



Under the Auspices and Guidance of  
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# Light from the Leshem

Authentic Kabbalah Teachings from the Torah  
On Topics Concerning The Divine Workings of Our Reality

Essays from the Writings of the Rav Shlomo Elyashiv,  
the Baal HaLeshem, of Blessed Memory

Translations and Elucidation of Selected Chapters from  
his Grand Collected Writings, entitled

## Leshem Shabo V'Achlama

By

The Rav Shlomo Elyashiv, the Baal HaLeshem,  
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Translation into English by Zerach Moshe Fedder

### Article One

#### Why was Humankind given Free Choice?

From the Book of the Knowledge – Section One

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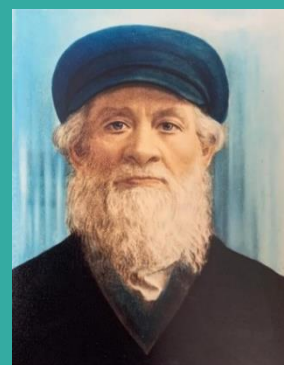
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The Baal HaLeshem, zt"l



Kabbalah | Light from the Leshem

Presenting The Writings of Rav Shlomo Elyashiv in English

## G-d creates Existence so that Humankind has Free Choice

The second matter<sup>1</sup> concerns the shards of spiritual dross<sup>2</sup>, which are the forces and roots of the existence of the husks<sup>3</sup>, all of which are all impurity and evil. Which, through their existence, all possibility and choice is given to man, providing him with two paths, choosing whichever way he wishes to follow. So that all his reward and motivation for his purpose is only decided by himself through his own choice. For humankind is given this power to build good for themselves and build evil for themselves. When a person behaves in the way of the Torah, he builds good assets for himself. When he behaves in the opposite way, he develops evil assets for himself.

### In this World, Human Beings are Constantly Performing Actions

This world alone, was created to be the world for action. Here human beings have been sent to act and to fulfill their purpose. Consequently, it is the defining characteristic and nature of man to always be performing actions, whether as deeds or as speech or in thought. Man does not stand still for a single moment of his life without performing some kind of action, because for this purpose alone was man created. For this reason alone, he was sent to this world, the only world where performing actions can occur.

Thus, man has had planted within him a core disposition to never be without a single moment that lacks performance of some kind of action. He is constantly active, whether through performing deeds or in speech or in thought. The benefit and performance of all his actions is only in order for him to achieve his end purpose. Because after this, he will be entering into the world of tranquility, once the days of his life are completed, once he has completed his allotted days of action. For he will then ascend and reside in the place that he has prepared for himself, his allotted place, his, so to speak, buildings that he has created from the results of his actions.

### The Existence of Good and Evil, Enables Humanity to Help in Building the Worlds

We must, at this juncture, explain the issue of God's creation of both good and evil. These acts of creation are only to establish potential possibility. The cooperation and joining together of both good and evil within all of existence, begins as potential alone, before the creation of humankind. But their emergence from potential to actualization can occur only through the actions of created beings<sup>4</sup> themselves. This relates to the matter that there is, in fact, also action and work occurring in all the supernal hosts<sup>5</sup>, in all the upper worlds. Because all celestial entities<sup>6</sup> are constantly at work and do not stop their work, for even a single moment. Then too, angels and seraphim never stop their actions. Each one oversees and performs actions that is unique to him and does not stop working for even a single moment<sup>7</sup>. As it is written in The Book of Daniel, chapter 7: "Tens of Thousands served Him..." It is also stated, "They all perform actions for the will of their Maker with fear and awe." Also, "They rejoice and rejoice in doing the will of their Maker." Thus, we see

<sup>1</sup> The first matter concerning the shards is discussed in the previous article. The shards have two aspects: thickness and husks. The thickening of the shards serves as the basic roots for the existence of the worlds of separation. The husks are the source impurity and evil in the lower worlds. This article addresses the second aspect, i.e., the husks.

<sup>2</sup> In Hebrew: סיגים

<sup>3</sup> In Hebrew: קליפות

<sup>4</sup> In Hebrew: הנמצאים literally – those that exist / those that can be found, i.e., human beings.

<sup>5</sup> In Hebrew: צבאות העליונים literally - upper groups/armies

<sup>6</sup> In Hebrew: גלגלים literally – wheels – The stars, planets and galaxies are discussed in Kabbalistic literature as following circular motions in the heavens known as galgalim or wheels.

