
ביאור תניא

THE STEINSALTZ TANYA

VOLUME II





THE MAGERMAN EDITION

THE STEINSALTZ
TANYA

LIKKUTEI AMARIM
33-53

COMMENTARY & TRANSLATION BY
RABBI ADIN EVEN-ISRAEL STEINSALTZ

Steinsaltz Center
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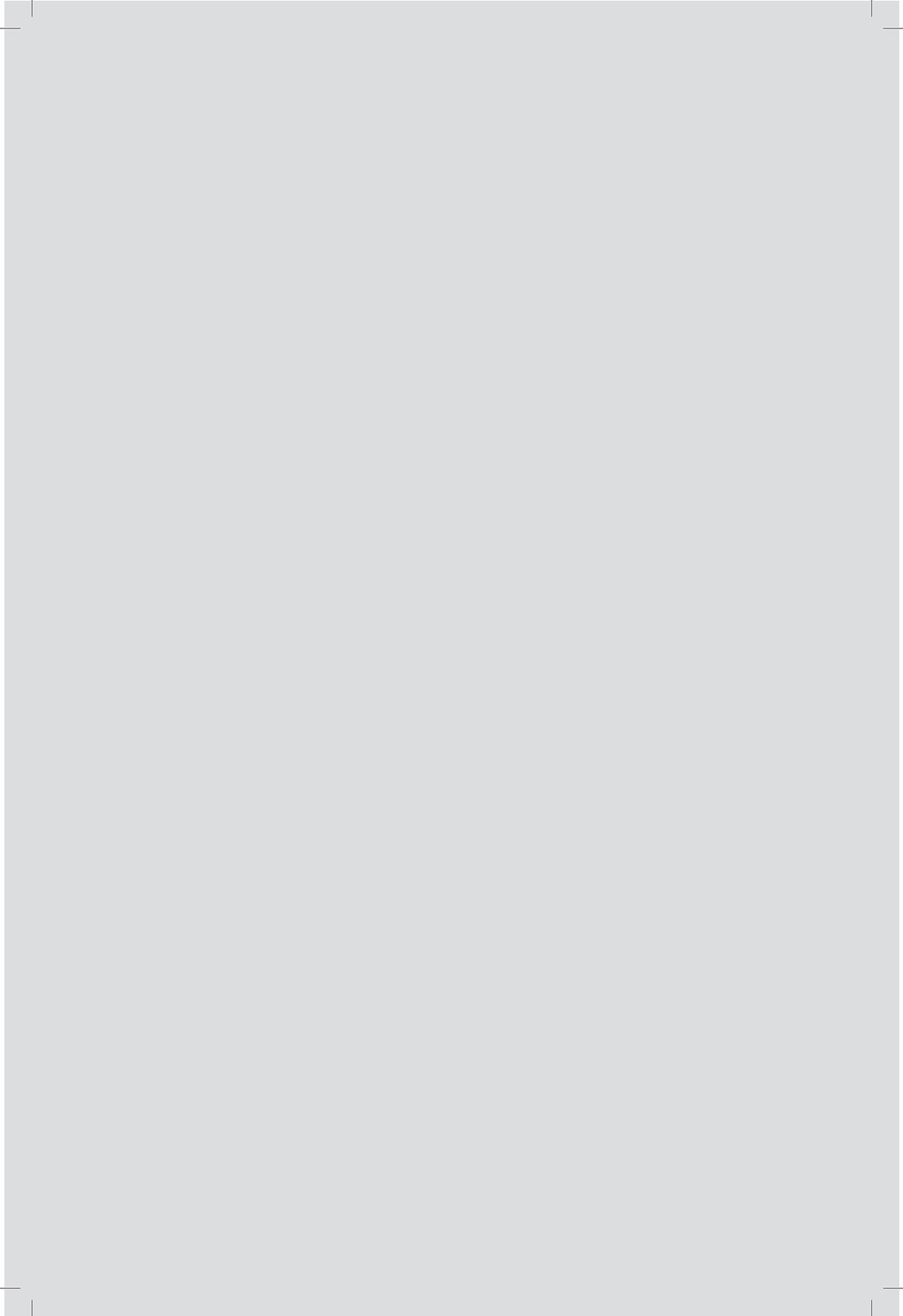
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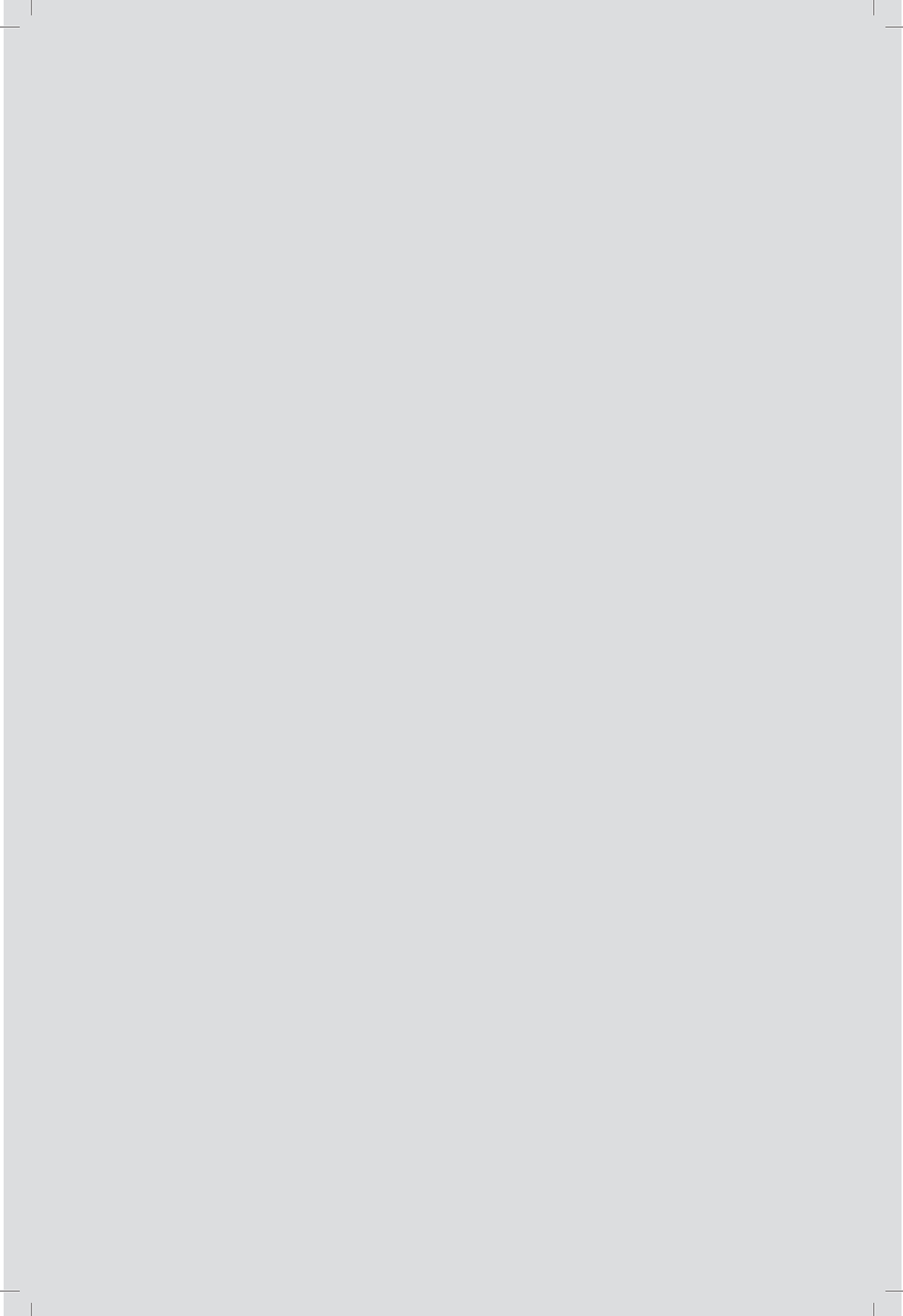
Dedicated to
my wife, **Debra**,
and my children,
Elijah, Zachary, Sydney, and Lexie.

