea, and the land further southward along the foot of the waterfalls descending from the peak of Mount Nebo.⁷⁹

The Legal Obligation to Perform the Commandments

◆ *Fourth Reading 5:1* Moses prefaced His review by recalling that when God gave the Torah at Mount Sinai, He established a covenant with the Jewish people.⁸⁰ Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, "Hear, O Israel, the rules and ordinances that I speak in your ears today; study them and safeguard them⁸¹ by learning how to perform them properly.

2 Your obligation to observe these rules and ordinances is based on the fact that God, our God, made a covenant with us at Mount Horeb.

3 Not with our forefathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—alone did God make this covenant, in which case you would be bound to it only by tradition and hearsay, which might leave you some reason to doubt my words, but with each of us personally—we, those who are here today, all of us who are alive.

4 When He first pronounced all ten commandments at once, God spoke with you at the mountain face to face—without any intermediary—out of the midst of the fire⁸²

5 (When God repeated each commandment separately, you only heard the first two directly from Him. I stood as an intermediary between God and you at that time in order to tell you the word of God regarding the last eight commandments, for you were afraid of the fire and you did not want to ascend the mountain.), saying,⁸³

6 The first commandment: 'I am God, your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of Pharaoh, where you were slaves.'

78. Above, 3:9. 79. Above, 3:17. 80. See Exodus 19:6. 81. Cf. above, 4:6. 82. Exodus 19:19, 20:1, 6. 83. Exodus 20:2-14.

— ONKELOS —

7 לא יחי לך אלה אחרן בר מני:
 8 לא תעבד לך צלם כל דמות
 די בשמיא מלעלא ודי בארעא
 מלרע ודי במיא מלרע לארעא:
 9 לא תסגוד להון ולא תפלהגון
 ארי אגא יי אלהך אל קנא מסער
 חובי אבהך על בנין מרדון ועל
 דר תליתי ועל דר רביעי לשנאי
 כד משלימין בנאי למחטי בתר
 אבהתהון: 10 ועבד טיבו לאלפי
 דרין לרחמי ולנטרי פקודי: 11 לא
 תימי ית שמא דיי אלהך למגנא
 ארי לא יזבי יי ית די יימי בשמה
 לשקרא: 12 טר ית יומא דשבטא
 לקדשותא כמא די פקודך יי אלהך:
 13 שתא יומין תפלח ותעבד
 כל עבדתך:

7 לֹא־יְחִי לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אַחֲרַיִם עַל־פְּנֵי: 8 לֹא־תַעֲבֹד
 לְךָ פֶּסֶל כָּל־תְּמוּנָה אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְאֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ
 מִתַּחַת וְאֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם מִתַּחַת לָאָרֶץ: 9 לֹא־תִסְגֹּד
 לָהֶם וְלֹא תַעֲבֹדֵם כִּי אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵל קָנָא
 פֶּקֶד עֲוֹן אָבוֹת עַל־בָּנִים וְעַל־רִבְעִים
 לְשָׁנָי: 10 וְעַשֶׂה חֶסֶד לְאֲלֹפִים לְאֹהֲבֵי וּלְשֹׂמְרֵי
 מִצְוֹתַי (מִצְוֹתַי): 11

11 לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת־שֵׁם־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׂוּא כִּי לֹא יִנְקָה
 יְהוָה אֶת אֶת־אֲשֶׁר־יִשָּׂא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ לְשׂוּא: 12
 12 שָׁמֹר אֶת־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּךְ יְהוָה
 אֱלֹהֶיךָ: 13 שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעֵשִׂיתָ כָּל־מְלֶאכֶתֶךָ:

— RASHI —

”זכור”, שגיהם בדבור אחד ובתבנה אחת נאמר,
 ובשמיעה אחת נשמעו: כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּךְ. קדם מתן תורה,
 במרה:

7 על פני. בכל מקום אשר אני שם, וזהו כל העולם.
 דבר אחר: כל זמן שאני קים. עשרת הדברות כבר
 פרשתיים: 12 שמור. ובראשונות הוא אומר:

22. שמות כ. 23. שמות כ, א.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

the differences between the first and second tablets:
 In *parashat Yitro*, emphasis is placed on how the Divine revelation shook and shocked both nature and the Jewish people. “There was thunder and lightning...an exceedingly loud blast of a ram’s horn, and all the people in the camp trembled... The whole of Mount Sinai was in smoke,”⁹⁰ and so on. The image is that of a searing revelation that destroyed the power of evil and its hold over the people. When the people expressed their fear of this direct revelation, Moses replied⁹¹ that this was exactly the point: that this awesome experience nullify their sense of self in their overwhelming experience of God.
 In *parashat Va’etchanan*, however, the emphasis is on how the Divine message was absorbed and internalized by the people. “You were shown [in order] to know that God is the only God.... God spoke with you face to face...God spoke all these words to your entire assembly,”⁹² and so on. This time, when Moses recalls how the people expressed their fear, he records God’s reaction: that they were right in being afraid and that they should indeed strive to retain at least something of this fear of God. Since God “leaves room” for people to exist on a lower

level of Divine consciousness, in which they retain their own sense of self, it is therefore necessary for them to know how to fear Him.
 Nonetheless, the context, as we said, is the account of the giving of the *first* tablets. In fact, after Moses recounts the Giving of the Torah, he pauses in his review of the historical narrative of the Jewish people and discusses how the recollection of the Giving of the Torah should engender feelings of love for God and loyalty to Him. He does not resume his review of the historical narrative—picking up with the sin of the Golden Calf and its aftermath, including the giving of the second tablets—until well into the next *parashah*, *Eikev*.⁹³ This discontinuity emphasizes the fact that at this point, Moses is focusing on the original, unbounded relationship between God and His people that existed when they possessed the first tablets. We thus learn that even in our present state of reality—that of the second tablets—we can and should retain a residual taste of the pure reality we knew briefly when we possessed the first tablets.
 In other words, although Moses is addressing the generation that had not witnessed the revelation at Mount Sinai and that is living in the post-fall

90. Exodus 19:16-19, 20:15-16. 91. Exodus 20:17. 92. Deuteronomy 4:35-36, 5:4, 19-25. 93. At 9:8, below.

7 The second commandment: **'You must not possess any idols of other peoples' deities as long as I exist, i.e., ever, or wherever I may be, i.e., anywhere.**

8 **You must not make yourself a carved image or any other type of likeness of anything that is in heaven above, on earth below, or in the water lower than the earth surrounding it, even if you do not intend to worship it.**

9 And if others make such idols, **you must neither prostrate yourself before them nor worship them, for I, God, your God, am a zealous God in this regard. For those who hate Me and worship idols, I am a God who remembers the premeditated sins of the fathers, adding their demerits to those of their descendants, but only up to the third and the fourth generation, and only if these descendants also worship idols.**

10 **But, in contrast, I am a God who shows kindness for at least 2000 generations to the descendants of those who love Me and worship Me alone out of that love, and for 1000 generations of descendants of those who observe My commandments solely out of fear or respect. Such is the difference between being motivated by love and being motivated by fear or respect.**⁸⁴

11 The third commandment: **'You must respect God's Name. You must not swear by the Name of God, your God, in vain, by swearing that something is something that it manifestly is not. For God will not absolve anyone who swears by His name in vain.'**

12 The fourth commandment: **'Remember and observe⁸⁵ the Sabbath day continuously, to keep it holy, just as God, your God, commanded you prior to the Giving of the Torah, at Marah.⁸⁶ "Remember" the Sabbath by anticipating it during the preceding week; "observe" the Sabbath by refraining on it from all categories of prohibited work.**

13 **Six days must you labor and do all your work.** But even if you have not finished all your work during the six preceding workdays,

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

Divine consciousness. This Divine consciousness was channeled into the world via the tablets later carved by God, on which He inscribed the Ten Commandments.

But, as has been seen,⁸⁷ despite the exalted spiritual level that the people attained through the Giving of the Torah, they still lacked the powerful yearning for Divinity that is known only to a penitent soul. So God "coerced" them into the sin of the Golden Calf in order to afford them this advantage, as well. (Although only a small percentage of the people were actually guilty of this sin, the rest were implicated by their failure to prevent it. In this way, they all "participated" in the sin; they were therefore all able to feel the yearning associated with penitence.) This reality of yearning for God was reflected in

the second set of tablets: God inscribed them, too, but Moses was the one who carved them,⁸⁸ and as such, they expressed humanity's aspiration toward Divinity, as opposed to the first set of tablets, which expressed God's unsolicited gift of revelation.

In this *parashah*, Moses describes how God gave the Ten Commandments the first time, before the sin of the Golden Calf. Nonetheless, he is speaking long after God had replaced the first tablets with the second ones. Thus, his repetition of the Ten Commandments expresses the spiritual state of reality embodied in the second tablets.⁸⁹

The differences between the description of the Giving of the Torah in the context of the historical narrative (in *parashat Yitro*) and the description in Moses' review (here, in *parashat Va'etchanan*) also reflect

84. Below, 7:9; Rashi *ad loc.* 85. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 14, pp. 135-140. 86. Exodus 15:25. 87. On Exodus 32:6. 88. Exodus 34:1; cf. Exodus 32:16. 89. According to some opinions (*Pesikta Zutarta*, *Tisa* 34:1, *Va'etchanan* 5:12), the text on the second tablets was that of the Ten Commandments as given in *parashat Va'etchanan*.

— ONKELOS —
 14 וְיִזְמַן שְׁבִיעָא שְׁבַתָּא קָדָם יי
 אֶלְהָרָא לֹא תַעֲבֹד כָּל עֲבִידָא אֲתָ
 וְבָרָךְ וְבִרְתָךְ וְעֲבָדְךָ וְאִמְתָךְ וְתוֹרָךְ
 וְחֻמְרָךְ וְכָל בְּעִירָךְ וְגִיּוּרָךְ דִּי
 בְּקִרְוֵיךָ בְּדִיל דִּי יְנַח עֲבָדְךָ וְאִמְתָךְ
 בְּתוֹרָה: 15 וְתִדְבֵר אֲרִי עֲבָדָא הַיּוֹת
 בְּאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם וְאַפְקָר יי אֶלְהָרָא
 מִתְמָן בִּידָא תְּקִיפָא וְבִדְרָעָא
 מְרַמָּא עַל כּוּן פְּקָדָךְ יי אֶלְהָרָא
 לְמַעַבְדַּד יִת יִזְמַן דְּשְׁבַתָּא: 16 יִקַּר
 יִת אֲבוּךָ וְיִת אִמְךָ כְּמָא דִּי פְּקָדָךְ יי
 אֶלְהָרָא בְּדִיל דִּי וְיִרְכּוּן יוֹמֵיךָ וְבִדִּיל
 דִּי יִטֵּב לָךְ עַל אֲרָעָא דִּי אֶלְהָרָא
 יִהֵב לָךְ: 17 לֹא תִקְטוּל נֶפֶשׁ: וְלֹא
 תִגּוּף: וְלֹא תִגְנוּב: וְלֹא תִסְהַד
 בְּחֻבְרָךְ סְהֻדוּתָא דְּשִׁקְרָא: 18 וְלֹא
 תִחַמַּד אִתָּךְ חֻבְרָךְ וְלֹא תִרוּג
 בֵּית חֻבְרָךְ חֻקְלָה וְעֲבָדָה וְאִמְתָּה
 תּוֹרָה וְחֻמְרָה וְכָל דִּי לְחֻבְרָךְ:
 19 יִת פְּתַגְמֵינָא הָאֵלִין מִלִּיל יי
 עִם כָּל קְהָלְכוּן בְּטוֹרָא מִגּוּ אֲשָׁא
 עֲנָנָא וְאִמִּיטָתָא קַל רַב וְלֹא פִסַּק
 וְכִתְבִּנוּן עַל תְּרִין לוחֵי אֲבָנָי
 וְיִהְיֶהנוּן לִי:

14 וְיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שֶׁבַת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂה כָל־
 מְלָאכָה אַתָּה | וּבִנְךָ וּבִתְּךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ־וְאִמְתְּךָ וְשׂוֹרְךָ
 וְחֻמְרְךָ וְכָל־בְּהֵמְתְּךָ וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ לְמַעַן
 יָנוּחַ עַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתְּךָ כַּמּוֹד: 15 וְזָכַרְתָּ כִּי עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ
 בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיֹּצִיאֲךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִשָּׁם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה
 וּבְזֹרַע נְטוּיָה עַל־פִּן צוֹרֶךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־יוֹם
 הַשְּׁבַת: ׀

16 כִּבְדָּךְ אֶת־אֲבִיךָ וְאֶת־אִמְךָ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
 לְמַעַן | יֵאָרִיכוּ יְמֶיךָ וְלְמַעַן יִיטֵב לָךְ עַל הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ: ׀

17 לֹא תִרְצַח ׀

וְלֹא תִנְאַף ׀

וְלֹא תִגְנוֹב ׀

וְלֹא־תַעֲנֶה בְּרַעְיָךְ עַד שְׂוֵא: ׀

18 וְלֹא תִחַמַּד אִשֶׁת רַעְיָךְ ׀

וְלֹא תִתְאָוֶה בֵּית רַעְיָךְ שְׂדֵהוּ וְעַבְדּוֹ וְאִמְתּוֹ שׂוֹרּוֹ וְחֻמּוֹ
 וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לְרַעְיָךְ: ׀

◆ חֲמִישִׁי 19 אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל־כָּל־
 קְהָלְכֶם בְּהָר מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ הַעֲנָן וְהָעֲרָפֶל קוֹל גָּדוֹל וְלֹא
 יָסַף וַיִּכְתְּבֶם עַל־שְׁנֵי לוחֵי אֲבָנִים וַיִּתֵּנֶם אֵלַי:

— RASHI —

”דְּמַרְגָּג לְמַחֲזוּי: 19 וְלֹא יָסַף. מִתְרַגְּמִינוּן: ”וְלֹא
 פִּסַּק”, לְפִי שְׁמֵדַת בְּשׂוּר וְדָם אֵינּוּ יְכוּל לְדַבֵּר כָּל
 דְּבָרָיו בְּנִשְׁמִימָה אַחַת וְצָרִיךְ לְהַפְסִיק, וּמִדַּת הַקְּדוּשׁ
 בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֵינּוּ כֵן — לֹא הֵיךָ פּוֹסֵק, וּמִשְׁלָא הֵיךָ
 פּוֹסֵק לֹא הֵיךָ מוֹסִיף, כִּי קוֹלוֹ חֲזוּק וְקוֹם לְעוֹלָם. דְּבָר
 אַחַר: ”וְלֹא יָסַף”, לֹא הוֹסִיף לְהִרְאוֹת בְּאוֹתוֹ פְּמִבֵּי:

15 וְזָכַרְתָּ כִּי עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ וְגו'. עַל מְנַת כּוּן פְּדִיאָךְ,
 שְׁתַּהֲיֶה לּוֹ עֶבֶד וְתִשְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתָיו: 16 כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּךְ. אִף
 עַל כְּבוֹד אָב וְאִם נִצְטוּוּ בְּמִרְה, שְׁנֵאֲמַר: ”שֵׁם שָׁם
 לוֹ חֵק וּמִשְׁפָּט”: 17 וְלֹא תִנְאַף. אֵין לְשׁוֹן נֶאֱוַף אֶלָּא
 בְּאִשֶׁת אִישׁ: 18 וְלֹא תִתְאָוֶה. ”וְלֹא תִרוּג”. אִף הוּא
 לְשׁוֹן חֻמְדָּה, כְּמוֹ: 25: ”נִחַמְדָּ לְמִרְאָה”, דְּמִתְרַגְּמִינוּן:

24. שְׁמוֹת טו, כה. 25. בְּרַאשִׁית ב, ט.

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people, is what allows us to employ our own, hu-
 man intellect in the study of the Torah, in order to
 internalize it and absorb its message fully; in this
 way, the goal of making this world into a home for
 God is achieved.⁹⁸

19 A great voice, not pausing: One meaning of the
 expression “not pausing” is that the voice of God
 at Mount Sinai continued—and continues—to be
 revealed in the prophecies and teachings of the
 prophets and sages of each generation.⁹⁹ The fact

98. *Sefer HaSichot* 5752, volume 2, pp. 331-338. 99. *Shemot Rabbah* 28:6.

14 the seventh day is the Sabbath, dedicated to God, your God; you should behave on the Sabbath as if all your work is done. You must not do any work—you, your son, or your daughter. Even though your children are not technically obligated to observe the commandments until they attain majority, you must nevertheless not permit them to engage in any form of forbidden work. **Your bondman and your bondwoman** are likewise forbidden to work, since they are obligated to observe all the prohibitions that you are. You may also not make **your ox, your donkey, or any of your livestock** work. **The resident alien, who is permitted to live within your gates,** is also forbidden to work, though not to the same extent that you are.⁹⁴ You and your animals should rest on the Sabbath, besides for your and their own sakes, **in order that your bondman and your bondwoman may rest like you** and not have to serve you or take care of your animals.

15 You must remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and that God, your God, took you out from there with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, on the condition that you fulfill His commandments. Therefore, God, your God, commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.'

16 The fifth commandment: 'Honor your father and your mother—as God, your God also commanded you at Marah⁹⁵—in order that your days be lengthened and that it go well with you in the land that God, your God, is giving you.'

17 The sixth commandment: 'You must not murder.'

The seventh commandment: **'You must not commit adultery, i.e., conduct extramarital relations with a married woman.'**

The eighth commandment: **'You must not steal people, i.e., kidnap.'**

The ninth commandment: **'You must not bear false witness against your fellow man.'**

18 The tenth commandment: 'You must not desire your fellow man's wife, nor may you desire your fellow man's house, his field, his bondman, his bondwoman, his ox, his donkey, or anything else that belongs to your fellow man.'

- ◆ **Fifth Reading 19 God spoke these words to your entire assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the normal cloud, and the thick cloud,⁹⁶ with a great voice, not pausing for breath as human beings must. Never again will God reveal Himself publicly to this degree. Later, during my first 40 days on the mountain, He inscribed the Ten Commandments on two stone tablets and gave them to me.**

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

reality of spiritual consciousness, he is teaching them that they must still nurture a vision of the pristine, pre-fall reality. This memory of their original, ideal spiritual state will be as essential to their success in their encounters across the Jordan as is their clear understanding of their own existential reality.⁹⁷

The Repetition of the Ten Commandments: On a

deeper level, the first account of the Ten Commandments, couched in God's first person, is what allows us to experience God's presence in the Torah as we learn it. This experience prevents us from forgetting that the study of the Torah is a spiritual encounter between God and us and not merely an intellectual pursuit. The second account of the Ten Commandments, couched as part of Moses' address to the

94. Exodus 23:12. 95. Exodus 15:25. 96. Above, 4:11-12, etc. 97. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 9, p. 69; *Sefer HaSichot* 5751, volume 2, p. 740.

— ONKELOS —

20 והיה כמשמעבון ית קלא מגו חשוכא וטורא בער באשא וקרבתון לותי כל רישי שבטיכון וסביכון: 21 ואמרתון הא אחינא יי אלהנא ית יקרה וית רבותה וית קל מימרה שמענא מגו אשא יומא הדין חוינא ארי ימלל יי עם אנשא ויתקיים: 22 וכען למא נמות ארי תיכלנא אשא רבתא הדיא אם מוספין אנחנא למשמע ית קל מימרא דיי אלהנא עוד ומיתין אנחנא: 23 ארי מאן כל בשרא די שמע קל מימרא דיי קיימא ממלל מגו אשא פותנא ואתקיים: 24 קרב את שמע ית כל די יימר יי אלהנא ואת תמלל עמנא ית כל די ימלל יי אלהנא עמך ונקבל ונעבד: 25 ושמייע קדם יי ית קל פתגמיכון במלותכון עמי ואמר יי לי שמייע קדמי ית קל פתגמי עמא הדין די מלילו עמך אתקינו כל די מלילו:

20 ויהי כשמעכם את־הקול מתוך החושך וההר בער באש ותקרבוני אלי כל־ראשי שבטיכם וקניכם: 21 ותאמרו הן הראנו יהוה אלהינו את־כבודו ואת־גדלו ואת־קלו שמענו מתוך האש היום הזה ראינו כי־ידבר אלהים את־האדם וחי: 22 ועתה למה נמות כי תאכלנו האש הגדלה הזאת אם־יספים | אנחנו לשמע את־קול יהוה אלהינו עוד ומתנו: 23 כי מי כל־בשר אשר שמע קול אלהים חיים מדבר מתוך־האש כמנו ויחי: 24 קרב אתה ושמע את כל־אשר יאמר יהוה אלהינו ואת | הדבר אלינו את כל־אשר ידבר יהוה אלהינו אליך ושמענו ועשינו: 25 וישמע יהוה את־קול דברי העם הזה אשר דברו אליך היטיבו כל־אשר דברו:

— RASHI —

24 ואת הדבר אלינו. התשתם את כחי בנבקה, שצטערת עליכם ורפיתם את ידי, כי ראיתי שאינכם חרדים להתקרב אליו מאהבה, וכי לא הייה יפה לכם ללמוד מפי הגבורה ולא ללמוד ממנוי:

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

Based on what we have explained previously, it is clear why these details of the revelation of Mount Sinai are given specifically here and not in the description of the event given in *parashat Yitro*. The generation of the conquest was about to embark on a long journey through history, which would take them and their descendants far from the original memory of the voice of God on Mount Sinai. As the memory of this voice would fade, it would be of paramount importance that these descendants be aware that it continues to speak to them through the prophets and sages of each generation.

Secondly, since the generation of the conquest and its heirs would have numerous encounters with other nations, it was important that we be told that the voice our forefathers heard at Sinai was heard by the non-Jews, as well. Therefore, in our efforts to encourage them to establish a Torah-based relationship with God and to observe the Noahide commandments, we are not confronting them with something essentially foreign to them, for the voice of God has been imprinted on their psyches from Mount Sinai.

Finally, as the Jewish people was about to pass from its spiritual existence in the desert to its material existence in the land, it needed to be reminded that the voice of God and the Torah permeate all existence and that everything, even the inanimate kingdom, is saturated with latent God-consciousness. Nothing about reality can truly be a deterrent to fulfilling God's will; if it appears to be so, this is only a façade, a test of our determination and devotion to our Divine destiny. By approaching the Torah and its lifestyle as an encounter with God Himself, we continue to cause His voice to permeate all reality, thereby making the world a home for Him and fulfilling the purpose of creation.¹⁰⁷

20 When you heard the voice: The Torah here records how the people, after “seeing” God’s transcendence at the Giving of the Torah, contested Moses’ wish that they retain this level of Divine consciousness for all time. God, in turn, ratified the people’s perspective.¹⁰⁸ Moses therefore couched his exhortation to the people to maintain consciousness of God’s transcendence in terms of “hearing”¹⁰⁹ rather than “seeing.”¹¹⁰

107. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 4, pp. 1092-1098. 108. *Below*, vv. 25-28. 109. *Below*, 6:4. 110. *Likutei Torah* 4:4a.

20 When you heard the voice from out of the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, you approached me—all the heads of your tribes and your elders (here, unlike above,¹⁰⁰ you approached me in an organized fashion, everyone showing due respect to their superiors in age, rank, and social status)—

21 and you said, 'Behold, God, our God, has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we heard His voice from the midst of the fire. We have seen today that God can speak directly with human beings and, with His help, they can miraculously survive the intensity of this experience and continue to live.

22 But we want to receive the Torah in the framework of our own, natural existence. So now, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us. If we continue to hear the voice of God, our God, anymore, without Him keeping us miraculously alive, we will die.

23 For who is there of all flesh who heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?

24 Rather, you should approach God by yourself, hear all that God, our God, will say, and you should speak to us all that God, our God, will speak to you, and we will study it and do it.¹⁰¹ For my part, I was deeply disturbed over this attitude. Shouldn't you have preferred to learn directly from God, rather than from me?

25 But God heard the sound of your words when you spoke to me, and God said to me, 'I have heard the sound of the words of this people, which they have spoken to you; they have spoken well.

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

that these prophecies and teachings were not explicitly articulated when the Torah was first given is simply because the state of the world and the Jewish people did not yet necessitate it. They were nonetheless implicit in the original revelation of the Torah.