<sup>7</sup> All of this is explained in more details in the following sources: Midrash Konen, Sod Chasmal by R. Y. Giktillia, z"l, and in the Chapters of the Chariots by Ishmael, the Cohen Gadol.

that all of them have continual tasks. Even the ten Sephirot<sup>8</sup> of Atzilut<sup>9</sup> have continual tasks to perform<sup>10</sup>.

### Upper Hosts are affected by the Actions of Humankind

Thus, the entire matter of performing work by all the hosts of the various upper worlds, is to bring upon them, themselves, His light of holiness and goodness and then to further to pass on this influence onto those below. Yet, all these supernal hosts do not have any free choice [of their own] at all, because they have no evil inclination at all<sup>11</sup>. That is why they are known as, "Standing," for none of them have the power to rise above their given level nor to descend below it. Yet, even so, they experience elevation as well as descent (G-d forbid), due to the actions of men. Because when the actions of men are corrupt, they cause evil to increase in the entire hosts of heaven, each one being affected in accordance with its worth. Through this, these upper entities actually experience some aspects of free choice<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, some Angels, too, can receive punishment and reward. All this is due to the power of free choice made for the Angels via the actions of humankind. But they themselves have no free choice at all and thus reward and punishment are not related to them<sup>13</sup>.

### A Wonderful Example of this Principle

For a wonderful example of this, see the article<sup>14</sup> by the Holy Menachem Azariah of Fano, z"l, that discusses the origins of the fire flowing in the Deenor river.<sup>15</sup> The Rema from Fano writes: "Where is the source of the flow of this river?" said Rabbi Yeremi bar Abba said Rav. 'From the perspiration of the Chayot.'<sup>16</sup> 'And where does it flow to?' said Rabbi Zotra bar Tovia said Rav. 'Onto the heads of the wicked.'<sup>17</sup> This occurs because the Chayot are the bearers of the Throne of Glory,<sup>18</sup> When the deeds of the lower ones<sup>19</sup> are proper, the throne easily bears its burdens, and the Chayot do not have to labor and perspire. But when the deeds of the lowly ones are corrupted, the throne weighs heavily upon them and the Chayot must labor and perspire to achieve their tasks. Thus, their perspiration is due to the deeds of the wicked. Therefore, in this manner, the Deenor river is fashioned, which then falls upon the heads of the wicked."

<sup>8</sup> The ten attributes / emanations (from Keter to Malchut)

<sup>9</sup> The World of Divine Emanation. World that is in unity with G-d.

<sup>10</sup> As is discussed in the commentary of the Raavad, z"l, on chapter two, Mishna one, in the Book of Formation, see there for further elucidation.

<sup>11</sup> See שבת פ"ט:א - Shabbat 89:A, at the top of the page.

<sup>12</sup> See the commentary of the Raavad mentioned in footnote 7

<sup>13</sup> This is to say they may be affected by human choices but do not initiate reward or punishment.

<sup>14</sup> חיקור הדין חלק ג' פרק ב' - Chikor HaDin, Part 3, Chapter 2,

Has a discussion of the Gemara: הגיגה י"ג:ב - Hagigah 13:B

<sup>15</sup> The river of fire that flows through Gehinnom.

<sup>16</sup> A type of angel mentioned in the Tanach and in the Kabbalah. Literally translation, animals, for they are the angelic equivalent of animals.

<sup>17</sup> In Gehinnom

<sup>18</sup> The Throne of Glory (כסא הכבוד) refers to the top of/beginning of the world of Briyah, the first world of separation. The allusion is, as if, HaShem is resting upon/sitting upon the world of Briyah, a synonym for the world of Briyah is the world of the Throne. The Chayot angels' task is to carry the throne of glory in the world of Briyah.

<sup>19</sup> In Hebrew: תחתונים refers to those that live in the lowest/physical world, i.e., Asiyah. Refers to humankind.

So according to our way of explaining this, because of the actions of the wicked ones, all the labor of the upper beings<sup>20</sup> is performed with great hardship and struggle, for the manifestation of humankind's free choice affects their environment, too, as mentioned above. Thus, the result of this struggle, causes fire to flow into the Deenor River and then onto the heads of the wicked.

