



HIGH SCHOOL
CHIDON **5786**

STUDY GUIDE

קונטרס ומעין

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Introduction

This world presents us with countless distractions, convincing us that to succeed, we must adopt the world's values and priorities. But קונטרס ומעין comes to remind us of something essential: we must never forget the true purpose for which we were placed in this world. We are here as guardians of our נשמה, here to fulfill רצון ה' in the world and empowered to make choices that align ourselves with this truth.

The רבי רש"ב teaches us that to meet the challenge of this world successfully, we must have the courage to be bold, to respond with conviction: to recognize the emptiness of worldly pursuits and be willing to appear as "fools" in the eyes of the world for the sake of ה'. This קונטרס will teach us how to live with this wisdom.

קונטרס ומעין is a המשך—a series of twenty-eight מאמרים written by the רבי רש"ב during the year תרס"ג (1902-1903). This was a time when the רבי רש"ב was actively confronting the secular ideologies that threatened Russian Jewry, particularly the השכלה movement that sought to draw Jews away from traditional observance. In response to these challenges, the רבי רש"ב crafted this profound work exploring three central themes: the foolishness of sin, the holiness of our נשמה, and our נשמה's inherent power to overcome all obstacles.

While a common thread weaves through all the מאמרים, you will encounter various subtopics and tangents along your journey through this קונטרס. The רבי רש"ב's teaching style often introduces questions that remain unanswered for several מאמרים, building suspense and deeper understanding as the concepts gradually unfold. This structure mirrors the way we encounter challenges in life—sometimes we must live with questions before clarity emerges.

As you begin your study, remember that mastering קונטרס ומעין is not just about preparing for the חידון—it's about equipping yourself with the tools to navigate life with clarity and purpose. Each מאמר builds upon the previous ones, creating a complete picture of how we can live authentically in this world.

How to Use This Study Guide

For each מאמר, we have included the following study aids:

Summary:

This paragraph sums up the main points of the מאמר, and explains its place in the broader flow of מאמרים.

Key Terms:

This section lists key terms from חסידות or קבלה that are used in the מאמר, but not fully defined or explained. Each term has a paragraph or two explaining what the term means and how it is used in the מאמר. These key terms may be referenced, in their Hebrew form, on the test.

Background פסוקים and מאמרי חז"ל:

This section includes all of the quotes from תנ"ך or חז"ל used in the מאמר, and provides translation and the broader context necessary for properly understanding the quote and its place in the מאמר.

Guiding Questions:

This section includes review questions to help test your understanding of the מאמר. There is an answer key on page 111 so you can check your answers.

מאמר א

Summary

This opening מאמר describes the ultimate purpose of man and how the יצר הרע tries to lead us astray from it.

The word שטות has a double meaning - both "**stray**" and "**foolishness**." The יצר הרע operates through שטות, making us **stray** from the proper path by convincing us of **foolishness**: the idea that making the harmful choice to do an עבירה will somehow be pleasurable or desirable.

We were created as beings with נשמות, which crave connection to ה' through תורה and מצוות. This spiritual pleasure is what we naturally desire, and our greatest joy. However, the יצר הרע tempts us with lowly, empty forms of pleasure, derailing us from our true goal.

Key Words and Ideas

רוח שטות

A "spirit of foolishness" that temporarily takes over when we're about to do something wrong. The word "רוח" means something fleeting without a strong foundation, like wind that can be moved by anything. "שטות" means it makes us act foolishly - we stop thinking clearly about what we're doing and just follow whatever impulse comes up in the moment. This מאמר, like many places in חסידות, explains that the נפש הבהמית uses רוח שטות to trick us into sinning by clouding our judgment and making us forget our true connection to ה'.