May this new translation of the Tanya,
along with the commentary from Rabbi Steinsaltz (z"l),
bring us closer to hasidic teaching and
help us connect with the mystical meaning
behind the Torah.

*May all the children of Israel use
the Tanya's knowledge and wisdom
to work together to hasten the coming of Mashiah.*

DAVID M. MAGERMAN





*Dedicated with gratitude
to the high souls of every tradition
who have come to this earth to help show humanity
the path towards a righteous life
and the way back to our Creator.*



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ספר התניא מלמד אותנו שהנפש האלוקית מסורה כל כולה לקב"ה והיא מבחינה זו חסרת אנוכיות או תחושת ישות. הנפש הבהמית לעומת זאת מדוכזת בעצמה ומסורה לקיומה הנפרד.

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(מתוך: "היום יום" כ' לטבת)

לזכות

משה ליב בן זיסל שיחי' לאיוש"ט
שולמית בת זהרה שתחי' לאיוש"ט



The *Tanya* teaches us that the divine soul is fully devoted to G-d, and therefore it is selfless. By contrast, the animal soul is selfish, devoted only to maintaining its own existence.

The Mittlerer Rebbe, Rabbi Dovber of Lubavitch, taught that when two Jews learn or discuss matters pertaining to service of God, there are two divine souls against one animal soul. The animal soul thinks only of itself and will not attach itself to the animal soul of the other. But the two divine souls are joined together with no division or barrier.

(Cited from *HaYom Yom*, 20 Tevet)

In the merit of

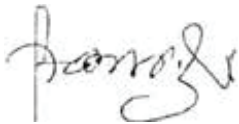
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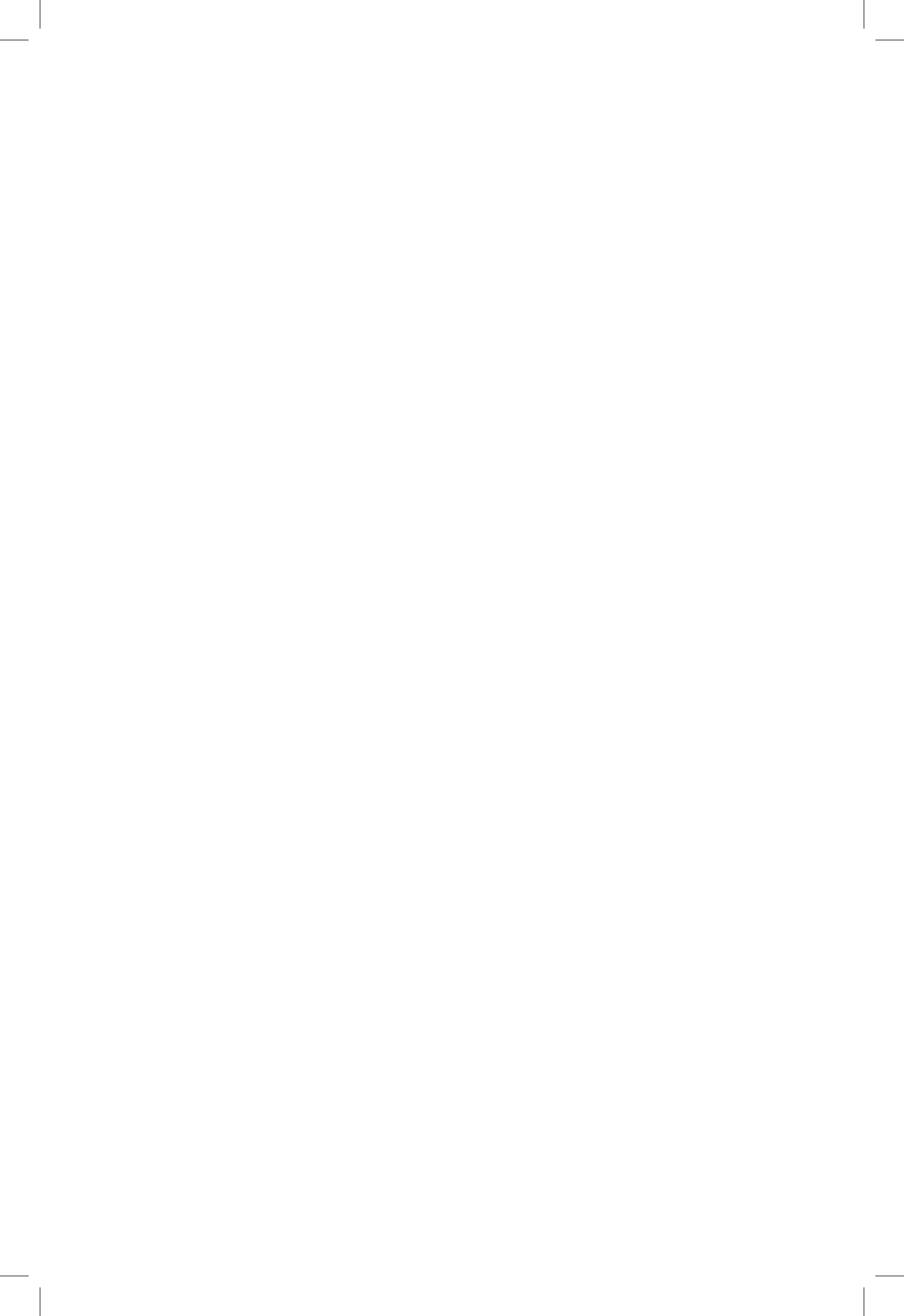


A blessing from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson, dated 21 Av 5721 (August 3, 1961), viewing with favor Rabbi Steinsaltz's project of writing a short commentary, with longer explanations, on the *Tanya* in a style accessible to the contemporary reader:

(ושאלות ותשובות – כהמצורף למכתבו) בענייני
המובאים בתניא, כן ביאור קצר או גם ארוך, ובסגנון,
ערוכים בלשון בני דורנו...

בברכה לבשו"ט





In December 2012, the final volume of the Hebrew edition of *The Steinsaltz Tanya* was published. That year, at a hasidic gathering, Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz shared why he wrote the book. He explained that Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the author of the *Tanya*, had poured his entire soul, his love and awe, his soul-wrenching oneness with God into that concise book, into pages that obscured his immense spirit so well. Through his commentary, Rabbi Steinsaltz strove to reveal to us this spirit, that powerful fire just barely contained by the words of the *Tanya*.

And he certainly succeeded. Yet he failed to mask his own burning spirit, his own love, awe, and closeness to God, as he had attempted to do his entire life.

The publication of this English edition of *The Steinsaltz Tanya* is the fulfillment of Rabbi Steinsaltz's vision to make the teachings of the *Tanya* accessible to every single individual. At the height of the preparations for this edition, our teacher Rabbi Adin Even-Israel passed away.

In this book, one learns how the life of the tzaddik lives on in this world, in those who learn his works. It is through those students who are open to receiving his teachings and are inspired to build upon his words that his light remains with us. We pray that this commentary of Rabbi Steinsaltz will introduce many generations of Jews to the world of the *Tanya* and to the path of authentic devotion to God.

May it serve to elevate his soul.



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Chapter 33

AT THE END OF CHAPTER 31, THE AUTHOR OF THE TANYA began to discuss the topic of joy – in particular, joy that emerges from bitterness – and the connection between joy and lowliness and bitterness. He stated that this feeling of joy, which flows from bitterness, occurs when a person emerges from a state of divine concealment and distress. After a brief digression in chapter 32, which focuses on loving one’s fellow Jew, the author now returns to the topic of joy, this time not in the context of escape from pain and bitterness but as an independent subject. He explains the benefits of joy and details what a person should contemplate in order to continuously arouse within himself boundless feelings of joy regardless of his life circumstances.

עוֹד זֹאת, תְּהִיָּה שְׂמֵחַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ **In addition, there will be true joy of** 11 Adar
הָאִמִּיתִית, **the soul,** 29 Adar I
(leap year)

The joy that will be discussed in this chapter is “true” in the sense that it does not stem from a sense of temporary relief from a state of spiritual inadequacy and distress but rather is continuous, an expression of the existence of the infinite divine oneness. A person only has to think about this in order to attain this unparalleled joy.