As has been mentioned,¹⁰² God addressed each Jew individually at Mount Sinai. (Hebrew has different forms for the singular "you" and the plural "you."¹⁰³ The word for "your" in the opening statement of the Ten Commandments—"I am God, *your* God"—is in the singular.) By extension, then, the words of every prophecy and teaching uttered by a true Torah sage are addressed to each Jew individually.

A second meaning of God's words "not pausing" is that the voice of God did not cease once it was heard in Hebrew but rather split into the seventy seminal languages of humanity.¹⁰⁴ God thus addressed not only each individual Jew but also every human being, thereby obligating all humanity for all time to respond to His call to observe the Noahide commandments.

By translating the Torah into all the earth's languages, God also informed us that the Torah may be studied in any language. By doing so, we elevate that language, utilizing it for a holy purpose. As has been mentioned,¹⁰⁵ this is also why God later had Moses translate the entire Torah into all seventy languages.

A further meaning of God's words "not pausing" is that there was no echo.¹⁰⁶ True, the absence of an echo normally characterizes a weak sound, not a "great voice." Here, however, the absence of an echo indicated that the voice of God did not reverberate off the mountains but was rather absorbed by the mountains themselves.

Inasmuch as the spiritual and material are two distinct aspects of reality, we normally would not expect the spirituality of the Torah to be absorbed into physical reality. But inasmuch as God revealed His essence at Mount Sinai, and His essence transcends the normal dichotomy between spirituality and physicality, this revelation was indeed able to permeate the physical dimension of existence.

¹⁰⁰ 1:22. ¹⁰¹ Exodus 20:16; 24:7. ¹⁰² On Exodus 20:1. ¹⁰³ This distinction exists in old English ("thou" and "thee" vs. "ye"), but has been abandoned in modern English. ¹⁰⁴ *Shemot Rabbah* 28:6. ¹⁰⁵ Above, on 1:5. ¹⁰⁶ *Shemot Rabbah* 28:6.

— ONKELOS —

26 לוי די זיי לבא הדין להון למדחל קדמי ולמטר ית כל פקודי כל יומיא בדיל דייטב להון ולבניהון לעלם: 27 אזל אמר להון תובו לבון למשכניכון: 28 ואת הקא קום קדמי ואמליל עמך ית כל תפקדתא וקמיא ודיניא די תליפנון ועבדון בארעא די אנא זיב להון למירתה: 29 ותשרון למעבד כמא די פקיד זי אלהכון יתכון לא תסטון ימינא ושמאלא: 30 בכל ארעא די פקיד זי אלהכון יתכון תהכון בדיל דתחון זייטב לבון ותורכון יומין בארעא די תירתון: 31 ודא תפקדתא קמיא ודיניא די פקיד זי אלהכון לאלפא יתכון למעבד בארעא די אתון עברין לתמן למירתה: 2 בדיל דתדחל קדם זי אלהך למטר ית כל קימוהי ופקודוהי די אנא מפקדך את וברך וברך בך כל יומי חייך ובדיל דיורכון יומיך: 3 ותקבל ישראל ותשר למעבד די זייטב לך ודי תסגון לחדא כמא די מליל זי אלהא דאבהתך לך ארעא עבדא חלב ודבש: 4 שמע ישראל זי אלהא זי חד:

26 מִי־יָתֵן וְהִיָּה לְבַבְכֶם זֶה לָהֶם לִירְאָה אֶתִּי וְלִשְׁמֹר אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹתַי כָּל־הַיָּמִים לְמַעַן יִיטֵב לָהֶם וּלְבָנֵיהֶם לְעַלְמִם: 27 לָךְ אָמַר לָהֶם שׁוּבוּ לָכֶם לְאַהֲלֵיכֶם: 28 וְאַתָּה פֹּה עֹמֵד עִמָּדִי וְיִאֲדַבְּרָה אֵלַיךְ אֵת כָּל־הַמִּצְוָה וְהַחֲקִים וְהַמְשַׁפְּטִים אֲשֶׁר תִּלְמָדֶם וְעָשׂוּ בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי נֹתֵן לָהֶם לְרִשְׁתָּהּ: 29 וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם לַעֲשׂוֹת כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲתֹכֶם לֹא תִסְרוּ יְמִין וּשְׁמֹאל: 30 בְּכָל־הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲתֹכֶם תִּלְכוּ לְמַעַן תִּחְיִיו וְטוֹב לָכֶם וְהִאֲרַכְתֶּם יָמִים בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר תִּירְשׁוּן: 6:1 וְזֹאת הַמִּצְוָה הַחֲקִים וְהַמְשַׁפְּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לְלַמֵּד אֲתֹכֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם עֹבְרִים שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ: 2 לְמַעַן תִּירָא אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשֹׁמֵר אֶת־כָּל־חֻקֹּתָיו וּמִצְוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה אֹתָהּ וּבְנֶה וּבְנֶה כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ וּלְמַעַן יֵאָרְכוּ יְמֵיךָ: 3 וּשְׁמַעְתָּ יִשְׂרָאֵל וּשְׁמַרְתָּ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֲשֶׁר יִיטֵב לָךְ וְאֲשֶׁר תִּרְבוֹן מְאֹד כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֶיךָ לָךְ אֶרֶץ זָבֵת חֶלֶב וְדָבֶשׁ: פ

ששי 4 שמע ישראל יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד: ◆

— RASHI —

"כי אז אהפף אל עמים שפה ברורה לקרא כלם בשם ה'." ונאמר: "ביום ההוא יהיה ה' אחד ושמו אחד":

4 ה' אלהינו ה' אחד. ה' שהוא אלהינו עתה ולא אלהי האמות, הוא עתיד להיות ה' אחד, שנאמר:

26. צפניה ג, ט. 27. זכריה יד, ט.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

4 Hear, O Israel: This verse, known as the *Shema* after its first word in Hebrew, is the basic statement of Jewish monotheism. Fundamentally, this verse proclaims that God is the one and only deity and that, moreover, there is not even any lesser power with whom God shares His jurisdiction and dominion over all creation.¹¹⁶ (In contrast, although non-Jews are also required to be monotheists, they are allowed to believe that God shares His dominion over the world with lesser powers, inasmuch as this is what an a priori, direct observance of natural reality would lead one to believe.¹¹⁷)

Hear, O Israel: On a deeper level, however, this verse describes God's relationship with all of creation and the implications of this relationship in our lives.

As was mentioned above,¹¹⁸ the existence of God is not something that can be conclusively proven by logic, so God "showed Himself," so to speak, at the Giving of the Torah and imprinted the memory of this revelation on all Jewish souls, who, we are taught, were present in one form or another at this occasion.¹¹⁹ Although this certainty about God's existence can be obscured by the disproportionate

116. See *Encyclopedia Talmudit*, s.v. *Yichud HaShem* 117. Sources cited in *Sefer HaMa'amarim – Melukat*, vol. 1, pp. 52-53. See above, on Genesis 1:14. 118. On 3:35 & 39. 119. *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer* 41; *Zohar* 1:91a; *Torah Or* 70d.

26 If only their hearts would be like this—to revere Me and to keep all My commandments—for all time, that it might go well with them and with their children forever!

27 So go say to them, “Return to your tents. Since you will not have to be ready at all times for Divine communication, you may resume conjugal life—which occasionally entails becoming ritually defiled,¹¹¹ for which reason I told you to refrain from it in preparation for the Giving of the Torah.”¹¹²

28 But as for you, Moses, you must from now on separate from your wife, since you must at all times maintain the highest level of ritual purity in order to speak with Me at any moment.¹¹³ In this sense, **stay here**—on your present level of ritual purity—in order to be able to converse **with Me, and I will speak to you all the commandments, rules, and ordinances** whenever I deem it necessary, **in order for you to teach them** to the people, **that they may perform them correctly in the land that I am giving them to possess.**'

29 Seeing, therefore, that the commandments you have heard from me, which I am about to review with you, are all of Divine origin, **safeguard** them by learning how to **perform** them properly as **GOD, your God, has commanded you** through me; **do not deviate** in your performance of them **either to the right or to the left.**

30 Rather, **walk entirely in the path that GOD, your God, has commanded you, in order that you may live in the land, that it may go well with you in the land, and that you may prolong your days in the land that you will possess.**

6:1 The following are the commandment, the rules, and the ordinances that **GOD, your God, has commanded me to teach you,** in order that you be able to **perform them in the land into which you are about to pass in order to possess it**

2 (and in order that you respect **GOD, your God,** enough to keep all His rules and His commandments that I command you—you, your children, and your grandchildren—all the days of your life, and in order that your days may be lengthened;

3 so hearken, O Israel, and safeguard these commandments by learning how to perform them properly, in order that it be good for you and that you increase exceedingly, just as **GOD, the God of your forefathers, spoke concerning you), a land flowing with milk and date- and fig-honey:**

Performing the Commandments out of Love

- ◆ *Sixth Reading 4* Besides fulfilling God's commandments because you are legally obligated to do so based on the covenant He made with you at Mount Sinai, you should also fulfill His commandments out of love, because when you are motivated by love, you will fulfill the commandments even when doing so seems inconvenient, burdensome, or inexpedient.¹¹⁴ This love, in turn, should be based on your awareness that God is the one and only true deity. Therefore, **hear, O Israel:** Although **GOD** is presently only **our God**, since only we, as a nation, have accepted Him as our sole sovereign, **GOD** is nonetheless the **one** and only true deity, and the day will come when He will be acknowledged as such by all humanity.¹¹⁵

111. Leviticus 15:18. 112. Exodus 19:11, 15. 113. Rashi on Numbers 12:8. 114. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 34, pp. 32-33. 115. See (also) *Torah Or* 55c.

is present within and throughout creation, is at the same time beyond it and unaffected by it, not at all subject to the limitations of time and space.¹²⁸ From this perspective, the creation of the world effected no change in God; He is the same after creation as He was before creation—filling every moment of time and every iota of space. When we look at the world from this perspective, we no longer see trees and tables; we only see God. God is everything.¹²⁹

The implications of such a worldview are sweeping. If God is everything, then there is no longer any possibility of self-centeredness or even self-awareness. Former personal interests and pressing issues melt away in the face of our all-encompassing Divine consciousness. The importance and significance we normally grant the world and the attention and devotion we normally let it command dissolve into nothingness. We can no longer be fazed by any seeming obstacle that the world purports to pose to the observance of the Torah,¹³⁰ for—as the converse implication of what we said above—when we look at trees and tables, we see trees and tables, but we know we are really seeing God in the form of trees and tables. We can truly “know God in all our ways,”¹³¹ for everything is God.¹³²

Hear, O Israel: Although Moses knew that—at least in the present, pre-messianic order—we cannot sustain such a lofty level of Divine consciousness, he felt that meditating on it would at least inspire us to love God, providing us with all the motivation necessary to live lives of full devotion to God and His law.

The sages, however, understood that this is not enough. They therefore instituted an ancillary state-

ment to accompany our liturgical recital of the *Shema*: “May the name of the glory of His kingdom be blessed forever and ever.”¹³³ This statement bids us to focus on God’s immanence rather than on His transcendence. Rather than contemplate God Himself, our attention is drawn to His “name,” His “glory,” and His “kingdom,” which signify the traces of God that we can apprehend in our worldly existence. (A person’s name is in no way part of him; the “glory” of his name is further removed from him; the “kingdom of the glory of his name” is even further removed.¹³⁴) By meditating on how God is manifest throughout creation, we recall how everything’s existence, including our own, is contingent upon His. (Since this awareness is counterintuitive to the superficial view of the world, it is formulated as a prayer that it be forever “blessed,” i.e., retained in our consciousness.¹³⁵) By meditating on how merely a glimmer of God’s creative energy—the “name of the glory of His kingdom”—is necessary to enliven all creation, we realize how deceptive our cherished sense of self really is.¹³⁶

The implications of this worldview are less drastic—although equally as universal—as those of the worldview based on God’s transcendence. Here, we are entirely aware of our own existence and feel ourselves to be free agents, separate from God. Nonetheless, our cognizance of the contingent nature of our existence induces and compels us to submit to His will.