As the Holy Zohar states:<sup>21</sup> "When the violations of the world multiply, Atika Kadisha<sup>22</sup> becomes hidden..."<sup>23</sup> which causes strife and conflicts in all the worlds, due to the entering of evil into them. Due to this, the Chayot must labor and struggle tremendously, which causes them to perspire greatly. Therefore, increasing the flow of fire into the Deenor River and onto the heads of the wicked.

### All Actions both Below and Above are Dependent upon the Actions of Humankind

Nevertheless, within all the worlds of separation<sup>24</sup>, the resulting good and evil deeds, that start as potential and become actualized, are actualized via the actions of those entities<sup>25</sup> that reside within each given world itself. For this is the crux of the matter of performing actions, that the work of all upper beings is also done through labor. Nevertheless, all actions, below and above are dependent upon the actions of humankind, as we have described above. Thus, the actions of humankind in this world (via actions, speech or thought), and the resulting forces of good and evil that are unleashed, become appropriately actualized in every individual world.

Hence, we see from this that G-d decided to delegate a portion of His honor to flesh and blood, making humankind His partner in the creation of the world. For He builds His Supernal Abode in the heavens with every deed and action that occurs in this world. Just as everything that the Almighty God created, he created by His will and not because He had any obligation to create the world.<sup>26</sup> So too, He provided a portion of His honor to flesh and blood.

He granted them the opportunity to perform their actions, corresponding to His will and all this is made possible because of the creation of both good and evil. Because if God created the good alone, all human action would be completely compulsory and there would not be any value at all in the power of action, put into the hands of humankind. For God, the Almighty, does not need help to perform his actions. When G-d decided to make actualization of His will, dependent upon human actions, He did so, because, only in this manner, could He truly bestow favor upon all the worlds.

<sup>20</sup> In Hebrew: צבאות אליונים

<sup>21</sup> Leviticus 15B, ויקרא ט"ו:ב

<sup>22</sup> Literally, the Holy Ancient One. This refers to the highest Partzuf / entity in the world of Atzilut.

<sup>23</sup> Here the Leshem brings a comprehensive quote from the Zohar that details all the places in the upper worlds that become corrupted by the evil doings of the wicked. It is beyond the scope of this translation to explain the details of the dynamics of these upper worlds, which would require a complete explanation of how these upper worlds unfold and interact with each other.

<sup>24</sup> *Briyah, Yitzirah and Asiyah.*

*Briyah*, the World of Creation from nothingness. First world of separation from G-d.

*Yitzirah*, the World of Fashioning, creation of something from something. Second world of separation.

*Asiyah*, the World of Making, where physical reality is manifest. Third world of separation.

<sup>25</sup> Literally, those that are found.

<sup>26</sup> I.e., G-d did not have any necessity to create the Universe. In Hebrew: הכרח

The primary way for reaching the ultimate goal of the final rectification of all reality, which is the underlying secret of complete unity<sup>27</sup>, is when this revelation of unity is initiated by the actions of humankind, by themselves. For through this, they draw themselves unto themselves, which designates their own unity<sup>28</sup>.

Furthermore, one cannot be said to be performing actions for oneself, unless one is doing so without being forced to do so at all (i.e., from free choice) and this possibility can one exist, as the result of the creation of both good and evil. Even now, humankind is in great danger lest their corruption increase more than their improvement. For it would have been better not to have given them the power of action<sup>29</sup> at all.

### Ultimately, Humankind Will Become Completely Rectified

Still, God has already prepared mankind with guidance from above, with many different techniques of subterfuge to finally correct all of mankind's corruptions completely (and all this will only be corrected by mankind themselves) until finally all corruption is annulled and everything is completely rectified. Even the biggest criminals and renegades, may God have mercy on them will become completely rectified<sup>30</sup>.

Even though these matters are from the deepest mysteries of the world. Here is not really the place to explain them, because they require extremely lengthy explanations<sup>31</sup>. But with this being said, it is still clear to those who understand knowledge<sup>32</sup> (that as Chazal<sup>33</sup> says), Teshuvah<sup>34</sup> contains the remedy, for it can turn even pre-meditated, malicious actions<sup>35</sup> into meritorious actions.<sup>36,37</sup> Similarly, it is not surprising, that the Holy One, by Himself alone, can prepare counsel for this, for on the contrary, He, by Himself alone, can fully repair all of humankind's corruption, without any involvement of humankind's free will in the matter.