This type of joy differs from the joy described in chapter 31 in another way as well. The joy depicted earlier was experienced by the divine soul alone and had to be shielded from and evade the flaws of the body and the animal soul, while the joy described in this chapter may express itself even through the body and the animal soul.

וּבְפֶרֶט כְּשֶׁרוֹאֶה בְּנַפְשׁוֹ בְּעֵתִים
 מְזוּמָּיִם שְׂצָרִיךְ לְזַכְּתָּהּ וּלְהַאֲרֶתָּהּ,
 בְּשִׂמְחַת לֵבָב.
 especially when a person sees on
 certain occasions that he must
 purify and illuminate his soul
 with joy of the heart.

Sometimes a person goes through a phase of self-induced bitterness which he must leave behind to attain a state of joy. At other times a person must experience joy, not because he was embittered but because he feels the need “to purify and illuminate his soul.”¹

A person can accomplish many things as part of his routine or out of a sense of duty. But sometimes he undergoes such a severe state of spiritual or physical exhaustion that he cannot act. He must experience what the author of the *Tanya* refers to as “joy of the heart” in order to purify and illuminate his soul. This kind of joy – genuine, heartfelt joy, not frivolity – is the optimal state of the soul. When a person experiences this joyful, positive state of mind, all of his actions are animated and effortless. He solves problems and meets challenges, and new paths open up for him.

The Talmud says that a person should pray only out of the joy associated with performing a mitzva.² Prayer, which is fundamentally an emotional service, clearly requires an appropriate emotional state. Our Sages broaden the scope of this requirement to include other mitzvot, such as Torah study, in another talmudic dictum³ which states that the Divine Presence rests only on a person who is imbued with the joy associated with a mitzva. When a person is feeling dejected or melancholy, it is as though he is trying to function in the dark. He cannot fully utilize his abilities. In order to illuminate the darkness and “purify and illuminate his soul,” he must experience joy. Then he can look at himself and at the world around him with joy, energy, and ease.

But how can a person reach this state of joy solely from within himself without relying on external stimuli?

1. The word “purify” refers to the vessel, whereas “illuminate” indicates drawing light into it. The vessel, that is, the soul, must first be purified and then illuminated (Rabbi Shmuel Gronem Esterman).

2. *Berakhot* 31a.

3. *Shabbat* 30b.

אִזֵּי יַעֲמִיק מַחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ וַיִּצְיִיר בְּשִׂכְלוֹ Then he should contemplate and
וּבִינְתּוֹ עֲנִיין יְחֻדּוֹ יִתְבַּרַךְ הָאֱמִיתִי, visualize with his mind and his
understanding the concept of
God's true unity,

One way for him to achieve true joy is to “contemplate and visualize with his mind and his understanding the concept of God’s true unity.” Just as a person must dwell on certain ideas in order to elicit painful feelings, so must he contemplate the concept of God’s divine oneness and unity in order to elicit joy.

In order for a person’s thoughts to lead to knowledge that is not only theoretical but will change his life, he must direct his thoughts. Directing one’s thoughts involves a process of careful analysis whereby a person approaches a concept from multiple angles. In this way, he visualizes the concept in his imagination as tangibly as possible so that his soul can connect itself to that concept fully, both intellectually and emotionally.

This applies to all objects of thought, whether material or spiritual, holy or impure. If a person cannot build frameworks in his soul in which his most personal understanding will become meaningful, he will be unable to emotionally relate to the objects of his thought.

“The concept of God’s true unity” as a topic for contemplation is discussed extensively in *Sha’ar HaYihud VeHa’emuna*.⁴ Here, the author of the *Tanya* touches only briefly on this concept, and only regarding the aspect that leads to joy.

אֵיךְ הוּא מְמַלֵּא כָּל עֲלָמִין, עֲלִוְנִים namely, how He fills all worlds,
וְתַתְּוֹנִים, higher and lower,

“Fills all worlds” is a concept in hasidic thought that refers to one of the two categories of the revelation of the divine light: “fills all worlds” and “encompasses all worlds.”⁵ That the divine light fills all worlds refers to the revelation of divine light within created beings, animating each one according to its measure and purpose. Analogous to this is the revelation and function of the soul in the body: the power of sight is

4. See also chaps. 20–21 above.

5. See the *Kitzur Tanya*.

expressed via the eye, the ability to walk is expressed via the legs, and so forth. The author of the *Tanya* specifies “higher and lower” because with regard to the divine light that fills all worlds, the higher and lower worlds are not equally capable of containing it.

וַאֲפִילוּ מְלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ הַלְלוּ הוּא
כְּבוֹדוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ and how even this earth is filled
with God’s glory

The second category of light, the other aspect of God’s unity, is that which “encompasses all worlds,” including this physical world.”⁶ On this level, the divine light is transcendent, beyond all existence and encompassing all particulars equally. Regarding this category of divine light, differences between large and small, and upper and lower are meaningless. It brings into existence our lower world just as it does the upper worlds. It creates existence from nothing by virtue of its concealed nature.⁷

When a person contemplates these two aspects of the divine light, the transcendent and the immanent, which generates and animates everything, it can lead him to experience God’s true unity. His awareness that even as God is transcendent He is here upon this earth, with all that this implies, is the essence of faith in the true divine unity. This type of faith negates the dichotomous perspective that “God is in the heavens and you are on earth” (Eccles. 5:1), in other words, that God is somewhere above whereas a person resides down below. Faith in God’s unity is faith that God is present even where the person is. Therefore, He is truly one and unified, and there is no existence outside Him.

וְכֹלֵּא קִמְיָהּ כְּלֵא חֲשִׁיב מִמֶּשׁ, וְהוּא
לְבַדּוֹ הוּא בְּעֵלְיוֹנִים וְתַחְתּוֹנִים מִמֶּשׁ,
כְּמוֹ שֶׁהָיָה לְבַדּוֹ קוֹדֵם שֵׁשֶׁת יָמֵי
בְּרֵאשִׁית. and how everything before Him
is literally considered nothing-
ness, and that He is literally alone
in the higher and lower worlds
just as He was alone before the
six days of Creation,

6. See Ezek. 36:35.

7. See chap. 48 below.

God is present whether or not the world exists, whether before or after the six days of Creation. The existence of the world does not in any way conceal God's presence. ☞

AN ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTION OF GOD'S UNITY

☞ A person's initial, simple, and undeveloped understanding of how God fills all worlds is that He is everywhere and fills everything, like the vacuum of space or, in a more concrete analogy, like the air that fills a room. A deeper understanding of this concept is that "there is nothing besides Him," that the multifaceted world that we perceive constitutes nothing other than God.

A material illustration of this idea is a black-and-white image. It is not always clear which is the foreground and which is the background. There are some images (such as those of the Dutch artist M. C. Escher) that are entirely focused on this liminal state. The more a person looks, the more uncertain he grows as to which is the foreground and which is the background.

A similar question, bearing multiple layers of implication, is whether a written letter consists of the black ink or the white paper. Generally speaking, we perceive the black as the letter and the white as the background, but it is possible to reverse this and to view the white as the letter and the black as the background. (Regarding the letters of a Torah scroll, this question has a halakhic basis, because the holiness of the Torah scroll pertains as much to the white parchment as it does to the black letters.)

In the same way, we generally see the world in the foreground and the Divine in the background. However, there is a

dimension in which we can contemplate that "everything before Him is literally considered nothingness," and attempt to view the world differently, not with the Divine standing in the background and filling in the gaps between entities that compose the world, but with these entities seen as the gaps within the divine existence. Instead of viewing a tangible world within whose shadowy reaches God does not dwell, we understand that the entire world comprises the divine existence.

Let us use an analogy that our Sages did not employ: that of black and white cinematography. Light is projected through a film onto a screen. Areas of darkness on the film create the images on the screen. This means that the world of a movie, in which characters move and converse, live and die, is created by light and shadows. The light is the backdrop, and the world of the movie appears where the light is hidden, to one degree or another. Similarly, the world is composed of dancing shadows that have no substance compared to the source of light. This is an expression of the concept that "everything before Him is literally considered nothingness." It is the perspective that "He is alone in the upper and lower worlds, just as He was alone before the six days of Creation." The world that appears so tangible to us is not a new, independent existence but only a darkness concealing God's existence. It is an illusion.