תענוג

Pleasure. תענוג is the deepest and most elevated power in the soul, forming the inner essence of our רצון (will). While we often think of pleasure as enjoyment from external things - food, achievements, recognition - חסידות teaches that true תענוג is much deeper. Authentic תענוג for a איד is accomplished only through studying תורה and performing מצוות, Which help the נשמה connect to her source and fulfill her true purpose.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

יואל ד"ח

וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִטְפוּ הַהַרְיִים עֲסִיס וְהַגְבְּעוֹת תִּלְכְּנָה חֶלֶב וְכָל אַפְיָקֵי יְהוּדָה יִלְכוּ מֵיָם וּמַעַיִן מִבַּיִת ה' יֵצֵא וְהִשְׁקָה אֶת נַחַל הַשְּׁטִיִּים:

And it will be on that day that the mountains will drop sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk, and all the brooks of יהודה will flow with waters; **and a fountain will come forth from the house of ה' and water the valley of שטיים.**

This פסוק is the קונטרס of the entire דיבור המתחיל. On a פשט level, the נביא is describing the times of משיח, when חיות ה' will flow from the המקדש בית even to the most distant places. Over the course of this קונטרס, the מאמר will use this פסוק as a springboard to explain how we can transform even our נחל שטיים – place of foolishness/irrationality– with קדושה.

מדרש רבה בלק פרשה כ

כְּתִיב: וַיֵּשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשֵׁטִים וַיִּחַל הָעָם לְזָנוֹת, שְׁטִיִּים שָׁעֲשׂוּ שְׁטוֹת

It is written: "And Israel dwelt in Shittim and the people began to be immoral" - [the place is called] **Shittim because they committed foolishness.**

This מדרש is foundational to our מאמר because it links the location name, "שטיים" with the word "שטות"- foolishness. The מדרש explains that when בני ישראל reached the camping spot of שטיים in the מדבר they fell into foolish and sinful behavior by acting immorally with the daughters of מואב.

במדבר ה:יב

דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ אִישׁ כִּי תִשְׁטֶה אִשְׁתּוֹ וּמַעַלָה בּוֹ מֵעַל:

Speak to בני ישראל and tell them: **if any man's wife goes astray and betrays him.** . .

This פסוק introduces the סוטה process, the procedure meant for a case when a wife is suspected of being unfaithful to her husband. רש"י translates the word "תשטה" as "turning aside"- as in "turning away from the proper, צניעות path." The מאמר uses this פסוק to build the case that the place "שטיים" represents turning away from the proper path.

בראשית לח:טז

ויט אליה אל הדרך ויאמר הבה נא אבוא אליך כי לא ידע כי כלתו הוא ותאמר מה תתן לי כי תבוא אלי:

And [יהודה] turned to her by the way and said: Come now, let me come to you; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. And she said: What will you give me so that you may come to me?

This פסוק describes יהודה's encounter with תמר. The מאמר references the Aramaic תרגום, which translates "he turned to her" as וסטא לותה. This use of the root of "סט" further demonstrates the connection between the word שיטים, meaning "deviating from the proper path." (This link is based on the fact that in Hebrew, the letters ט and ש can sometimes be interchangeable.)

סוטה ג:א

ריש לקיש אמר: אין אדם עובר עבירה אלא אם כן נכנס בו רוח שטות, שנאמר: "איש איש כי תשטה אשתו", "תשטה" כתיב.

ריש לקיש says: **A person does not sin unless a spirit of foolishness (שטות) enters them**, as it says, "If any man's wife goes astray), using the word "תשטה".

This גמרא is commenting on the פסוק (quoted above) introducing the סוטה process. ריש לקיש connects the word תשטה (straying) with the word שטות (foolishness). The מאמר will build on this concept, developing the idea that all strayings from the proper path (עבירות) stem from the foolishness of the הרע, which clouds our judgement, and tricks us into thinking that עבירות are pleasurable.

בראשית ג:ו

ותרא האשה כי טוב העץ למאכל וכי תאוה הוא לעינים ונחמד העץ להשכיל ותקח מפריו ותאכל ותתן גם לאישה עמה ויאכל:

And the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, and she took of its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

This פסוק describes the הדעת עץ חטא. The מאמר uses this פסוק as an example of how הרע operates: by convincing us that forbidden things are "good" and "desirable." This represents the ultimate שטות - focusing on what seems immediately physically pleasurable while ignoring the consequences. This deception leads us ר"ל, towards doing עבירות.