The *Zohar* calls the awareness of God’s unity with creation vis-à-vis His transcendence “the higher [perception of God’s] unity” (יחודא עילאה) and the awareness of God’s unity with creation vis-à-vis

INNER DIMENSIONS

[4] God is one: The Divine consciousness of the “higher unity” is that which is operative in the world of *Atzilut*; the Divine consciousness of the “lower unity” is that which is operative in the worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*. In fact, the words “name,” “glory,” and “kingdom” in the added statement allude to these three worlds, respectively; the words “forever and ever” allude to our physical world.¹³⁷

The dominant *sefirah* in the world of *Atzilut* is *chochmah*, the radical insight that overwhelms the intellect when it ascends to a new conception of reality. The prerequisite for this new insight is self-abnegation, for a mind that is complacent in its own worldview is not ready to accept a new,

revolutionary worldview in its place.

In contrast, the dominant *sefirot* in *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah* are *binah* (understanding), the *midot* (emotions), and *malchut* (expression), respectively. These states of consciousness do not presuppose any self-abnegation; therefore, the Divine consciousness that characterizes these worlds does not contradict any sense of self.

Specifically, the “higher unity” refers to the union between *Z’eir Anpin* and *Nukva* of *Atzilut*, whereas the “lower unity” refers to the union of *Nukva* of *Atzilut* with the three worlds below *Atzilut* into which it descends in order to enliven them.¹³⁸

128. *Tanya*, chapter 48 (67b-68b). 129. *Tanya*, chapter 20; *Sha’ar HaYichud v’haEmunah*, chapters 6-8. 130. *Likutei Torah* 4:4ab. 131. Par. Proverbs 3:6. *Yom Tov shel Rosh HaShanah* 5666, pp. 153-154, 242; *Sefer HaSichot Torat Shalom*, pp. 51, 184-185. 132. *Sefer HaSichot* 5690, p. 86. 133. *Pesachim* 56a; *Shulchan Aruch* 1:61:13. 134. *Sefer HaMa’amarim – Likut*, vol. 2, p. 7. 135. *Sefer HaMa’amarim* 5717-5718-5719, p. 503. 136. *Torah Or* 29b. 137. *Likutei Torah* 2:31cd; *Derech Mitzvotecha* 122a, 127b; *Sefer HaMa’amrim* 5651, p. 146; *Sefer HaMa’amarim* 5734-5735, p. 310. 138. *Zohar* 1:18b.

bias toward the material perspective of creation endemic to all physical creatures, we can always recover it by contemplating the true nature of existence in order to “rediscover” God within the world, for just as a superficial look at the world belies God’s existence, so does a close look bespeak His existence. This is what the Torah means when it tells us to *know* that God exists: to recover our awareness of this sometimes obscured truth.

However, as was also mentioned, this knowledge of God’s existence applies only to God the Creator, i.e., His immanence within creation, which brings it into being and sustains it continuously. There is also an aspect of God that transcends the context of creation and indeed was neither changed nor affected by the creation of reality in any way. It is this transcendent aspect of God that we are required to *believe* in, since direct knowledge of it is presently unattainable.

The two names of God most commonly used in the Torah refer to these two aspects of God. The name *Elokim* (translated here simply by the word “God”) refers to the immanent Godliness that informs creation, while the name *Havayah* (translated here by the word “God,” spelled with small capitals) refers

to the transcendent Godliness that exists outside the context of creation.

Thus, the *Shema* is first of all a reminder that “God is our God,” i.e., that as Jews, we possess an innate, inviolable belief that God is not only immanent but also transcendent. But in addition, we are enjoined to *know* God’s transcendence, not only to *believe* in it. This is why the verse continues “God is one.”

The adjective “one” can describe:

- one entity among many (“he is *one* of them”);
- a unity composed of parts (*one* body made of many limbs and organs); or
- a unique entity (“*one* and only”).

Although God is certainly “one” in the third sense, as will be explained shortly, when we say “God is one,” we mean “one” in the second sense, for the intent behind these words is that the world and all its constituents, rather than being individual, disparate entities, are in fact part of God.¹²⁰ This realization flows logically from the awareness of God’s transcendence, for when we say that God transcends the universe, we obviously do not mean that He does so in a physical sense, for God is not corporeal. Rather, we mean that God, even as He

✧ A CLOSER LOOK ✧

[4] God is one: According to the sages, this phrase enjoins us to declare God king “above, below, and in all four directions.”¹²¹ This idea is in fact embedded in the significance of the letters that spell the word for “one” (אחד): The numerical value of the first letter, *alef*, is 1, alluding to the one God; the numerical value of the second letter, *chet*, is 8, alluding to the seven heavens and earth; and the numerical value of the final letter, *dalet*, is 4, alluding to the four directions of the compass.¹²² Additionally, the word *alef* means “leader” or “ruler,” alluding to God, ruler of the world;¹²³ the arch over the scribal form of the *chet* (ח) alludes to God’s presence in heaven;¹²⁴ and the numerical value of the *dalet* alludes to His presence in the four directions of earth.¹²⁵

Furthermore, the fact that the statement added by the sages expresses the same directive, i.e., to enthrone God over the world but on a lower level of consciousness, is reflected in the fact that the last word of this statement—“and ever” (ועד)—can be seen as a reductive transformation of the last word of the *Shema*, “one” (אחד): The *alef* transforms into a *vav* since they are both vowel-letters (אָהוּ); the *chet* transforms into an *ayin* since they are both guttural letters (עֵאָחָהּ);

and the *dalet* remains a *dalet*.¹²⁶

Specifically, the sequence of *alef-chet-dalet* indicates how God (indicated by the *alef*) creates the world through the *sefirot*, the first of which is *chochmah* (indicated by the *chet*, its initial letter), as expressed through speech (*dibur* in Hebrew, indicated by the *dalet*, its initial letter). The *dalet* in this case is written larger than usual in order to indicate how, in the world of *Atzilut* (the realm of consciousness of the “upper unity”), God’s speech is not a diminution of intensity or content vis-à-vis His thought, as is human speech is vis-à-vis human thought, but rather a perfect expression of it.

The sequence of *vav-ayin-dalet* indicates how God “descends” by becoming vested within a created world (the physical form of the *vav*—a straight line—indicating “vertical” passage). In this context, the focus of the *sefirot* is the emotions, indicated by the *ayin* (whose numerical value is 70, indicating the seven emotions, each comprising ten sub-*sefirot*). Here, the *dalet* indicating God’s speech is of regular size, indicating how speech is disconnected from thought, thus producing worlds that are conscious of their own independent existence.¹²⁷

120. *Sefer HaMa’amarim* 5729, pp. 52-53. 121. *Berachot* 13b. 122. *Sefer Mitzvot Katan* 2, 104; *Beit Yosef on Tur* 1:61, s.v. *Katuv beSefer Mitzvot Katan*. 123. *Likutei Torah* 2:23c. 124. *Menachot* 29b. 125. *Shulchan Aruch* 1:61:6. 126. *Zohar* 2:134a; *Mikdash Melech ad loc.*; *Tanya, Sha’ar HaYichud vahaEmunah*, chapter 7 (81b). 127. *Igrot Kodesh*, vol. 2, pp. 116-118.

— ONKELOS —
 5 ותרחם ית יי אלקהיך בכל לבך
 ובכל נפשך ובכל נבטך:

5 וְאַהֲבַתְּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ
 וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ:

את נפשך: ובכל מאדך. בכל ממונה; יש לך אדם שממונו חביב עליו מגופו, לכה נאמר: "בכל מאדך". דבר אחר: "ובכל מאדך", בכל מדה ומדה שמועד לך, בין במדה טובה בין במדת פּרענות. וכן כּוּד הוא אומר: "כוס ישועות אשא" וגו',²⁸ "צרה וגון אמצא" וגו'.²⁹

5 וְאַהֲבַתְּ. עשה דבריו מאהבה. אינו דומה העושה מאהבה לעושה מיראה. העושה אצל רבו מיראה, כשהוא מטריח עליו מניחו והולך לו: בכל לבבך. בשני יצריי. דבר אחר: "בכל לבבך", שלא יהיה לכה חלוק על המקום: ובכל נפשך. אפלו הוא נוטל תהלים קטו, יג. 29. ע. ג.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

integrate this "new" understanding of the *Shema* into our lives no less than we are obligated to integrate all other latent facets of the Torah that become revealed as history progresses.¹⁴⁶

1-4 In the land into which you are about to pass... The implication here is that the commandment to recite the *Shema* and to believe that God is one applies only in the Land of Israel. This, of course, is not the case: the commandment to recite the *Shema* applies wherever we may be, and belief in the oneness of God is one of the six constant commandments that apply to all Jews in all places at all times (the others being¹⁴⁷ belief in God's existence,¹⁴⁸ not serving idols,¹⁴⁹ loving God,¹⁵⁰ fearing God,¹⁵¹ and not being lured to sin by what one sees¹⁵²).

As was mentioned above,¹⁵³ the lowly and inanimate "land" allegorically refers to the lowest form of connection we have with God: simple, unassuming faith. Faith carries neither the excitement of the emotions nor the mental stimulation of the intellect; it serves rather as the silent bedrock of the rest of our spiritual lives. Nonetheless, it is specifi-

cally through faith that we can relate to God in His transcendence, for our intellect and emotions are too limited to grasp this facet of Divinity, whereas faith is unlimited—just as the ground, although bland and relatively nondescript itself, possesses the power to produce and sustain all forms of life.

Nonetheless, as was mentioned above, faith needs to be activated and bolstered by contemplating and meditating deeply on the inner, Divine nature of reality. This, we said, is the message of the *Shema*. Thus, the juxtaposition of the *Shema* and the "land" is to be understood to mean that we must constantly recall and strengthen our faith in God's transcendence until we "know" it as well as we "know" His immanence.

When we answer the challenge of the *Shema* by bringing God's transcendence into our Divine consciousness, we make the "land" "flow with milk and honey," meaning that God's transcendence becomes so real to us that we both grow from it (just as milk nourishes a growing child) and are filled by it with sublime delight (just as honey tastes sweet).¹⁵⁴

Part of Shema	Divine Consciousness	Focus of Contemplation	Zoharic Term	Sense	Knowledge vs. Faith
"God is God"	Only God exists; reality is an illusion	God's essence			
"God is one"	Only God exists; creation is part of God	God's transcendence	Higher Unity	Hearing	Faith (to be brought into knowledge)
"Forever and ever"	Creation exists but only contingently	God's immanence	Lower Unity	Sight	Knowledge

Figure 3. Divine Consciousness in the *Shema*

5 You will love: If someone loves God, he does not need to be told to do so; if he does not love God, telling him to will not make him do so. Maimonides¹⁵⁵ and the Ba'al Shem Tov¹⁵⁶ therefore explain this verse to be both

the commandment to contemplate the unity of God described in the preceding verse as well as a promise that if we meditate on its meaning deeply enough, we will thereby come to love God. **[continues...]**

146. *Hitva'aduyot* 5713, vol. 1, pp. 319-323. 147. *Sefer HaChinuch*, introduction. 148. Exodus 20:2. 149. Exodus 20:3-6. 150. Deuteronomy 6:5. 151. Deuteronomy 6:2. 152. Numbers 15:37. 153. On 3:35 & 39. 154. *Likutei Torah* 4:4a-d. 155. *Yesodei HaTorah* 2:2. 156. *Shenei HaMe'orot* 2:2 (30b). Elsewhere (*Igrot Kodesh Admor Mohorayatz*, vol. 3, p. 426; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5697, p. 222; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5699, p. 8, etc.) this teaching is ascribed to the Maggid of Mezeritch. See *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 26, p. 117, note 39.

5 If you indeed contemplate this truth and all its implications, **you will** come to **love God, your God, with all your heart**, that is, with total sincerity, and even by harnessing your inclination to do evil for serving Him; **and at** the expense of **your very soul**, i.e., even if doing so requires you to suffer martyrdom; **and with all your material means**, even if you value these material means more than your own life; and whether He treats you well or seemingly does not.

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

His immanence “the lower [perception of God’s] unity” (תורה תראה).¹³⁹ In “the higher unity,” all of creation is united with God by the fact that it is all in fact just a manifestation of God; in the “lower unity,” all constituent parts of creation are united with God by virtue of the dependence of their existence on His existence.