וְגַם בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה שֶׁנִּבְרָא בוֹ עוֹלָם
 הַזֶּה - הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צְבָאָם
 - הָיָה הוּא לְבַדּוֹ מִמְּלֵא הַמָּקוֹם
 הַזֶּה. וְגַם עַתָּה בֵּין הוּא לְבַדּוֹ בְּלִי
 שׁוּם שִׁינוּי בְּכֹל,

and also in this very space in which
 this world, the heavens and earth
 and all their hosts, was created – He
 alone filled this space. He is now
 also alone, without any change at all,

Prior to the creation of the world, God was fully revealed and manifest everywhere; there was no existence without Him. Now as well, the world's seeming existence does not negate the infinite divine existence. The world does not, so to speak, press upon the divine existence to keep it from being present in the same space. The created world is nothing more than a secondary or tertiary image overlaid onto the true existence. In essence the created world itself is the divine existence.

מִפְּנֵי שֶׁכָּל הַנִּבְרָאִים בְּטֵלִים
 אֶצְלוֹ בְּמִצִּיאוֹת מִמּוֹשׁ,

because the existence of all created
 beings is literally nullified in rela-
 tion to Him,

The world is not at all comparable to the Divine. The world is transparent compared to God's existence. From God's perspective, whether or not the world exists makes no difference. In this sense, created beings are nullified within God's existence, since essentially they are part and parcel of that existence, and have no independence beyond Him whatsoever.

כְּבֵיטוּל אוֹתוֹת הַדְּבוּר וְהַמַּחֲשֶׁבָה
 בְּמִקּוּרְןָ וְשִׁדְשָׁן, הוּא מֵהוּת הַנֶּפֶשׁ
 וְעִצְמוּתָהּ,

just as the letters of speech and
 thought are nullified within their
 source and root, namely, the essence
 and being of the soul,

The letters of speech and thought make up the concepts and words with which a person thinks and speaks. In a sense, these letters reveal a person's character and essence. When we compare the revealed letters to the original, unrevealed source, that which is revealed is nullified. It has no intrinsic meaning without the source that it reveals.⁸

8. See chap. 20 and commentary there.

שֶׁהֵן עֶשֶׂר בְּחִינוֹתֶיהָ: חֻכְמָה
 בִּינָה וְדַעַת כּו', שְׂאִין בְּהֵם
 בְּחִינַת אוֹתוֹת עֲדִיין, קוּדֵם
 שְׂמֹת לְבָשׁוֹת בְּלְבוּשׁ הַמַּחֲשָׁבָה
 [כְּמוֹ שְׁנַתְבָּאָר בְּפָרְקִים כ' וְכ"א
 בְּאֲרִיכוֹת עֵיין שָׁם].

which are the soul's ten faculties – wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, and so forth. They do not yet possess the aspect of letters before they are clothed in the garment of thought (as explained at length in chapters 20 and 21; see there).

The ten faculties of the soul constitute its essence and being, which serves as the source of the letters, which are ultimately clothed in the garment of thought. When we consider the soul itself, prior to the expression of its traits, abilities, and potential, we see that what these express in the “garment” of the letters of thought and speech is as nothing compared to the infinite possibilities the soul contains.

This relationship between a person's thoughts and personality is not merely quantitative. An entire world may exist within those thoughts: people, places, events, and actions. But that world has no independent, objective existence outside of his thoughts. It is no more than a shadow of the person's personality. Similarly, the letters of divine speech – whose power creates and maintains the universe and the reality of all of the worlds within it – do not possess substantiality any more than do the letters of human thought. Just as the creations of human thought are nullified relative to the person thinking them, so too, all worlds are nullified relative to the divine essence that creates them.

וְכְמוֹ שְׁנַתְבָּאָר גַּם כֵּן בְּמִקּוֹם
 אַחֵר, מְשַׁל גִּשְׁמֵי לְזֶה מֵעַנְנֵן
 בֵּיטוּל זֵיו וְאוֹר הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בְּמִקּוּדוֹ,
 הוּא גּוֹף כְּדוּר הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ שֶׁפָּרְקִיעַ.
 שֶׁגַּם שֶׁם מֵאִיר וּמִתְפַּשֵּׁט
 וְדֹאֵי זֵיו וְאוֹרוֹ, וּבֵיתֵר שְׂאֵת
 מִהֵתְפַשֵּׁטוֹתוֹ וְהֵאָרְתוֹ בְּחִלָּל
 הָעוֹלָם, אֵלֶּא שֶׁשֶּׁם הוּא בְּטֵל

This idea was likewise explained elsewhere (see *Sha'ar HaYihud VeHa'emuna*, chap. 3) by employing an analogy to this from the physical world, namely, the concept of the nullification of the sun's radiance and light within its source, that is, the body of the sun in the firmament. In there too, the sun's radiance and light certainly shine and radiate, even more than its radiance

בְּמִצִּיאוֹת בְּמִקְוֵרוֹ וּבְאֵילֵי אֵינוֹ
בְּמִצִּיאוֹת כָּלָל. and illumination in the expanse
of the universe; but there, inside
the sun, its existence is nullified
within its source, as though it
does not exist at all.

The light of the sun shines everywhere except within the sun itself. When the light shines outside the sun, it appears as an independent entity that gives vitality to complete worlds. But within the sun none of that has any significance. When the light is in the source from which it is generated, it is nullified. It returns, as it were, to the state prior to its having been created, when it did not exist at all.

וְכַכֵּה מִמֶּשֶׁ, דֶּרֶךְ מִשָּׁל, In precisely the same way, figura-
tively speaking,

One should bear in mind that the light and the source of light are only analogies. An analogy, whether taken from the material or spiritual world, serves to explain something beyond the analogy itself. We must examine the analogy again and again in order to seek its deeper meaning. In this particular analogy, the idea to contemplate is how a derivative is nullified in relation to its source, in the fundamental existence from which it stems.

הוּא בִּיטוּל הָעוֹלָם וּמְלוֹאוֹ בְּמִצִּיאוֹת
לְגִבֵּי מִקְוֵרוֹ, שֶׁהוּא אֹר אֵין סוֹף בְּרוֹךְ
הוּא, וְכִמוֹ שֶׁנִּתְבָּאֵר שָׁם בְּאֵרֵיכּוֹת. is the existence of the world and
everything in it nullified in rela-
tion to its source, which is the
light of *Ein Sof*, blessed be He, as
explained there at length.

As was explained earlier, the nullification of the world's existence relative to the divine is not due to the lowliness and insignificance of the world but due to the fact that its entire existence is a dim ray of light deriving from the essence of divine light. It is an illumination that appears as an independent entity only when it is disconnected and distanced from the divine source. The world, including everything contained therein, is insubstantial in the context of the divine light source.

וְהָיָה כְּשִׁיעַמִּיק בְּזֶה הַרְבֵּה, When a person contemplates this a great deal,

Deep contemplation in general consists of thinking about a particular topic until it becomes clear to one and conceptually integrated into one's soul. Contemplation of God's unity is a component of the daily prayer service. It is what one must bear in mind when proclaiming, "Hear, Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord is one" (Deut. 6:4). The idea expressed in this verse is more than the fact that God is one and not two. A person must be unwavering in his concentration, steadily focused for a period of time, envisioning and clarifying for himself the nature of this oneness, of the fact that "there is nothing besides Him" (Deut. 4:35), that not only is there no other like Him in terms of greatness or strength, but that nothing exists apart from Him. This is not the kind of thought that a person can have fleetingly – "God exists; He is one" – and then go on with his day. A person must meditate on this thought at length, reviewing it again and again.

A significant proportion of hasidic teachings is meant to supply the content for such contemplation and provide a springboard that enables a person to look at this verse anew twice daily, in a fresh light and with new vitality. This is similar to how a person contemplates a physical object placed directly before him, as something he is seeing for the first time. ❧

THE POWER OF THE BEDTIME *SHEMA*

❧ A story is told of a Chabad hasid who reached an inn late at night. The innkeeper asked him if he wanted to eat, but the hasid refused, saying that he was too tired and wanted to go straight to bed. In his room, the hasid washed his hands and began to recite the bedtime *SHEMA*. Since he was a hasid, he began to deeply meditate on the concept that God is one while standing with one foot on the floor and the other on the bed. The innkeeper found him in that same position the following morning, still ponder-

ing this phrase. That hasid's meditation was not the same that he had had on previous occasions, but a new insight into God's oneness. Although he had genuinely intended to go to sleep, his meditation revealed a new reality that gave him enough material to think about until the morning. Not everyone is capable of such a deep meditation, but this story teaches how deep and broad the topic of God's unity is, and how far one can go in meditating upon it.