<sup>27</sup> Which we discuss in Clallim, principle 15 and 17 – כללי ט"ו וי"ז – ספר הכללים,

<sup>28</sup> This refers to another profound subject that the Leshem discusses in another section of The Book of Knowledge:

“All this is possible because of the root of Oneness, which is found within everyone. For everyone is supported and remains in existence only due to this inner Oneness. This Oneness is the root, the most inner aspect of everything, and upholds and maintains everything.

For this reason, every person is drawn only toward himself and what is his. He, himself with his spiritual and physical belongings and achievements and those who are connected to him, are more precious to him than anything else. For he is at one with what belongs or is connected to him, and his desire is only for that which is special to him. This is because he, himself and what he owns or is connected to him, are essential for him.”

From The Book of The Knowledge, Part 2, Essay 4, Branch 11, Sign 1, Paragraph 4

ספר הדע"ה חלק ב' סימן ד' אנף י"א פסקא ד'

<sup>29</sup> i.e., the power to act from free choice.

<sup>30</sup> The secret of this matter will be explained in the second part of this book.

<sup>31</sup> as you will see in the second half of this volume (The Book of the Knowledge)

<sup>32</sup> i.e., the knowledge of Kabbalah

<sup>33</sup> The Rabbis of the Mishna and Talmud. Literally: the wise ones, may their memory be blessed.

<sup>34</sup> Repentance, literally: returning.

<sup>35</sup> In Hebrew: זדונות

<sup>36</sup> In Hebrew: זכויות

<sup>37</sup> As is written in Yoma 86B, ב' יומא פ"ו,

Admittedly, there is a big difference when the Holy One repairs without human intervention, because when a man himself turns his pre-meditated, malicious actions<sup>38</sup> into merit<sup>39</sup> through returning to God in lovingkindness<sup>40</sup>, he is exonerated immediately from his sins. But when such evil actions are repaired by the decree of the Holy One, blessed be He, this mending transpires only from of the merits of the righteous, upon whom the existence of the entire world stands, now and forever. Yet the wicked whose actions corrupt the world, do not deserve such mending. Rather, as is mandated by God, from the start, these wicked ones become a platform for the feet of the righteous. As Chazal stated:<sup>41</sup> “Their souls are burned to ashes, and the wind scatters them, and they become ashes under the feet of the righteous.” Indeed, even so, it is still more desirable<sup>42</sup> for the wicked to have been created than is not created. And may we all say: “Thank you to God, for it is good.”<sup>43</sup> And that's enough for now on this topic.

### Humanity Prepares and then Receives Their Reward from Their Own Actions

Now let us return to our original topic, i.e., the creation of good and evil. The Holy One, blessed be He, bestowed upon flesh and blood, His own honor, to enable mankind, too, to become His partners in building worlds and destroying them. Thus, vis-a-vis their own will and rational decisions, humanity prepares for themselves and then receives the reward that they merit through the performance of their own positive actions.

For this alone,<sup>44</sup> is the true goodness that will come through the final end-purpose and rectification of existence. Because mankind through his actions, prepares for himself (from his own rational decisions and free will) that which originates within his internal potential. For via his actions, the potential which is already within him, becomes strengthened and unified with him. For when all the actions of a person become actualized, this person arrives and ascends, higher and higher, until he reaches the Holy Light of the Holy One, blessed be He. Behold, through his actions, he will have become, he, himself, in a state of union with the Holy One, Himself. The actions of a righteous one will allow him to attain the actualization of the hidden principle of complete unification, which is the end-purpose of all end-purposes<sup>45</sup>.

Thus, we find that the essence of the entire rectification process is actualized through the creation of good and evil. For this enables the possibility for free choice which becomes the essence of how mankind achieves rectification for himself and thus, too, the rectification of all the worlds via his actions.

<sup>38</sup> In Hebrew: זדונות

<sup>39</sup> In Hebrew: זכויות

<sup>40</sup> In Hebrew: תשובה מאהבה Literally, Repentance from Love

<sup>41</sup> Rosh Hashanah 17A - ר"ה י"ז, א'

<sup>42</sup> In Hebrew: נוח, literally comfortable.

<sup>43</sup> Psalms 107:1, א, תהלים ק"ז, א' In Hebrew: הודו לה' כי טוב

<sup>44</sup> i.e., the reward for performing positive actions/mitzvot

<sup>45</sup> As we elucidate more thoroughly in The Book of General Principles, Principle 15, Branch 10 and Principle 17, Branches 4 and 5. ספר כללים כלל ט"ו, ענף י' וכלל י"ז, ענף ד' וה'