The sages insisted that we contemplate the “lower unity” only after first considering the “higher unity” because, as stated, our perception of the “upper unity” is only akin to that of hearing, and the disadvantage of hearing is that it evokes a much less intense emotional response than does seeing.¹⁴⁰ In contrast, since our perception of the “lower unity” is akin to that of sight, we can be much more successful at rousing ourselves to love God by contemplating the “lower unity,” meditating on God’s immanence within creation.

Nonetheless, contemplating the “lower unity” must follow contemplating the “higher unity,” because the contrast in how we perceive these unities serves to arouse us to an ecstatic yearning to experience the “higher unity” with the same intensity with which we can experience the “lower unity”—in other words, to experience the Divine consciousness that will inform the world in the messianic future.¹⁴¹

Hear, O Israel: There is, in fact, a third level of Divine consciousness, beyond both the “lower unity” and the “higher unity.” At this level, not only is the existence of all creation contingent on God’s creation; not only is God all that exists because all creation is part of God; God is all that exists because creation does not exist altogether. This idea would be aptly expressed by calling God “alone” (יחיד) rather than just “one” (אחד). This is the perspective of reality from the point of view of God’s essence, which is beyond any notion of creation altogether.¹⁴²

It is important to realize that although this third perspective is true, the other two perspectives are also equally, if paradoxically, true. That is, our world as God created it does indeed exist, and the two perspectives that acknowledge this reality are intended to be the goals of our quest for Divine consciousness. It is for this reason that the Torah in-

structs us to contemplate how God is “one” rather than how He is “alone.”

Furthermore, the perspective that God is one with His creation is in a sense even higher than the perspective that creation is just an illusion, for the latter perspective admits that the plurality of creation is in some way a contradiction to God’s oneness, while the former can be true only if we assert that God transcends the dichotomy of oneness and plurality. Thus, even though the perspective that God is one with His creation is not the perspective of God’s essence, it strikes deeper into God’s essence than does the perspective seen from the vantage point of God’s essence (i.e., that creation is an illusion)! It is for this reason, too, that the Torah bids us to contemplate how God is “one” rather than how He is “alone.”

Nonetheless, this advantage of God’s “oneness” over His “aloneness” becomes apparent only after we become aware of His “aloneness”: in order to sense that God transcends the dichotomy of unity and plurality, we must first sense that such a dichotomy exists, and that there is an advantage of unity over plurality.¹⁴³ The perspective that God is in fact all that exists is therefore alluded to by the first mention of God’s Name in the *Shema*. In this context, the *Shema* can be read: “Hear, O Israel: God, [in the presence of whose essence nothing exists,] [contracts Himself via His Name *Elokim* in order to become] our ‘God,’ [and then creates the world, but is still the transcendent] God, [who is manifest throughout all creation equally, thus rendering all things] one [i.e., part of Him].”¹⁴⁴

Hear, O Israel: Thus, the affirmation of monotheism embodied in the *Shema* includes, on a deeper level, the belief that all creation is part of God. It follows that neglecting to contemplate and internalize this belief is a subtle form of idolatry; our duty to repudiate idols has expanded to include the duty to repudiate the independent existence of anything apart from God.

This belief was always part and parcel of Judaism;¹⁴⁵ it was only the exigencies of history that necessitated its explicit articulation with the advent of the Chasidic movement. We are therefore obligated to

¹³⁹ Zohar 1:18b. ¹⁴⁰ See above, on 4:35 & 39. ¹⁴¹ Or HaTorah, *Devarim*, pp. 62-64. ¹⁴² *Yom Tov shel Rosh HaShanah* 5666, p. 432; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5729, p. 53; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 12, p. 66 ff. ¹⁴³ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 19, p. 360. ¹⁴⁴ *Imrei Binah, Keriat Shema* 8, 9. ¹⁴⁵ *Tanya*, chapter 42 (60b); *Igeret HaKodesh* 25 (141b). See also *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 2:9-10 and *Sha'ar HaYichud v'ehaEmunah*, chapter 7 (82b-83a).

ONKELOS
 6 ויהוון פתגמא האלין די אנא
 מפקדון יומא דין על לבך:
 7 ותתננון לבניך ותמלל בהון
 במתקב בביתך ובמתקב בארץא
 ובמשכבך ובמקימך:

6 והיו הדברים האלה אשר אנכי מצוה היום על-
 לבך: 7 ושננתם לבניך ודברת בם בשבתך בביתך
 ובלכתך בדרך ובשכבך ובקומך:

RASHI

ואומר³²: "בני הנביאים אשר בבית אל". וכן בחזקיהו,
 שלמד תורה לכל ישראל וקראם "בנים", שנאמר³³:
 "בני עתה אל תשלו". וכשם שהתלמידים קרויים
 בנים, שנאמר: "בנים אתם לה' אלהיכם", כן הרב
 קרוי "אב", שנאמר³⁴: "אבי אבי רכב ישראל" וגו'.
 ודברת בם. שלא יהא עקר דבורך אלא בם, עשם
 עקר ואל תעשם טפל: ובשכבך. יכול אפלו שכב
 בחצי היום? תלמוד לומר: "ובקומך". יכול אפלו
 עמד בחצי הלילה? תלמוד לומר: "בשבתך בביתך
 ובלכתך בדרך", דרך ארץ דברה תורה: זמן שכיבה
 וזמן קימה:

6 והיו הדברים האלה. ומדי האהבה, והיו הדברים
 האלה, שמתוך כך אתה מכיר בהקדוש ברוך הוא
 ומתדבק בדרכיו: אשר אנכי מצוה היום. לא יהיו
 בעיניך כדיוטגמא ישנה שאין אדם סופנה, אלא
 כחדשה שהכל רצין לקראתה. "דיוטגמא" — מצות
 המלך הבה במכתב: 7 ושננתם. לשון חדוד הוא,
 שיהיו מחודדים בפיה; שאם ישאלך אדם דבר, לא
 תהא צריך לגמגם בו, אלא אמר לו מיד: לבני.
 אלו התלמידים. מצינו בכל מקום שהתלמידים
 קרויים "בנים", שנאמר³¹: "בנים אתם לה' אלהיכם".
 31 דברים יד, א. 32 מלכים ב, ג. 33 דבה"ב כט, יא. 34 מלכים ב, יב.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

for spiritual ends, chief of which is charity.¹⁶¹

Divine Consciousness	The Shema	Type of Love for God
God's essence	"God is our God"	"with all your means"
God's transcendence	"God is one"	"with all your soul"
God's immanence	"Blessed be...for ever and ever"	"with all your heart"

Figure 4. Love of God in the Shema

In this context, loving God "with all your means" in fact expresses a higher form of self-abnegation than loving Him "with all your soul." At both levels of love, we are ready to lay down our lives for God, if need be. The difference is that doing so out of love for God "with all your soul" is a conscious choice between remaining alive but denying God and dying but affirming God, whereas doing so out of love for God "with all your means" is a spontaneous reaction, a compulsion born of our absolute identification with God.¹⁶²

With all your heart...soul...means: From another perspective, loving God "with all your heart" means, again, redirecting our worldly loves toward God by contemplating God's immanence within creation; loving God "with all your soul" refers to the pure love of God that only those who identify completely with their Divine soul can experience; loving God "with all your means" (here interpreted ac-

ording to the phrase's more literal meaning, "with all your boundlessness") refers to the love of God experienced by penitents, whose former estrangement from God propels them to desire Him with an infinitely greater motivation than even someone who has always been righteous can experience.¹⁶³

To suffer martyrdom: God had promised the Jewish people that He would send the dread of Him before them, making their enemies flee before them,¹⁶⁴ and He would soon reiterate that promise, saying that "no one will stand up against you... God will cast the terror of you and the dread of you upon all the land."¹⁶⁵ There was therefore no need to spur the people to martyrdom on the eve of their entry into the land. It was necessary, however, to provide them with the means to fulfill the Torah's instructions at all times, even when they might be lured into doing otherwise. Moses therefore urged them to love God to the extent that they would be ready to lay down their lives for God if called upon to do so, and to recall this commitment constantly. Hence, if they would be ready at all times to sacrifice their very lives for God, all the more so would they be ready to overcome any lesser challenge in order not to be severed from Him, even momentarily.

We, too, can call upon this readiness for self-sacrifice to enable us to overcome any challenge to our observance of the Torah's instructions, whether from within ourselves or from without.¹⁶⁶

7 You will learn: The verb for "to learn" used in this verse (שנן) literally means "to repeat"; one learns by

161. *Sefer HaMa'amarim Melukat*, vol. 5, pp. 223-224, 322, 343-345; *Torah Or* 29c. 162. *Sefer HaMa'amarim Melukat*, vol. 3, pp. 27-28, vol. 4, pp. 6-7. 163. *Likutei Torah* 4:80d-81a. 164. Exodus 23:27. 165. Below, 11:25. 166. *Tanya*, end of chapter 25 (32ab).

6 Due to this love, **these words**—that is, the teachings of the Torah—**that I command you** to observe, will seem,¹⁵⁷ whenever you study them,¹⁵⁸ as fresh and novel as if I had spoken them to you **today**, because you will **keep them upon your heart**, i.e., you will realize that only by constantly studying the Torah will you be able to sustain constant awareness of God and constant love for Him.

7 Furthermore, you will enthusiastically teach your knowledge of the Torah to others. **You will learn** the Torah thoroughly **for the sake of your students**,¹⁵⁹ so that you will always know how to answer their questions. Also, the Torah's teachings—and not other, secondary matters of mundane life—will be your chief occupation: **You will discuss them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the way**; they will be your last concern **when you lie down** to sleep at night **and** your first concern **when you wake up** in the morning.

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

This commandment was not given to the generation of the desert, because their experience of God was so intense that His unity was self-evident to them.¹⁶⁰

With all your heart...soul...means: Having descended the conceptual ladder of God's oneness in the previous verse (and in the statement added by the sages)—beginning with His essence, continuing with His transcendence, and concluding with His immanence—we are now bidden to re-ascend this ladder, responding to these three levels of Divine consciousness with three corresponding intensities of love for God.

Awareness of God's immanence throughout creation inspires us to love Him "with all your heart," redirecting the love we normally feel for earthly things toward God. Instead of pursuing desirable food, clothing, housing, challenges, companionship, stimulation, power, wealth, and so on, we are asked instead to orient our drives for these things toward Divine consciousness. The technique involved is straightforward enough: by contemplating the fact that all aspects of life originate in Divinity, we come to realize that the truest experience of all these things is to be found within a heightened experience of God—and that furthermore, the desire we feel for these things is really just our innate desire for God in disguise. (It is for this reason that the sages instituted the description of the angels' devotion to God as part of the liturgy directly preceding the recitation of the *Shema* every morning: by recalling how the angelic archetypes of our animalistic human soul acknowledge their Divine source in Divine ecstasy, our human soul follows suit, ecstatically submitting itself to God, as well.)

Thus the human-animal soul, which initially only understands the material world, learns to love God. The Divine soul, in contrast, needs no prompting to love God, for that is its nature. Its role vis-à-vis this

love is to contemplate how God is immanent within creation; the human-animal soul then "overhears" the Divine soul meditating on this fact, and this in turn leads it to even greater love for God. In fact, as it pursues God with all the raw power innate to its animal drives, its passion for God eventually surpasses that exhibited by the Divine soul itself.

Awareness of God's transcendence inspires us to love Him "with all your soul," which means "even at the expense of your soul"—to the extent of martyrdom, if necessary. The fact that all creation is part of God—and thus God is all that exists—renders all worldly pursuits trivial, if not ridiculous, leaving only God as the legitimate focus of our love. This love not only makes us willing to give up our lives for God if necessary; it makes us *want* to abandon the farce of worldly life altogether and become consumed in the blazing fire of God's presence. This is accomplished most effectively by total immersion in the study of the Torah, in which our mind fuses, so to speak, with the mind of God.

This form of love is purely an experience of the Divine soul. The human-animal soul cannot participate in this kind of love: since this soul is by nature self-oriented, the self-destructive element of love "with all your soul" is entirely foreign to it.