The deep contemplation that this chapter is discussing is not a purely intellectual and abstract analysis, but something that has an emotional aspect as well. The nullification of the world before the Divine means that no barrier exists, that God is here with us as fully as He is in the highest heavens, and perhaps even more so. The more a person meditates on this, the more he perceives an intensely tangible nearness to God. This nearness is not dependent on a person's righteousness, fulfillment of mitzvot, Torah study, or anything else. Rather, it is a closeness that has no conditions, no limits, where essence meets essence and one may come to feel an intense joy that is without conditions and without limits.

יִשְׂמַח לְבוֹ וְתִגַּל נַפְשׁוֹ אֶף גִּילת
וְרִינָן בְּכָל לֵב וְנַפְשׁוֹ וּמֵאֲדָּ
his heart will rejoice and his soul will
be glad even with joy and song (see
Isa. 35:2), with all his heart and soul
and might

The phrase “With all his heart and soul and might” recalls the commandment to love God mentioned in the first paragraph of the *Shema*: “With all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.” That love of God likewise comes from a person's contemplation of God's oneness as he recites the words “Hear, Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord is one.”

בְּאֵמוּנָה זוֹ כִּי רַבָּה הִיא, כִּי הִיא
קִרְבַּת אֱלֹקִים מִמֶּשׁ.
in this faith in God's unity. One's joy
abounds because it is a great faith,
since it is literally an experience of
closeness to God.

Although the chapter began with the notion of intellectually contemplating God's unity, the author of the *Tanya* refers to this concept here as “faith” because it is first and foremost founded upon the faith that, as the psalmist says, “By the word of God the heavens were made” (Ps. 33:6).⁹

As stated earlier, the purpose of contemplating God's unity is not to deny material existence but to attain an experiential awareness of the Divine Presence. By contemplating the nothingness of existence

9. As explained by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson.

relative to the Divine, we dismantle all the barriers and reveal that God is present. When we contemplate that “there is nothing besides Him,” that there is no existence besides the Divine, no existence that has any tangibility that can interpose between us and Godliness, we attain a feeling of closeness to God, of being as close to Him as we can bear to be.

In order to attain closeness with God, a person need not storm the supernal realms or penetrate more and more deeply into the layers of his soul. He need only remove the veil of created reality and reveal that God is present. The question is not whether God is present, but to what degree a person is aware of His presence. For example, there are many things whose existence a person is unaware of and that do not depend on his awareness. Every person has a heart, but only a minority (usually those with a heart condition) are sensitive to the fact. The heart constantly operates; a person’s life depends on its continuing activity at every moment, yet he may not be aware of that.

As a rule, the extent to which a person is aware of something bears no correlation whatsoever to how real or close it is to him. If anything, the correlation may be inverse, in that the closer and more familiar something is, the more effort and practice a person requires to be truly aware of its existence. As noted in other contexts, a person’s greatest pleasure is that of being alive. Yet one typically takes this for granted, except at a time of crisis, such as after recovering from a serious illness or being granted a reprieve from a death sentence. The meaning of one’s “closeness to God” is that the Divine is closer to him than anything else, closer than life itself, closer than the beating of his heart – and that is precisely why he does not sense it. But the moment the veil is lifted, as soon as this notion of God’s unity enters into his awareness, then he needs nothing else in his life. He has everything.

וְזֶה כָּל הָאָדָם וְתַכְלִית בְּרִיאָתוֹ,
וּבְרִיאָת כָּל הָעוֹלָמוֹת עֲלִיּוֹנִים
וְתַחְתּוֹנִים, לְהִיּוֹת לוֹ דִּירָה זֶה
בְּתַחְתּוֹנִים, כְּמוֹ שֶׁיִּתְבָּאֵר לְקַמֵּן
בְּאֵרֵיכוֹת.

In fact **this is the whole purpose of man and the purpose of his creation, and of the creation of all the worlds, higher and lower: namely, in order for this to be a dwelling place for Him below, as will be explained at length below.**

God created the world and man in order to have “a dwelling place below,”¹⁰ which, to quote Ecclesiastes (12:13), “is the whole [purpose of] man.” God is found in everything and everywhere, including the lower worlds, and this reality is not dependent on man at all. Moreover, from God’s perspective, there is no distinction between the higher and lower realms. Therefore, the concept of “a dwelling place below” refers not to God’s existence in the lower realms but rather to the fact that His existence is revealed to man both consciously and emotionally. The notion of lower realms as applied to the psyche of the human being relates to a level of his intellect or emotion that does not perceive the divine. When a person becomes aware that God is present in his ordinary state of reality, when he feels close to God, he creates “a dwelling place below” for God, and as such he attains the great goal of the existence of all worlds, from their beginning to their end. ❧

וְהִנֵּה כְּמֵה גְדוּלָה שְׂמֵחַת הַדְּיוֹט
וְשֹׁפֵל אֲנָשִׁים בְּהִתְקַרְבוֹתוֹ לְמֶלֶךְ
בְּשָׂר וָדָם, הַמֵּת־אֲכִסֵּן וְדָר אֵתוֹ
עִמּוֹ בְּבֵיתוֹ,

How great is the joy of a commoner and lowly man when he draws close to a human king who lodges and lives with him in his home!

SEEING THE WORLD OR SEEING THE DIVINE?

❧ Our world was created in such a well-balanced and complete way that it appears to possess an independent existence. As a result, God’s existence is not readily apparent. In the analogy given earlier of a black-and-white drawing, one may perceive black shapes resting against a white background or vice versa. That which helps the eye pass from the black shapes to the white shapes are the flaws: a lack of completeness in some point, lines that are unfinished, improper proportions. These allow the eye to switch perspectives. In this vein, our world is so well balanced that a person is equally likely either to perceive or not perceive the

divine. Someone who sees only the natural aspect of the world may live all his life without ever discovering that there is another, divine aspect, and it is theoretically possible (although this requires much practice) to perceive this other aspect continuously. A person’s perspective may also switch from one point to the other. Suddenly he may discover a new viewpoint so that the proportions drastically change. That which he had considered central he now considers merely decorative. That which he had considered reality he now sees as nothing but a backdrop to reality.

10. Further discussed in chaps. 35–36 below. See also *Tanḥuma, Naso* 16 and *Behukotai* 3; *Bemidbar Rabba* 13:6.

Until now, the author of the *Tanya* has focused on a person's intellectual contemplation of God's omnipresence. Now he returns to the initial subject of the chapter: the concept of joy and how it emerges from that contemplation.

Were a great, well-known man to stay at the home of a commoner, were he to shake his hand and speak to him even briefly, that meeting would become the focal point of the commoner's life, its apex of light and happiness. It would be an experience he would always remember and that would serve as his source of vitality.

וְקָל וְחוֹמֵר לְאֵין קֶץ לְקִרְבַּת וְדִירַת
מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ
הוּא. וְכִדְבָרְתִּיב: "בֵּי מִי הוּא זֶה אֲשֶׁר
עָרַב לְבֹו לְגֹשֶׁת אֱלֹהֵי נְאֻם ה'" (ירמיה
ל, כא).

How **infinitely more so** is a person's joy with regard to the **closeness and dwelling** here below of the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is written: "For who is it whose heart has dared to approach Me? – the utterance of the Lord" (Jer. 30:21).