בראשית כא:לג

וַיִּטַע אֶשֶׁל בְּבְאֵר שֶׁבַע וַיִּקְרָא שָׁם בְּשֵׁם ה' אֱ-ל עוֹלָם:

And he planted an אשל in בער שבע, **and called out in the name of ה', G-d of the world.**

גמרא סוטה י:א

ויקרא שם בשם ה' א-ל עולם אמר ריש לקיש אל תקרי ויקרא אלא ויקריא מלמד שהקריא אברהם אבינו לשמו של הקדוש ברוך הוא בפי כל עובר ושב

"And he called there in the name of ה', G-d of the world" - ר"ש לקיש said: Do not read it as "and he called" (ויקרא) but rather "and he caused others to call" (ויקריא) - this teaches that אברהם אבינו caused the name of ה' to be called by every passerby.

מדרש רבה וירא פרשה מט

אברהם היה מקבל את העוברים ואת השבים משהיו אוכלים ושותים אמר להם ברכו...אם מקבל עליו וברך הוה אכיל ושתי ואזיל ואי לא הוה מקבל עליה וברך הוה אמר לו הב מה דעלך

Avraham would receive the travelers. After they ate and drank, he would say to them "Make a bracha!" ...If he agreed and blessed ה', he would eat and drink and go. But if he did not agree and bless, he would say to him, "Give me what you owe me."

In this חז"ל describe how אברהם used his kindness to guide others to recognize ה'. When travelers ate at his tent, אברהם would redirect their thanks away from himself, telling them they had really eaten from ה's food, not his. If guests refused to acknowledge ה', אברהם would present them with an impossible bill for providing wine, meat, and bread in the middle of the desert - forcing them to realize that only ה' could have provided such things.

This מדרש demonstrates the value of חסד guided by שכל, kindness that is directed for a higher purpose, rather than kindness which comes purely from natural instinct.

דברים ד:לט

וַיֵּדַעַת הַיּוֹם וְהִשְׁבַּת אֶל לִבְכָּךְ כִּי ה' הוּא הָאֱלֹקִים בְּשָׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְעַל הָאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת אֵין עוֹד:

And you shall know this day and consider it in your heart that ה' is אלקים in heaven above and on earth beneath; there is no other.

This פסוק describes deep knowledge of ה' which leads to ideal emotions in the heart. The מאמר uses this פסוק to explain the advantage of studying פנימיות התורה: it creates אהבה and יראה.

Guiding Questions

1. What are the two definitions for the word שטות, and how are they connected?
2. What is the reason that we are drawn after the desires and pleasures of this world?
3. What are the four levels or forms of pleasure? What name are they given in the מאמר?
4. How is אברהם an example of guiding emotions with שכל?
5. How does the מאמר explain the relationship between שכל and our spiritual development when facing physical desires?
6. According to the מאמר, why is learning תורה - especially פנימיות התורה - the ultimate תענוג for a איד, and what unique effect does it have on the נשמה?
7. What are the two negative outcomes of attaching ourselves to the pursuit of physical pleasure?
8. What question might we ask ourselves when we feel tempted by the יצר הרע?

מאמר ב

Summary

In this מאמר, the רבי רש"ב continues to uncover the deceptive tactics the יצר הרע uses to convince us of the ultimate שטות: that it is worthwhile and beneficial to sin. This exploration will continue through מאמר ד.

The מאמר starts by describing how the יצר הרע works gradually. At first, the יצר הרע might not suggest doing an outright עבירה; instead, it encourages choosing (permissible) pleasure over investing in תורה and מצוות. When we choose immediate pleasures over spiritual growth, our נפש הבהמית grows stronger while our connection to ה' becomes harder to feel.

Every נשמה has an unbreakable bond with ה', so much so that a איד will ultimately choose to give up everything rather than abandon יאדישקייט. The יצר הרע, however, deceives us into thinking that doing an עבירה will have no real effect on this bond.

As our מאמר explains, this is far from the truth. When we make choices that go against ה' will, we're choosing to receive חיות through קליפה, rather than through קדושה. The difference is stark: the חיות which comes through קדושה is direct, deep, and lasting, while the חיות which comes through קליפה is contracted, shallow, and temporary.

Key Words and Ideas

נפש הבהמית

Our human self that seeks survival and personal gratification, formed from קליפת נוגה.

נפש אלקית

Our נשמה, a literal piece of ה' which desires only to be connected to ה'.