What keeps us from indeed expiring in Divine rapture at this point is our further ascent to the consciousness of God's essence, which, as noted above, transcends the dichotomy of transcendence and immanence. At this stage of love, we merge absolutely with God and, in complete submission to His will (this form of union surpassing that of the mind-union achieved in the preceding level of love), recall that He wants us alive and functioning in the physical world in order to elevate it and transform it into His home. This is loving God "with all your means." Primarily, this includes using our money

¹⁵⁷ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 24, p. 193. ¹⁵⁸ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 19, p. 233, note 48. ¹⁵⁹ See *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 9, pp. 33-48, p. 80, note 9. ¹⁶⁰ *Derech Mitzvotecha* 199b.

— ONKELOS —

8 ותקטרנון לאת על ידך ויהון לתפלין בין עיניך: 9 ותכתבנון על מזוזון ותקבענון בספי ביתך ובתערעך: 10 ויהי ארי יעלנך ? אלהך לארעא די קיים לאברהמך לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב למתן לך קרוין רברבו וטבו די לא בנית: 11 ובתיז מלן כל טוב די לא מלית וגבין פסילין די לא פסלת כרמין ויתין די לא נצבת ותיכול ותשבע: 12 אסתמר לך דלמא תתנשי ית דחלתא די די אפקך מארעא דמצרים מבית עבודתא: 13 ית ? אלהך תדחל וקדמוהי תפלה ובשמה תקים: 14 לא תהכון בתר טעות עממא מטעות עממא די בסחרניכוון: 15 ארי אל קנא יי אלהך שכינתה בינך דלמא יתקף רגזא די אלהך בך ושיצנך מעל אפי ארעא:

8 וקשרתם לאות עליך ויהיו לטטפת בין עיניך: 9 וכתבתם על מזוזות ביתך ובשערך: 10 והיה כפי ביתך ובתערך: 11 ויהי ארי יעלנך ? לאבתיך לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב לתת לך ערים גדלות וטבת אשר לא בנית: 11 ובתים מלאים כל טוב אשר לא מלאת וברת חצובים אשר לא חצבת כרמים וזיתים אשר לא נטעת ואכלת ושבעת: 12 השמר לך פן תשכח את יהוה אשר הוציאך מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים: 13 את יהוה אלהיך תירא ואתו תעבד ובשמו תשבע: 14 לא תלכון אחרי אלהים אחרים מאלהי העמים אשר סביבותיכם: 15 כי אל קנא יהוה אלהיך בקרבך פני יחרה אפי יהוה אלהיך בך והשמידך מעל פני האדמה: 15

— RASHI —

תשבע. אם יש בך כל המדות הללו, שאתה ירא את שמו ועובד אותו — אז בשמו תשבע, שמתוך שאתה ירא את שמו, תהא זיהר בשבועתך. ואם לאו — לא תשבע. 14 מאלהי העמים אשר סביבותיכם. הוא הדין לרחוקים, אלא לפי שאתה רואה את סביבותיך תועים אחריהם, הצרף להזהיר עליהם ביותר: 16 במסא. כשיצאו ממצרים שנסוהו במים, שנקאמר: "היש ה' בקרבנו": 18 הישר והטוב. זו פשרה, לפנים משורת הדין: 19 כאשר דבר. והיכן דבר? "והמתי את כל העם" וגו':

8 וקשרתם לאות על ידך. אלו תפלין שבזרוע: והיו לטטפת בין עיניך. אלו תפלין שבראש. ועל שם מנן פך שיותיהם נקראו טטפת: "טט" בכתפי שמים, "פת" באפריקי שמים: 9 מזוזות ביתך. "מזוזות" כתיב, שאין צריך אלא אחת: ובשערך. לרבות שערי חצרות ושערי מדינות ושערי עירות: 11 חצובים. לפי שהיה מקום טרשין וסלעים, נופל בו לשון "חציבה": 12 מבית עבדים. כתר גומו: "מבית עבודתא", ממקום שהייתם שם עבדים: 13 ובשמו

35. שמות יז, ז. 36. שמות כב, כז.

🔍 A CLOSER LOOK 🔍

[7] You will discuss them...when you lie down to sleep at night and when you wake up in the morning: These words are explained in the Oral Torah¹⁷⁶ to mean that we are obligated to recite "these words," i.e., the paragraph in which they appear, twice a day: when we go to sleep at night and when we wake up in the morning. The similar phrase in a parallel paragraph below¹⁷⁷ adds that paragraph to this obligation. Finally, the phrase "in order that you remember the day when you went out of Egypt all the days of your life," found further below,¹⁷⁸ adds the paragraph

describing the commandment of *tzitzit* and the Exodus from Egypt¹⁷⁹ to this obligation.¹⁸⁰ (There are other passages that enjoin us to remember the Exodus from Egypt, but this paragraph was chosen because the commandment of *tzitzit* serves to remind us of all the Torah's commandments as well.¹⁸¹)

Thus, the liturgical recitation of the *Shema* comprises these three paragraphs, which constitute a central focus of the morning and night daily prayers. (In contrast, the *Shema* is not part of the afternoon prayer.)

176. Berachot 2a. 177. 11:19. 178. 16:3. 179. Numbers 15:37-41. 180. Berachot 1:5 (12b), 2:1 (13a). 181. Numbers 15:39-40; Berachot 14b.

8 The subject of the passages inscribed on the parchments that have been in your *tefilin* until now is the Exodus from Egypt.¹⁶⁷ From now on, you must add this paragraph, describing how you are to love God, to the *tefilin*. In the head-*tefilin*, write it on an additional, third parchment and place it in one of the two empty compartments; in the hand-*tefilin*, add it to the single parchment already there.¹⁶⁸ **You must bind these words as a sign upon your weaker arm and they must act as a reminder on your forehead, above the point exactly between your eyes.** Thus, the *tefilin* will from now on remind you not only of the miracles of the Exodus but also of the intense love you are to feel toward God when you contemplate His singularity.¹⁶⁹

9 **You must also inscribe this paragraph¹⁷⁰ upon a parchment, place the parchment in a container, and fasten the container to one of the doorposts of each door of your house (the right doorpost as you enter¹⁷¹) and upon your gates—both the gates to your private homes as well as the gates to your public areas.** This parchment is called a *mezuzah*, after the doorpost onto which it is affixed.

Remaining Loyal to God

10 **When God, your God, brings you to the land that He swore to your forefathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to give you, and you will benefit from great and good cities that you did not build,**

11 **houses full of all good things that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew out of the rocky ground, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant, and you will eat and be satisfied,**

12 **beware, lest this unearned opulence make you forget God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house where you were slaves.**

13 **Accord Him all the respect due Him: only if you revere God, your God, and worship Him, may you swear by His Name.** Do not invoke His Name lightly.

14 **In your fascination with materiality and sensual pleasure, do not follow other deities, especially not any of the deities of the peoples who are around you and with whom you might therefore become familiar,**

15 **for God, your God, whom you know to be a zealous God, is among you, and He does not tolerate infidelity. Therefore, do not worship idols, lest the wrath of God, your God, be kindled against you and He destroy you off the face of the earth.**

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

repeating and reviewing the material many times. The commandment to *teach* the Torah is stated only later,¹⁷² using the usual verb, “to teach” (למד).¹⁷³

The sages, however, understand this verse, too, to refer to *teaching* the Torah to students.¹⁷⁴ It follows that they understand the “repeating” in this verse to refer to a methodology of teaching rather than of learning. The fact that the methodology of “repeating” is mentioned in the Torah before plain “teaching” implies that pedagogically, “repeating”

should precede the actual teaching!

Hence, the notion that repeating is to precede the original act of teaching lies at the very core of Jewish education. First and foremost, a child should be instructed over and over again regarding the fundamental concepts of belief in God, the recitation of the *Shema* and blessings and the like, until these become second nature. Only then is he ready for the steady process of intellectual learning described later in Deuteronomy.¹⁷⁵

167. Exodus 13:9, 16. 168. See further, 11:18, below. 169. *Shulchan Aruch* and *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* 1:25:11; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 9, pp. 49-55. 170. See further, 11:20, below. 171. *Yoma* 11a; *Shulchan Aruch* 2:289:2. 172. Below, 11:19. 173. See *Hilchot Talmud Torah MiShulchan Aruch Admor HaZaken*, vol. 1, pp. 68-70, vol. 2, pp. 557-559. 174. *She'iltot* 142; *Zohar* 2:93a; *Mishneh Torah*, *Talmud Torah* 1:2. 175. *Sefer HaSichot* 5703, p. 46.

— ONKELOS —

16 לֹא תִנְסוּן קָדָם יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ
 כְּמֵא דִּי נְסִיתוּן בְּנִסְיָא: 17 מִשֶּׁר
 תִּשְׁרֹן יֵת פְּקוּדֵיָא דִּי אֱלֹהֶיךָ
 וְסִדְרֹתָהּ וְקִימוּהֵי דִּי פְקָדָה:
 18 וְתַעֲבֹד דְּכֶשֶׁר וְדִתְקֹן קָדָם יְיָ
 בְּדִיל דְּיִטֵּב לְךָ וְתַעֲוֹל וְתִירַת יֵת
 אֲרַעָא טַבְתָּא דִּי קִיִּים יְיָ לְאַבְהֵתָךְ:
 19 לְמַתְבַּר יֵת כָּל בְּעַלֵּי דְבִבְרָךְ
 מִקְדָּמְךָ כְּמֵא דִּי מְלִיל יְיָ: 20 אֲרִי
 יִשְׁאַלְךָ בְּרַךְ מְחַר לְמִימַר מֵא
 סְהוּדוּתָא וְקִימֵיָא וְדִינֵיָא דִּי פְקִיד
 יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיָא יִתְכוּן: 21 וְתִימַר לְבָרַךְ
 עֲבָדִין הוֹיָא לְפָרְעָה בְּמִצְרַיִם
 וְאַפְקֵיָא יְיָ מִמִּצְרַיִם בִּידָא תְּקִיפָא:
 22 וְיִהְיֶה יְיָ אֲתִין וּמוֹפְתִין רַבְרַבִּין
 וּבִישׁוּן בְּמִצְרַיִם בְּפָרְעָה וּבְכָל
 אֲנָשׁ בֵּיתָה לְעִינֵיָא: 23 וְהִנְיָא
 אִפְקֵי מִתְמָן בְּדִיל לְאַעְלָא יִתְנָא
 לְמַתָּן לְנָא יֵת אֲרַעָא דִּי קִיִּים
 לְאַבְהֵתָנָא: 24 וּפְקֻדָּנָא יְיָ לְמַעֲבַד
 יֵת כָּל קִימֵיָא הָאֵלִין לְמַדְחַל יֵת
 יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיָא לְטַב לְנָא כָּל יוֹמֵיָא
 לְקִימוּתָנָא בְּיוֹמֵי הַדִּין:

16 לֹא תִנְסוּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר נְסִיתֶם בְּמִסְהָ:
 17 שְׁמוֹר תִּשְׁמְרוּן אֶת־מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְעֲדֹתָיו
 וְחֻקֵּי אֲשֶׁר צִוְּךָ: 18 וְעֲשִׂיתָ הַיֵּשֶׁר וְהַטּוֹב בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה
 לְמַעַן יִיטֵב לְךָ וּבָאֵת וּיְרַשֶׁת אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַטְּבָה אֲשֶׁר־
 נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לְאַבְרָהָם: 19 לְהַדְרֵף אֶת־כָּל־אֲיֻבֶיךָ מִפְּנֵיךָ
 כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה: 8

20 כִּי־יִשְׁאַלְךָ בִּנְךָ מָחָר לֵאמֹר מָה הָעֲדוֹת וְהַחֻקִּים
 וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוְּהָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אַתְּכֶם: 21 וְאָמַרְתָּ
 לְבִנְךָ עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ לְפָרְעָה בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיֹּצִיאֵנוּ יְהוָה
 מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה: 22 וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה אוֹתוֹת וּמִפְתֹּתִים
 גְּדֹלִים וְרַעִים | בְּמִצְרַיִם בְּפָרְעָה וּבְכָל־בֵּיתוֹ לְעֵינֵינוּ:
 23 וְאוֹתָנוּ הוֹצִיא מִשָּׁם לְמַעַן הִבִּיא אוֹתָנוּ לְתֵת לָנוּ אֶת־
 הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם: 24 וַיֹּצִינוּ יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת
 אֶת־כָּל־הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה לִּירְאָה אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְטוֹב
 לָנוּ כָּל־הַיָּמִים לְחֵיתָנוּ כִּהְיוּם הַזֶּה:

— RASHI —

20 כִּי יִשְׁאַלְךָ בִּנְךָ מָחָר. יֵשׁ מְחַר שֶׁהוּא אַחַר זְמַן:

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

child excludes himself from the others who are performing God's commandments not because he sees himself as apart from them, as does the wicked son, but rather because he considers himself a perpetual beginner. Fulfilling the Torah's instruction to view the Torah everyday as fresh and new, "as if I spoke them to you today,"¹⁸⁸ he always seems to himself as not yet having received the new level of the Torah he aspires to each day.