In order to truly sense God's closeness and the resulting joy one experiences, a person must have, on the one hand, a sense of trepidation in the face of awesome, infinite distance, such that "who is it whose heart dared to approach Me?" and he must perceive, on the other hand, the unrivaled closeness of the Divine. When a person experiences these two feelings, a sense of gratitude and tremendous joy bursts into being, as he considers that God, who is immeasurably great and awesome, chooses to be the guest in his home, meaning, in his awareness and his feelings. In and of himself, a person is a small, lowly creature. No matter how much he grows, he can never come close to God, the infinite *Ein Sof*. All human beings, from the simplest and lowest, to Moses, the preeminent human being, stand before *Ein Sof* at the same point: the point of nothingness. But although a person cannot reach the infinite *Ein Sof*, the infinite *Ein Sof* can reach him. Accordingly, it is only when God so desires that a person can be close to him. That is the reason for one's sense of gratitude, which results in a feeling of joy: that as infinitely great as God is, He reaches down infinitely below. "It is true that God is the King of kings, and before whom no one dares to approach, yet here He is! The King of kings visits me. He is always with

me.” This is the essence of a person’s most simple and all-encompassing gratitude for being able to experience God’s closeness to him.

12 Adar וְעַל זֶה תִּיקְנוּ לֵיתֵן שְׂבַח וְהוֹדָיָה לְשִׁמּוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ בְּכָל בֹּקֶר, וְלוֹמַר: “אֲשִׁירֵנוּ מֵה טוֹב חֲלָקְנוּ וְכוּ’ וּמֵה יָפֵה יְרוּשָׁתֵנוּ.” בְּלוֹמַר, כְּמוֹ שֶׁהָאָדָם שֵׁשׁ וְשִׁמַּח בִּירוּשָׁה שֶׁנִּפְלָה לוֹ הוּז עֵתָק שְׁלֵא עָמַל בּוֹ, **It is on account of this that the Sages instituted that a person should give praise and thanks to God’s name every morning, and say, “Happy are we, for how good is our portion and how pleasant is our lot, and how beautiful is our heritage!” That is to say, just as a person is happy and joyful in receiving an inheritance when a great fortune that he had not labored to acquire falls into his possession,**

The most germane clause of this quote is “How beautiful is our heritage.”¹¹ When a person acquires wealth through laborious and extensive efforts, he may feel as if he has received compensation for an investment that he made. But when a person receives an inheritance, something that he did not strive to achieve, something that was given freely, he can experience only pure joy and gratitude.

כֵּן וְיוֹתֵר מִכֵּן לֵאמֹן קָמַן יֵשׁ לָנוּ לְשִׁמּוֹחַ עַל יְרוּשָׁתֵנוּ שֶׁהִנְחִילָנוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, הוּא יְחִוּד ה’ הָאֱמִיתִי, אֲשֶׁר אֶפִּילוֹ בְּאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת אֵין עוֹד מִלְּבָדוֹ - וְזוֹ הִיא דִּירְתוֹ בְּתַחְתּוֹנִים. **likewise, and infinitely more so, ought we to rejoice over our heritage that our forefathers bequeathed to us. This inheritance is the ability to feel God’s true unity, the knowledge that even on earth below there is nothing besides Him. This awareness is His dwelling place in the lower worlds.**

Our ancestors bequeathed to us an awareness, a realization that they themselves attained, by devoting their entire lifetimes to study, meditation, and contemplation. It is an inheritance for which we should be more grateful and joyful than for anything material. Our ancestors passed on to us the secret that in essence God is present right here.

11. Regarding the phrase “How good is our portion, how pleasant is our lot,” see *Iggeret HaKodesh*, epistle 7 and *Sefer HaMa’amarim Admor Yosef Yitzhak*, 5688.

From generation to generation, fathers, as it were, whispered into the ears of their children: “In your house, in the house that all of us live in, lies a hidden treasure.” This deeply personal awareness is the secret of God’s true unity. The sense that despite everything, God is here with us and permeates all of existence is more precious than the treasures of all the kings of the earth. This is an inheritance that, although containing everything, is a person’s individual awareness that he cannot pass on to anyone else. So in thanks to God, we exclaim: “How good is our portion ... and how beautiful our heritage.” Compared to this gift, everything else in the world pales into insignificance.

וְזֶהוּ שֶׁאָמְרוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ ז"ל:
 תְּרִי"ג מִצְוֹת נִתְּנוּ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל...
 בְּאֶחָת חֲבִיקוּק וְהַעֲמִידֵן עַל אֶחָת
 שְׁנַיִמָּר: "וְצַדִּיק בְּאֵמוּנָתוֹ
 יִחִי" (חֲבִיקוּק ב, ד).
This is the meaning of the statement of our Rabbis, “There were 613 commandments given to Israel... Habakkuk came and established them upon one, the mitzva of *emuna*, as the verse states: “But the righteous will live by his faith” (Hab. 2:4).

Our Rabbis teach that “613 commandments were given to Israel¹²... King David came and established them upon eleven ... Isaiah came and established them upon six ... Micah came and established them upon three ... Habakkuk came and established them upon one, referring to the commandment of faith, as it is stated: ‘But the righteous person shall live by his faith.’” This refers to faith in God’s unity, which fills a righteous person with life and constitutes his reality. It is the meaning, power, and joy of his life. This joy is intrinsic regardless of his circumstances, whether a person is righteous or evil, rich or poor, fortunate or wretched. He knows what is important: that God is here with him.

כְּלוֹמַר, כָּאֵלוּ אֵינָהּ רַק מִצְוָה
 אֶחָת - הִיא הָאֵמוּנָה לְבַדָּה.
 כִּי עַל יְדֵי הָאֵמוּנָה לְבַדָּה - יבא
 לְקַיֵּם כָּל הַתְּרִי"ג מִצְוֹת.
In other words, it is as though there is only one commandment, which is faith alone, for by means of faith alone a person will come to fulfill all 613 commandments.

This is not to say that faith substitutes for all the other commandments,

12. See *Makkot* 23b–24a.

and one who possesses faith is not obligated to fulfill them. On the contrary, faith provides the means by which a person fulfills all of the commandments. This unique quality underscores the importance of faith.¹³

דְּהֵיִינוּ כְּשִׂיְהִיָּה לְבוֹ שֶׁשׁ וְשִׂמְחָה
בְּאִמּוּנָתוֹ בְּיַחְדוֹ ה' בְּתַכְלִית
הַשְּׂמֵחָה - כְּאִלּוּ לֹא הֵיְתָה
עָלָיו רַק מִצְוָה זוֹ לְבִדְדָה, וְהִיא
לְבִדְדָה תַּכְלִית בְּרִיאָתוֹ וּבְרִיאַת
כָּל הָעוֹלָמוֹת -

That is to say, when a person's heart will be happy and joyous, with the ultimate joy in his faith in God's unity, as though he is obligated only in this commandment alone, and that it alone is the purpose of his being created and the creation of all the worlds,

The phrase “the righteous person lives by his faith” means that the greater a person's faith, the more alive, inspired, and vibrant he is. When a person believes that God exists not only somewhere in the heavens above but is here with us and that there is truly nothing besides Him, that is the sole source of his joy and vitality. The purpose of the creation of man and all the worlds is for God to have a dwelling place below, which, as was noted above, is our personal, subjective awareness that God is with us. When a person attains this awareness that God is with him, that God is his life and that there is nothing besides Him, he fulfills his part in the purpose of his being created and of the creation of all the worlds.

הָרִי בְּכַח וְחַיּוּת נַפְשׁוֹ בְּשִׂמְחָה
רַבָּה זֶה תַּתְּעֵלָה נַפְשׁוֹ לְמַעְלָה
מִמְּעָלָה עַל כָּל הַמוֹנְעִים קִיּוֹם כָּל
הַתְּרִי"ג מִצְוֹת,

then with the strength and vitality of his soul experienced through this great joy, his soul will be elevated far beyond all obstacles that prevent him from fulfilling all of the 613 commandments,

13. The 613 commandments are established on faith. Faith and fulfilling the other commandments are not two separate matters. Rather, when a person fulfills a commandment, he feels faith in the source of that commandment (remark of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menaḥem Mendel Schneerson).

This feeling of joy is a person's sensation of divine life flowing through him and all existence.

This chapter continues the theme begun in chapter 31, which describes a person who feels dejected on account of his spiritual failings and who therefore cannot serve God by properly fulfilling His commandments. In order to break free of his immobility and overcome the obstacles that are preventing him from serving God, he must attain a state of joy. The path to doing so is the way of "a righteous person, [who] lives by his faith," that is, faith in the unity of God. A person possessing faith can constantly be rejuvenated.