שלוש קליפות הטמאות This literally means "three completely impure shells/husks." Unlike קליפת נוגה (meaning "shining husk" which contains some potential for good), these three קליפות cannot be elevated. These קליפות receive their life force only from "בחינת אחוריים" (see below). Forbidden foods (like non-kosher food) or forbidden actions (עבירות) are all part of שלוש קליפות הטמאות.

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סטרא אחרא

This phrase literally means "the other side." This is the realm of טומאה, קליפה, and evil which opposes קדושה. The סטרא אחרא is not, ח"ו, a force separate from ה'. Like everything else in creation, it must be created and sustained by ה'. But it receives its lifeforce in a concealed, indirect way. (See "בחינת אחוריים" below.)

בחינת פנים

This phrase literally means "in a way of facing." It is used to describe חיות which is given willingly and directly. When ה' gives life to קדושה, it's מבחינת פנים - because He inherently desires it. The מאמר compares this to someone who joyfully gives a beloved friend a gift, while facing them and giving them a broad smile. This form of חיות powers true spiritual life and vitality. The מאמר explains that only things which receive חיות through בחינת פנים can be called truly "alive" in a spiritual sense.

בחינת אחורים

This phrase literally means "in a backwards way." This describes חיות given unwillingly and indirectly, in contrast to בחינת פנים. The מאמר compares this to someone throwing something over their shoulder to an enemy without looking at them. קליפות receive sustenance from ה' through בחינת אחוריים – reluctantly, and without ה' revealing Himself. This indirect, concealed form of חיות is not true and lasting. Therefore, קליפות are associated with death.

מקיף

This word literally means "surrounding" or "transcendent." In our מאמר, this word describes חיות from ה' which remains hidden and external to the receiver, rather than being revealed, internalized and integrated. סטרא אחרא receives חיות from ה', but only במקיף - this allows קליפה to get חיות from ה', without it being elevated by Him or בטל to Him.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

שבת קח

כך היא אומנותו של יצר הרע היום אומר לו עשה כך ומחר אומר לו עשה כך, עד שאומר לו לך ועבוד עבודה זרה

"This is the craft of the הרע יצר: today it tells him to do this, tomorrow it tells him to do that, until it tells him to go worship idols."

This גמרא is describing the הרע יצר's strategy of gradual seduction. The מאמר uses this to illustrate how the הרע יצר doesn't immediately tempt us with major sins because it knows that wouldn't work. Instead, it begins with permitted things, then gradually leads us toward forbidden actions.

זוהר חלק א קפ

תוקפא דגופא חולשא דנשמתא, חולשא דגופא תוקפא דנשמתא

"Strengthening the body weakens the soul, weakening the body, strengthens the soul."

This principle, commonly cited in חסידות, is a paraphrase from the זוהר. It expresses the inverse relationship between physical and spiritual strength. The מאמר uses this to explain how strengthening our נפש הבהמית through indulgence in desires (even permitted ones) automatically weakens our נפש האלקית.

דברים כט:יח

וְהָיָה בְּשִׁמְעוֹ אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הָאֱלֹהִים הַזֹּאת וְהִתְבָּרַךְ בְּלִבּוֹ לֵאמֹר שְׁלוֹם יִהְיֶה־לִּי כִּי בְּשָׂרֹת לִבִּי אֶלֶף לְמַעַן סָפּוֹת הַרְוֵה אֶת־הַצְּמָאָה:

"And it will be, when he hears the words of this curse, he will bless himself in his heart saying: 'Peace will be mine, for I will walk in the stubbornness of my heart and will join the satiated with the thirsty'"

This פסוק is part of a speech of rebuke משה רבינו gave the Jewish people before his passing. משה warns against someone who convinces themselves that they can follow their heart's desires – going against the will of 'ה' – without consequences. The מאמר quotes this פסוק as a description of the שטות of the הרע יצר: the idea that we can sin while maintaining our relationship with 'ה'.

In future מאמרים, this פסוק will be analyzed in great detail.

דברים ל:טו

ראה נתתי לפניך היום את החיים ואת הטוב ואת המות ואת הרע.

"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil."

This פסוק establishes that choices have real spiritual consequences. It also aligns טוב חיים with טוב, and רע with מוות. The מאמר uses this to contrast the הרע's false promise that עבירות are good and pleasurable with the תורה's truth: forbidden actions are "evil" and "deathly." As the מאמר will explain, this isn't just metaphorical; forbidden actions connect us with קליפה, and disconnect us from 'ה', the only true source of life.