As such, he ponders every day anew the difference between the refinement of the world effected by the forefathers and that which we effect now, after the Torah has been given. The fact—he notes—that the commandments are divided into categories based upon the various aspects of Divinity they express implies that the commandments reveal Divinity in the world. But, he further notes, the forefathers' relationship with God focused on abstract spiritual activities, such as meditation, prayer, debate, and edification. These activities promoted a palpable increase in Divine consciousness. At the Giving of the Torah, however, the focus switched to the physical

performance of the commandments, which may indeed infuse the world with Divinity but do not necessarily entail any open increase in Divine consciousness. Therefore, he asks, why do we concern ourselves at all with the difference between testimonies, rules, and ordinances?

The answer that the Torah tells us to give him is that even though "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt"—even though we may not have even begun the work of refining the world according to the Torah's instructions, nonetheless, "God took us out of Egypt with a mighty hand"—by giving us the Torah, God has enabled us to do the seemingly paradoxical, seamlessly blending our devotion to executing God's will as expressed in His commandments with the ascent in Divine consciousness that performing these commandments affords.¹⁸⁹

24 To perform all these rules: Whereas above, in verse 20, all three categories of commandments are mentioned, here only the rules (*chukim*)—those commandments with no rational basis—are mentioned. The implication is that we should perform

188. Above, v. 6. 189. *Sefer HaMa'amarim Melukat*, vol. 4, pp. 219-222.

16 Furthermore, **you must not test God, your God**, challenging Him to meet your supposed needs, **as you tested Him at Masah and Merivah.**¹⁸²

17 Rather, **diligently safeguard the commandments of God, your God, His testimonies, and His rules, which He has commanded you**, for their own sake.

18 Moreover, do not limit your devotion to the strict letter of God's law. Rather, **you must do what is proper and good in the eyes of God** beyond the explicit requirements of His law. For example, when selling your field, you should allow the owner of an adjoining field to have the first bid,¹⁸³ and you should reach a compromise with a litigant rather than exacting from him everything to which you are technically entitled. You should do all this without concern for reward, **in order that God may reward you nonetheless, and it will be well with you and that you come and take possession of the good land**¹⁸⁴ **that God swore to your forefathers**
 19 **in order to drive out all your enemies from before you, as God has spoken.**¹⁸⁵

20 If your intelligent¹⁸⁶ child asks you at some point in the future, saying, 'What is the basis for the testimonies, rules, and ordinances that God, our God, has commanded you?'

21 You must say to your child, 'We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and God took us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.'

22 God afflicted Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household with great and terrible signs and marvels before our eyes.

23 He brought us out of there in order that He might bring us to and give us the land that He swore to our forefathers.

24 God commanded us to perform all these rules, to cultivate respect for God, our God, for our good all the days, and to keep us alive, as we are today.

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

20 What are the testimonies, rules, and ordinances: The Torah's "ordinances" are the commandments that mortal intellect would dictate by itself in any case, such as the prohibitions against thievery, murder, and so on. "Testimonies" are the commemorative commandments, such as the holidays, *tefillin*, and so on, which mortal intellect would not necessarily legislate but which make perfect sense once the Torah commands them. "Rules" refer to the commandments that have no rational basis (even if some lesson can be inferred from them), such as the prohibitions of mixing milk and meat, mixing wool and linen, or the rite of the red cow.

Thus, in terms of the involvement of human intellect in the commandments, the three categories of commandments are here listed neither in ascending nor descending order. Rather, they are listed in the descending order of the aspect of Divinity they express. Since ordinances are fully graspable by human intellect, they reflect the Divine energy that is immanent within creation and grasped by the intel-

lect. Rules, which transcend human intellect, reflect the Divine energy that transcends creation and is therefore beyond our ability to grasp with our intellect. Testimonies, which are neither obligated by the intellect nor beyond the intellect, reflect God's essence, which transcends even the dichotomy between immanence and transcendence.

Although every commandment in the Torah falls into one of these three categories, each individual commandment also expresses the defining characteristics of all three categories: Every commandment challenges us to understand its message to us—even if that message is that its message is beyond the limits of our intellect—and in that sense is an ordinance. Similarly, every commandment is an expression of God's inscrutable will, despite the fact that we can grasp some elements of its meaning. Finally, every commandment testifies to the special relationship between God and the Jewish people.¹⁸⁷

That God has commanded you: The intelligent

182. Exodus 17:1-7. 183. *Bava Metzia* 108a. 184. Cf. *Bava Metzia* 30b. 185. Exodus 23:22-33. 186. See Exodus 12:26, 13:8, 14-16. 187. *Sefer HaMa'amarim Melukat*, vol. 4, pp. 213-219.

— ONKELOS —

25 וְחִבַּתָּא תְּהִי לְנָא אַרְי נִשְׁר
לְמַעַבְד יֵת כֵּל תְּפַקְדָּתָא הִדָּא קָדָם
יְי אֱלֹהֵנָא כְּמָא דִּי פִקְדָּנָא: 1 אַרְי
יַעֲלֵךְ יְי אֱלֹהֵךְ לֹאֲרַעָא דִּי אִתָּא
עֲלָל לְחַמְנָא לְמִירְתָּהּ וְיִתְרַךְ עִמְמִין
סְגִיאִין מִן קִדְמָךְ חִתְמֵי וְגִרְגְּשָׁאֵי
וְאִמְרָאֵי וְכַנְעֵנָאֵי וְפִרְזָאֵי וְחֻזָּאֵי
וְיִבּוּסָאֵי שְׁבַעָא עִמְמִין סְגִיאִין
וְתִקְפִין מִנְךָ: 2 וְיִמְסִרְנִין יְי אֱלֹהֵךְ
קִדְמָךְ וְתִמְחַזְנִין גְּמִרָא תְּגַמֵּר יִתְהוּן
לָא תִגְזֹר לְהוּן קָים וְלָא תִרְחַם
עֲלֵיהוּן: 3 וְלָא תִתְחַמֵּן בְּהוּן בְּרַתְךָ
לָא תִתֵּן לְבָרָה וְבִרְתָּהּ לָא תִסַּב
לְבָרָה: 4 אַרְי יִטְעִין יֵת בְּרַךְ מִכְתָּר
פְּלַחְנִי וְיִפְלַחֵן לְטַעוּת עִמְמִיא
וְיִתְקַף רְגֵזָא דִּי? בְּכוּן וְיִשְׁעֵךְ
בְּפִרְיֵי: 5 אַרְי אִם כְּדִין תַּעֲבֹדוּן
לְהוּן אֲגוּרִיהוּן תִּתְרַעוּן וְקִמְתְּהוּן
תִּתְבַּרְוּן וְאִשְׁרִיהוּן תִּקְוִצְצוּן
וְצִלְמֵי טַעוּתְהוּן תּוֹקְדוּן בְּנוּרָא:
6 אַרְי עִם קִדִּישׁ אִתָּא קָדָם יְי אֱלֹהֵךְ
כִּךְ אִתְרַעִי יְי אֱלֹהֵךְ לְמַהוּי לָהּ
לְעַם חִבֵּיב מִכֵּל עִמְמִיא דִּי עַל אִפִּי
אֲרַעָא: 7 לָא מִדְּסִגִּיאִין אִתּוּן מִכֵּל
עִמְמִיא צְבִי יְי בְּכוּן וְאִתְרַעִי בְּכוּן
אַרְי אִתּוּן זְעִרִין מִכֵּל עִמְמִיא:

25 וצדקה תהיה לנו כִּי־נִשְׁמֹר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־הַמִּצְוָה
הַזֹּאת לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוֵּנוּ: 5

◆ שביעי 7:1 כִּי יִבְיֵאֵךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה
בְּא־שָׂמָה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ וְנִשְׁלַל גּוֹיִם־רַבִּים | מִפְּנֵיךָ הַחַתִּי
וְהַגְּרָשִׁי וְהָאִמְרִי וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַפְּרָזִי וְהַחִילִי וְהַיְבוּסִי שְׁבַעָה
גּוֹיִם רַבִּים וְעִצּוּמִים מִמֶּךָ: 2 וּנְתַנָּם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְפָנֶיךָ
וְהִפִּיתָם הַחֲרָם תַּחֲרִים אֹתָם לֹא־תִכְרַת לָהֶם בְּרִית
וְלֹא תִחַנְּם:

3 וְלֹא תִתְחַמֵּן בָּם בַּתֵּךְ לֹא־תִתֵּן לְבָנֶךָ וּבִתּוֹ לֹא־
תִקַּח לְבִנְךָ: 4 כִּי־יִסִּיר אֶת־בְּנֶךָ מֵאִתְּךָ וְעָבְדוּ אֱלֹהִים
אַחֲרָיִם וְתָרָה אַף־יְהוָה בְּכֶם וְהִשְׁמִידֶךָ מִהָר: 5 כִּי
אִם־כֹּה תַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם מִזְבְּחֹתֵיהֶם תִּתְצוּ וּמִצְבַּתְתֶּם
תִּשְׁבְּרוּ וְאִשִּׁירְהֶם תִּגְדַּעוּן וּפְסִילֵיהֶם תִּשְׂרְפוּן כַּאֲשֶׁ:
6 כִּי עִם קְדוּשַׁת אֹתָהּ לִיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּךָ בְּתוֹר | יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְהִיּוֹת לוֹ לְעַם סִגְלָה מִכֵּל הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי
הָאָדָמָה: 7 לֹא מִרְבָּכֶם מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים חָשַׁק יְהוָה בְּכֶם
וַיִּבְחַר בְּכֶם כִּי־אַתֶּם הַמְּעֻט מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים:

— RASHI —

אִתָּא: וְאִשִּׁירְהֶם. אֵילָנוֹת שְׁעוֹבְדִין אוֹתָם: וּפְסִילֵיהֶם.
צִלְמִים: 7 לֹא מִרְבָּכֶם. כִּפְשׁוּטוֹ. וּמִדְּרָשׁוּי: לְפִי
שָׂאִין אֹתָם מִגְּדִילִים עֲצֻמְכֶם כְּשֹׁאֲנֵי מִשְׁפִּיעַ לְכֶם
טוֹבָה, לְפִיכֶךָ חָשַׁק ה' בְּכֶם: כִּי אִתֶּם הַמְּעֻט. הַמְּמַעֲטִין
עֲצֻמְכֶם, כְּגוֹן אֲבָרֵיהֶם שְׂאֵמְרוּ: "וְאִנְכִי עֹפֵר וְאִפְר",
וּכְגוֹן מִשָּׂה וְאֲהָרֹן שְׂאֵמְרוּ: "וְנִחְנוּ מִה". לֹא
כְּנֻבּוֹכְדָנָא צִר שְׂאֵמְרוּ: "אֲדָמָה לְעֵלְיוֹן", וְסִנְחָרִיב
שְׂאֵמְרוּ: "מִי כָכָל אֱלֹהֵי הָאָרְצוֹת", וְחִירִם שְׂאֵמְרוּ:
"אֵל אֲנִי, מוֹשֵׁב אֱלֹהִים וְשִׁבְתִּי". כִּי אִתֶּם הַמְּעֻט. הָרִי
"כִּי" מִשְׁמֵשׁ בְּלִשׁוֹן "דָּהָא":