This path is accessible not only to the righteous. Any person can say, "Although I, as lowly and disgraceful as I may be, have committed such and such sins, God is always with me, and when God is with me, what can be bad?" The power of this joy enables anyone to overcome his feelings of dejection and rise above anything that prevents him from serving God by keeping His commandments.

מִבֵּית וּמְחוּץ. whether those obstacles are **internal or external.**

A person can overcome every obstacle, whether it is the result of entanglements within his own soul and his own life choices, or whether it stems from external circumstances.

Until this point, the author of the *Tanya* has explained the verse "A righteous person lives by his faith" as referring to the sense of renewal and joy experienced by a person who possesses faith in the oneness of God and His closeness to him. From this point onward, the author analyzes the subject on a deeper level.

וְזֶהוּ שֶׁאָמַר "בְּאֵמוּנָתוֹ יִחְיֶה" - יִחְיֶה דְיִיָּקָא - בְּתַחֲיֵית הַיְמִתִּים דְּרַךְ מְשָׁל, כְּדִ תַּחֲיֶה נַפְשׁוֹ בְּשִׂמְחָה רַבָּה זֶה. **Thus the verse states, "He shall live by his faith" – specifying "he shall live"; that is, just as the dead, for example, will be revived, so will his soul be revived by means of this great joy.**

Not only does this faith provide inspiration for the rest of a person's life, but it constitutes a renewal of his current life. When the soul of one whose former life was cause for bitterness, for a fading will to live, is

rejuvenated by the joy generated by living by one's faith, a completely new life replaces the old. This phenomenon is analogous to the future resurrection of the dead, when the deceased will be infused with an utterly new and qualitatively different life than we experience at present.

וְהִיא שְׂמֵחָה כְּפִילָה וּמְכֻפָּלָת, כִּי
מִלְבָּד שְׂמֵחָת הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַמְּשֻׁפָּלָת
בְּקִרְבָּת ה' וְדִירָתוֹ אִתּוֹ עִמּוֹ, This is a manifold joy, because
apart from the joy of the person's
soul when apprehending God's
closeness to him and His dwelling
together with him,

This refers to the joy of a person who attains the awareness that God dwells with him.

13 Adar עוֹד זֹאת יִשְׂמַח בְּכַפְלָיִים בְּשִׂמְחָת
ה' וְגוֹדֵל נִחַת רוּחַ לְפָנָיו יִתְפַּרֵּךְ
בְּאַמוּנָה זוֹ, he will moreover be doubly joyful
in his awareness of God's joy and
the great degree of gratification
this faith brings God,

The joy a person's closeness to God generates is twofold: not only does he himself experience joy, but God too may be said to experience joy when a person believes in Him. When one who is trapped inside a body and unable to perceive the Divine is ensconced within a society that denies God, within a world that is turning to other directions, and he becomes aware that “behold, the Lord is standing over him,” then God rejoices, and the person partakes of that joy. He consequently experiences a double joy: his own joy at being close to God, and God's joy at being close to him.

דִּאֲתַכְפִּיָּא סְטָרָא אַחֲרָא מִמֶּשׁ,
וְאֲתַתְּפֵךְ חֲשׂוּכָא לְנֹהוֹרָא, in that the *sitra aḥara* is literally
subdued, and darkness is trans-
formed into light.

The *sitra aḥara*, the “other side,” refers to the aspect of existence that is not holy and hides holiness. As has been explained in a number of places (see commentary to chap. 27), there are two aspects to serving God, “subduing” and “transforming.” Regarding the first aspect, the concealing veil is torn and a ray of the divine light appears from the

other side. But with regard to the second, the concealment (the darkness) itself is transformed into light: the *kelippa* that had concealed the Divine is revealed as itself being divine light.

שְׁהוּא חֹשֶׁךְ הַקְּלִיפּוֹת שֶׁבְּעוֹלָם
 הַזֶּה הַחוּמְרֵי, הַמַּחְשִׁיכִים וּמְכַסִּים
 עַל אֹרֹן יִתְבַּרְךְ עַד יֵת קֵץ, כְּמוֹ
 שֶׁכָּתוּב: "קֵץ שָׁם לַחֹשֶׁךְ" (איוב
 כח, ג)

This darkness is referring to the darkness of the *kelippot* in this material world, which obstruct and conceal God's light until the end time, when, as the verse states: "He sets an end to darkness" (Job 28:3).

In addition to the particular type of darkness associated with each specific sin, there is general darkness associated with the existence of *kelippa* in the most primal sense: *Kelippa* is by definition a covering that prevents us from seeing the essence within, an entity through which we cannot see the Divine. This concealment is due to the fact that the world (*olam*) is by design an occlusion (*he'elem*) of the Divine. At present this concealment is an integral part of the nature of the world, unaffected by people or the passage of time, that will be eradicated only at the end of days, when the world as we know it will be totally shattered.

[דְּהַיְיֵנו קֵץ הַיָּמִין, שִׁיעֲבִיר רוּחַ
 הַטּוֹמְאָה מִן הָאָרֶץ "וְנִגְלָה כְבוֹד
 ה' וְרָאוּ כָּל בְּשָׂר יַחְדָּיו" (ישעיה מ,
 ה), וְכִמוֹ שֶׁיִּתְבָּאֵר לְקַמּוֹ].

(This is a reference to the end of days, when God will remove the spirit of impurity from the earth, "and the glory of the Lord will be revealed and all flesh will see together" [Isa. 40:5], as will be explained below [chap. 36].)

At the end of days (see Dan. 12:13), when the spirit of impurity will be removed completely and the concealment intrinsic to the existence of the world will be eradicated, then "all flesh will see together." The concealment is a combination of a number of factors: the external world, a person's senses, and the internal structure of his psyche. In order to go beyond concealment, it does not suffice to rectify just one of these factors. Being able to see the Divine via the external world

as a result of a miracle or a revelation will in itself not change much. A change in a person's sensory, material awareness will in itself not be enough without a corresponding shift in the internal makeup of his psyche. Lacking that, he will always readjust himself so that the messages from the outside align with his internal preconceptions. It is virtually impossible for a person to see things that, according to his fundamental assumptions, cannot exist. Moreover, in order to attain a perception of the Divine, he must push not only beyond the boundaries of material existence and the perception associated with the material world, but also beyond the confining existence of his own self. In order for God to be revealed in this world, one must make a place for Him, and wherever a person's sense of self is present, God cannot be revealed. Therefore the Talmud states, "Any person who has arrogance within him, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: He and I cannot dwell together in the world" (*Sota* 5a). But at the end of days, at the end of the existence of this world with its present meaning, form, and structure, at a time when the "world" (*olam*) will no longer constitute a "concealment" (*he'elem*), the existence of physicality will itself be a revelation of the Divine. Then "all flesh will see together that the mouth of God has spoken."

וּבְפֶרֶט בְּחוּץ לְאֶרֶץ, שְׂאֵיזֵר אֶרֶץ
הָעַמִּים טָמֵא וּמְלֵא קְלִיפּוֹת
וְסִטְרָא אֲחָרָא. This darkness exists particularly outside the Land of Israel, since the air of the land of the nations is impure and full of *kelippot* and the *sitra aħara*.

The spiritual darkness¹⁴ and concealment outside the Land of Israel is more powerful than in the Land of Israel.¹⁵ As a result of this potent darkness, the divine light is significantly less apparent outside the Land of Israel. ¶

וְאֵין שְׂמֵחָה לְפָנָיו יִתְבַּדֵּךְ כְּאוֹרָה
וְשְׂמֵחָה בִּיתְרוֹן אוֹר הֵבֵא מִן
הַחֹשֶׁךְ דִּי יִקָּא. There is no greater joy before God as the light and joy caused by the superior nature of light that emerges specifically from the darkness.