1 וְנִשְׁלַל. לְשׁוֹן הַשְּׁלָכָה וְהַתְּנָה, וְכִן: "וְנִשְׁלַל הַבְּרוֹזִל".
2 וְלֹא תִחַנְּם. לֹא תִתֵּן לָהֶם חֵן, אִסּוּר לוֹ לְאָדָם
לֹאמֹר: כִּמְהָ נָצָה גּוֹי זֶה. דָּבָר אַחֵר: לֹא תִתֵּן לָהֶם
חֲנִיָּה בְּאָרֶץ: 4 כִּי יִסִּיר אֶת בְּנֶךָ מֵאִתְּךָ. בְּנוֹ שֶׁל
גּוֹי כְּשִׁישָׂא אֶת בְּתוּךָ, "יִסִּיר אֶת בְּנֶךָ" אֲשֶׁר תִּלְד
לוֹ בְּתוּךָ, "מֵאִתְּךָ". לְמִדְּנֵי שְׂבֹן בְּתוּךָ הִבָּא מִן הַגּוֹי
קְרוּי "בְּנֶךָ", אָבֵל בֶּן בְּנֶךָ הִבָּא מִן הַגּוֹיָה אֵינּוּ קְרוּי
"בְּנֶךָ", אֱלָא "בְּנֶה", שְׁהָרִי לֹא נֶאֱמַר עַל בְּתוֹ: "לֹא
תִקַּח כִּי תִסִּיר אֶת בְּנֶךָ מֵאִתְּךָ", אֱלָא "כִּי יִסִּיר אֶת
בְּנֶךָ" וְגו': 5 מִזְבְּחֹתֵיהֶם. שֶׁל בְּנִין: וּמִצְבַּתְתֶּם. אָבִן

37. דברים יט, ה. 38. חולין פט, א. 39. בראשית יח, כו. 40. שמות טו, ח. 41. ישעיה יד, יד. 42. מלכים ב, יח. לה. 43. יחזקאל כח, ב.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

pursuits and with less and less sensitivity to them, this question becomes increasingly trenchant.

The decisive answer to this question has been discovered only in modern times. As science has learned to unleash the power of the atom, the world has learned that size is not always an indication of

power. What matters is knowing how to access the energy latent in the smallness; once that knowledge has been discovered, even the smallest particle of matter can release incredible amounts of force.

The basic process used to release this force is nuclear fission, in which the atom is broken down into

25 It will be for our merit that we safeguard these rules by studying how to perform them properly, in order to observe all these commandments before God, our God, exactly as He has commanded us.'

- ◆ **Seventh Reading 7:1 When God, your God, brings you into the land that you are entering in order to possess, He will cast out many nations from before you: the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites—seven nations, each of which is more numerous and powerful than you.**

2 God, your God, will deliver them to you, and you, for your part, must smite them. They are so corrupt and pose such a serious threat to your spiritual integrity that **you must utterly destroy them: you must neither make a covenant with them nor be gracious to them** by allowing them to remain in the land, even peacefully, or complimenting their beauty—unless they repent of their evil ways and convert to Judaism.¹⁹⁰

3 You must not intermarry with them: you must not give your daughter to a son of theirs, and you must not take a daughter of theirs for your son,

4 for the children produced from such unions will be lost to the Jewish people. The children born to the non-Jewish daughter will not be Jewish to begin with, and although the child born to your Jewish daughter by her non-Jewish husband will be Jewish, the husband will still turn away your Jewish grandchild from following Me, and they will worship the deities of other nations.¹⁹¹ God will hold you responsible for not eliminating this threat from your midst: **the wrath of God will be kindled against you, and He will quickly destroy you.**

5 Rather, thus must you do to them: You must demolish their multi-stone altars, smash their single-stone monuments, cut down their deified trees, and burn their sculpted images in fire.¹⁹²

6 For you are a holy people, consecrated to God, your God: God, your God, has chosen you to be His treasured people¹⁹³ **out of all the peoples upon the face of the earth.**

7 God did not delight in you and choose you because you are more numerous than any other people, for, on the contrary, you are the least of all the peoples.

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all the commandments, even those that appeal to human intellectual understanding, as if they were simple rules. Ultimately, we should behave in accordance with God's will not because doing so seems reasonable to us, but simply because it is God's will; even when we strive to understand the significance of a commandment and thereby become enthused about it, we do so because this, too, is God's will. This is the highest, most selfless way of fulfilling God's commandments.¹⁹⁴

7 You are the least of all the peoples: Among the nations of the world, the Jewish people have almost

always been a minority; among the Jewish people themselves, those Jews who have scrupulously fulfilled the commandments have always been a minority; and even the most religious of us succeed in dedicating only a minority of our time to explicitly holy pursuits such as prayer and Torah study. This objective reality may prompt us to wonder how this minority can be expected to hold its own against the majority, and even if it can, what's the point, since it seems doomed to remain the minority? Furthermore, as time progresses and assimilation and war erode our numbers while the demands of modern life leave us both less and less time for spiritual

¹⁹⁰. Below, 20:18; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 14, p. 116, note 15. ¹⁹¹. Cf. Exodus 34:15-16. ¹⁹². *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 14, p. 111, note 16.

— ONKELOS —

8 אָרִי מִדְּרַחֵם יִי יִתְכוּן וּמִדְּנִטְר יִתְּקִימָא דִּי קָיִים לְאַבְהֻתְכוּן אַפֵּק יִי יִתְכוּן בִּידָא תְּקִיפָא וּפְרָקָא מִבֵּית עֲבֻדוֹתָא מִידָא דְּפְרִיעָה מִלְּכָא דְּמִצְרַיִם: 9 וְתִדַּע אָרִי יִי אֶלְהֵךְ הוּא אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהָא מְהִימְנָא נִטְר קָיִמָא וְחֻסְדָּא לְרַחֲמוּהִי וּלְנִטְרֵי פְקוּדוּהִי לְאַלְפֵי דְרִין: 10 וּמִשְׁלָם לְסִנְאוּהִי טָבֵן דִּי אַנּוּן עֲבָדִין קְדָמוּהִי בְחֵיהוּן לְאַבְדִּיהוּן לֹא מֵאַחַר עוֹבֵד טֵב לְסִנְאוּהִי טָבֵן דִּי אַנּוּן עֲבָדִין קְדָמוּהִי בְחֵיהוּן מִשְׁלָם לְהוּן: 11 וְתִשְׂרֵת יִתְּ תַּפְקֻדְתָּא וְיִתְּ קָיִמָא וְיִתְּ דִּינֵינָא דִּי אָנָּא מִפְּקוּדֵךְ יִמָּא דִּין לְמַעְבְּדוּן:

8 כִּי מֵאַהֲבַת ה' הוּזָה אֶתְכֶם וּמִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת־הַשְּׁבֻעָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְתֵּיכֶם הוֹצִיא יְהוָה אֶתְכֶם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּפְדָד מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים מִיַּד פְּרַעֲה מִלְּד־מִצְרַיִם:

◆ מִפְטִיד 9 וַיִּרְעַתְּ כִּי־יְהוּזָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים הָאֵל הַנִּצָּמֵן שְׁמֵר הַבְּרִית וְהַחֹסֵד לְאַהֲבָיו וּלְשִׁמְרֵי מִצְוֹתוֹ (מִצְוֹתָיו) לְאַלְהֵךְ דּוֹר: 10 וּמִשְׁלָם לְשִׁנְאוֹ אֵל־פָּנָיו לְהַאֲבִידוֹ לֹא יֵאָחַר לְשִׁנְאוֹ אֵל־פָּנָיו יִשְׁלָם־לוֹ: 11 וְשִׁמְרַתְּ אֶת־הַמִּצְוָה וְאֶת־הַחֻקִּים וְאֶת־הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מִצְוֶה הַיּוֹם לַעֲשׂוֹתָם:

ק"ח פטוקים. עויאל סימן.

— RASHI —

הוא אומר "לְאַלְפִים": לְאַהֲבָיו. אלו העושים מאהבה: וּלְשִׁמְרֵי מִצְוֹתָיו. אלו העושים מִירָאָה: 10 וּמִשְׁלָם לְשִׁנְאוֹ אֵל פָּנָיו. בחייו משלם לו גְּמוּלוֹ הַטוֹב כְּדִי "לְהַאֲבִידוֹ" מִן הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא: 11 הַיּוֹם לַעֲשׂוֹתָם. ולמחר, לעולם הבא — לְטַל שְׂכָרָם: חסלת פרשת ואתחנן

8 כִּי מֵאַהֲבַת ה'. הרי "כי" משמש בלשון "אלא" — לא מרבכם חשק ה' בכם, אלא מאהבת ה' אתכם: וּמִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת הַשְּׁבֻעָה. מחמת שמרו את השבועה: 9 לְאַלְהֵךְ דּוֹר. ולהלן" הוא אומר "לְאַלְפִים", כאן שהוא סמוך אצל "לְשִׁמְרֵי מִצְוֹתָיו", העושים מִירָאָה, הוא אומר "לְאַלְהֵךְ", ולהלן שהוא סמוך אצל "לְאַהֲבָיו", העושים מאהבה ששכרם יותר גדול,

44. דברים ה, ט.

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smaller components. As Jews, this teaches us that the key to releasing our latent, infinite potential is by breaking our egos, allowing our inner, Divine essence to shine through. The better we master this "spiritual technology," the less we need be intimidated by being an apparently insignificant minority

among the world's populace, by being the relative few among our people who are seriously devoted to the Torah's teachings, or by having only limited time and energy to devote to holy endeavors. Within us lies the power to change the entire world for the good!²⁰¹

201. *Hitva'aduyot 5711*, vol. 1, pp. 313-319; *Igrot Kodesh*, vol. 8, p. 168, vol. 11, p. 422.

8 **Rather, it was because of God's love for you and because He kept the oath He swore to your forefathers that God took you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slaves, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.** In addition, God chose you because you are the most self-effacing of all peoples. Even your leaders are self-effacing,¹⁹⁵ while those of other peoples are self-aggrandizing.¹⁹⁶ Your selflessness in comparison to the other nations is alluded to by the fact that the number of your tribal clans—65—is five less than the number of the nations—70.¹⁹⁷

- ◆ **Maftir 9** Seeing that God has kept His promise to your forefathers, **you can know assuredly that God, your God, is the only God;** that He is **the only truly faithful God;** and that what I told you about His loyalty is true: **He will keep the terms of the covenant and will do all the kindness He promised to those who keep His commandments because they love Him,** adding their merit to that of their descendants for two thousand generations;¹⁹⁸ **as well as to those who keep His commandments only out of fear or respect, adding their merit to those of their descendants for one thousand generations.**¹⁹⁹

10 Although, as stated, God fully rewards the devotion of those who love Him, there may be circumstances that cause the reward not to reach them. In such cases, they will receive the reward that they failed to receive in their lifetimes in the afterlife. In contrast, **He fully recompenses those who hate Him** for whatever good they do during their lifetimes **while they are still alive,** and thus they enter the afterlife devoid of any merits, **causing them to perish,** i.e., be denied any afterlife. **He does not delay in rewarding one who hates Him for the good he does; He recompenses him while he is alive.**

11 Thus, as you see, it is best that **you observe the commandments, rules, and ordinances that I command you to do today** out of love, even though you may not receive their full reward in this life. Be assured that in the afterlife, you will be able to claim your full reward. Indeed, inasmuch as the fullest reward possible is the infinite delight of ever-expanding Divine consciousness, and attaining this consciousness will be your chief activity in the afterlife, it follows that you will be taking the reward for what you already earned when alive, while simultaneously earning and taking more."²⁰⁰

The *Haftarah* for *parashat Va'etchanan* is on p. 236.



193. Exodus 23:27-33, 34:11-16; Numbers 33:50-56; below, 12:3. 194. Exodus 19:5. 195. Genesis 28:27; Exodus 16:7. 196. Isaiah 14:14, 36:20. 197. Genesis 10. Rashi on 26:36. 198. Above, 5:10. 199. Exodus 20:5-6. 200. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 29, pp. 41-48.

Dedicated in honor of our children

**Nathan, Yitzchok,
Moshe Lev,
and Gilana**

*May you continue to grow in the ways
of our holy Torah*

Yuri and Deana Pikover