14. See *Shabbat* 15b, and Rambam, *Sefer Tahara, Hilkhot Tumat Met*, chap. 11.

15. See *Torah Or* 13a.

This darkness refers to the darkness of this world, in particular, the darkness in the lands of the other nations outside the Land of Israel. If a person clearly recognizes God's existence in the midst of this darkness, he creates light from within the darkness. The light that is generated from within the darkness, in which God takes such joy, is not a light that is the opposite of darkness but one that emerges from the darkness. Jeremiah alludes to this concept in the verse "If you extract that which is precious from the worthless" (Jer. 15:19), referring to a unique factor that is not shared by light that does not emerge from darkness. ☞

TO TRULY ENTER THE LAND OF ISRAEL

☞ Not everyone who enters the Land of Israel is immediately aware of a greater divine revelation. One possibility accounting for this phenomenon is that a person brings with him the *kelippot* from outside the land. Therefore, even in the Land of Israel he is in a bubble of sorts that contains the atmosphere from outside the land. As was explained above, a person's ability to

perceive the Divine depends not only on his external environment's illumination but also on his internal being's purification. One must train himself to sense the difference between the degree of light radiating from one place and another. One who has yet to do so cannot have truly transitioned from one location to another.

GOD'S JOY

☞ As was mentioned above, when a person is close to God, it generates two elements of joy. The first is the person's joy at recognizing his nearness to God. The second is God's joy at his success in recognizing Him despite the labyrinth of life in which God placed him. God created a universal concealment and distance from Him so that people would discover Him from the midst of the concealment.

This sense of discovery that comes out of concealment has been compared to the entertainment presented before aristocrats, which consists of entirely new and unexpected sights (see *Torah Or* 18a). It has also been stated (*Torah Or* 61b and *Likkutei Torah*, Num. 77c) that laughter and

lightheartedness result when something different and new is introduced (*Likkutei Hagahot* on the *Tanya*).

The feeling of joy upon discovering God may be compared to that of a father who asks his child difficult questions and rejoices when he answers them correctly. The most crucial question that God asks us is "Where am I?" To answer this question, a person must overcome stumbling blocks, work his way through errors, and emerge from a labyrinth, after which he can respond, "You are here!" The person rejoices because he feels close to God and because he feels God's joy on his behalf (see *Torah Or* 18a, 61b; *Likkutei Torah*, Num. 77c).

וְזֶהוּ שְׂכַתוֹב: "יִשְׂמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל
 בְּעוֹשֵׂיו" (תהלים קמט, ב). פִּירוּשׁ
 שְׂכַל מִי שֶׁהוּא מִזְרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל
 יֵשׁ לוֹ לְשִׂמּוֹחַ בְּשִׂמְחַת ה' אֲשֶׁר
 שָׁשׂוּשְׂמִת בְּדִרְתוֹ בְּתַחְתּוֹנִים,
 שֶׁהֵם בְּחִינַת עֲשִׂיָּה גְּשָׁמִיית
 מִמֶּשׁ.

This is the meaning of the verse "Let Israel rejoice in its Maker" (Ps. 149:2). This means that everyone who is of the seed of Israel should rejoice in God's joy, who is happy and joyous that His dwelling place is in the lower worlds, which are on the level of actual physical *Asiya*.

A Jew must rejoice that God has made him dwell in the lowly and dark world of *Asiya* so that despite the darkness he will be able to perceive the divine light hidden within. The verse "Let Israel rejoice" indicates that this is the characteristic quality of Israel: Every Jew accepts simple belief in God's unity not as a philosophical conclusion nor as the apex of the mystical ladder, but in the same way that a small child does. He acknowledges that God is one not only in the higher worlds but in the lower worlds as well. A Jew accepts this not as the conclusion of his life, but as the starting point for his life. "Let Israel rejoice" because the end point and purpose of a Jew's life, to make a dwelling place for God below, is also imprinted upon every starting point of his life, in his soul and in his body.

וְזֶהוּ שְׂכַתוֹב 'בְּעוֹשֵׂיו', לְשׁוֹן
 רַבִּים, שֶׁהוּא עוֹלָם הַיָּדָה הַגְּשָׁמִי
 הַמְּלֵא קְלִיפּוֹת וְסִטְרָא אַחְרָא,
 שְׁנִקְרָאוּ 'רְשׁוֹת הָרַבִּים', וְ'טוּרֵי
 דִּפְרוּדָא',

This is the meaning the verse, which states "its *Makers*," in the plural form. This is a reference to the fact that this material world is filled with multitudinous *kelippot* and the *sitra aħara*, which are called a "public domain" and, in the *Zohar*'s parlance, "mountains of separation,"

In terms of the straightforward reading of the verse, either the Hebrew term actually does mean "its Maker" (and the *yod* in the word usually indicating a plural is a linguistic anomaly here), or the reference to a powerful figure in the plural is a standard technique.¹⁶

16. See *Da'at Mikra*.

Whereas a private domain (literally, “the domain of the individual”) alludes to a space in which God, the “Individual One of existence,” is revealed, and there is nothing besides Him, a public domain (literally, “the domain of the multitude”) alludes to our physical world, a realm in which the Individual One is concealed. Instead, we perceive a multiplicity of forces and factors that make up and propel the world.

וְאֵת־הַפְּכוֹן לְנִהוּרָא וְנִעֲשִׂים רְשׁוֹת
הַיְחִיד לְיִחוּדוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ בְּאַמוּנָה זוֹ. **and which are then transformed
into light by means of this faith and
become a private domain for the
sake of God’s unity.**

This world, referred to here as a public domain, i.e., a place where multiple forces seem to be at play and the oneness of God is concealed, must be transformed into a “private domain,” i.e., a realm where God’s unity and oneness are clearly apparent. It is a transformation in which darkness morphs into light. This occurs when there is a transition from a perspective of multiplicity to a perspective of oneness, from a perspective of a multitude of forces that appear to be acting arbitrarily and aimlessly, of evil and good jumbled together, to a perspective in which all forces act as guided by one clear guideline and in which they are all one.

Transforming darkness into light is the work of the human being. A person is born into a world of disparity, the “mountains of separation.” But he slowly learns that all of its barriers, the ominous “mountains of separation,” are a deception, that what appear to be disparate entities are elements of one existence. He attains the faith that the divine light exists everywhere and that nothing can obscure it. As a result, the “public domain” is nullified and transformed into a “private domain.”

“Let Israel rejoice in its Maker.” Israel rejoices in the transition from the so-called public to private domains. A person rejoices not in his personal accomplishments, but in the existence of God, in the fact that as a result of his awareness God illuminates all the worlds, and in the fulfillment of the purpose of his creation and the creation of all the worlds.

The existence of the world is, as it were, God’s endeavor to receive a signal, a message from another. The entire framework of creation is built to this end, to transmit that message. Ultimately, the fact that

someone below answers Him, that God receives a signal from man saying, “You, God, exist,” means that the message has been successfully transmitted from one end of existence to the other. This expresses the divine victory, which floods all of existence with light.

This chapter has discussed God’s unity from the human perspective, as something meaningful in a person’s awareness and experience. But that faith in His unity does not suffice if one also believes that He exists only on some other plane. That kind of faith will change nothing in a person’s life, because if God exists only on another plane, it would make no practical difference whether He were one or three. Rather, a meaningful faith in the unity of God is the awareness that “there is nothing besides Him,” in other words, that there is no other power, existence, or meaning apart from Him.

When that faith is authentic and clear, it results in double joy: The person is joyful because God is close to him, and God is joyful, as it were, because this person is close to Him, having overcome all of the obstacles that had been placed in his way.

There is a well-known Chabad melody sung to the words “Indeed, You are God who conceals Himself” (Isa. 45:15). Contrary to what one might suppose, this is a melody of joy, because a person knows that, although seemingly absent, God is “a God who conceals Himself,” and this awareness causes him to be joyful. The Ba’al Shem Tov used to say¹⁷ that the verse from the Torah portion of the rebuke, “I will conceal (*haster astir*) My face” (Deut. 31:18), literally means “I will conceal the concealment.” The curse in God’s doubly concealing His face is that a person does not even know that there is a concealment; he does not sense the darkness and the gaping chasm beneath him. But as soon as a person knows that there is concealment, the concealment ceases. Belief in God’s unity does not necessarily disclose the depth of divine existence, but it reveals that a concealment of God exists, that He is hidden right here. The joy in this revelation is not like any other type of joy. It is the crux of every kind of joy in the world, the bedrock of all true joy, which can never be undermined.

17. See *Ba’al Shem Tov al HaTorah*, 71–72.