ירמיה י"ז

ויהוה אלקים אמת הוא אלקים חיים ומלך עולם מקצפו תרעש הארץ ולא יכלו גוים זעמו:

"But 'ה is the true G-d - He is the living G-d and eternal King. When He becomes angry, the earth trembles, and the nations cannot withstand His wrath."

In this פסוק, ירמיה הנביא, contrasts 'ה with the idols that the other nations worship. Idols appear powerful but are ultimately lifeless and temporary. In contrast, 'ה is described with three essential qualities: He is אמת (true - eternal and unchanging), חיים (living - the source of all real life), and מלך עולם (eternal King - His sovereignty never ends). The מאמר focuses on the connection between the first two qualities: because 'ה is absolute אמת - meaning He never changes or ceases to exist - He is therefore the source of true life.

משנה פרה ח:ט

המים המכזבים, פסולין. אלו הם המים המכזבים, המכזבים אחד בשבוע.

"Waters that "lie" are unfit. The following are "waters that lie": those that dry up even once in a seven year cycle."

This משנה deals with determining which water sources qualify to be used for the sprinkling of the פרה אדומה ash-water mixture. Streams that sometimes dry up are called מכזבים (lying) because they're unreliable - even if they fail only once in seven years, they're פסול for the purposes of פרה אדומה. The מאמר uses this הלכה to support the idea that anything with interruption or end is considered "false" (כזב), while only that which is eternal is considered "true" (אמת).

אבות דרבי נתן פרק לד. 9.

עשרה נקראו חיים. הקב"ה (ירמיהו י"ז) וה' אלהים אמת הוא אלהים חיים. תורה נקראת חיים שנא' (משלי ג' י"ח) עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה ותומכיה מאושר. ישראל נקראו חיים שנא' (דברים ד' ד') ואתם הדבקים בה' אלהיכם חיים כולכם היום...

"Ten things are called 'life': The Holy One... 'And ה' is the true G-d, He is the living G-d.' Torah is called life, as it says: 'It is a tree of life to those who grasp it, and those who support it are fortunate.' Israel are called life, as it says: 'And you who cling to ה' your G-d are all alive today...'"

This teaching from אבות דרבי נתן explains that the term "life" has a specific meaning - it refers to things connected to ה's truth. The מאמר uses this to demonstrate that true life comes only through connection to ה. תורה is called "life" because it connects us to ה through His wisdom and will. ישראל are called "life" because they are connected to ה.

Guiding Questions

1. Which gradual tactic does our יצר הרע use to convince us to indulge in our desires and, ultimately, do עבירות?
2. What happens when we focus on and chase our physical desires?
3. What is the nature of a נפש אלקית's connection to ה'? How does the יצר הרע undermine it?
4. From where does קדושה draw its life force? From where does סטרא אחרא draw its life force?
5. What is the hallmark of something that is אמת?
6. What is the connection between אמת and חיים?

מאמר ג

Summary

This מאמר explains the difference between how ה' relates to קדושה versus קליפה, and why doing עבירות make a person spiritually lower than even the אחרא itself.

Using the משל of a father teaching his beloved child, the מאמר explains how אלוקות desires to give life and energy to קדושה, and is therefore fully expressed there. In contrast, ה' does not desire to give חיות to קליפה, and does so only reluctantly, as a means to an end. As a result, the חיות remains hidden and external – קליפה cannot feel ה'’s light within it, and therefore feels independent from ה'.

Yet even אחרא never actually disobeys ה'’s will – it recognizes that it was created by ה' for a specific purpose. In contrast, when we do an עבירה, we are intending to go against ה'’s will, thereby denying His existence entirely.

Key Words and Ideas

גלות השכינה

This literally means the exile of the שכינה. This is what happens when ה'’s חיות gets “trapped” inside forces of קליפה. The שכינה is present and providing חיות, but it’s hidden and can’t reveal itself. This is similar to when someone is in exile or jail: they are still alive, but can’t move around or express themselves freely.

קליפת נוגה

This literally means “a shining husk.” Most things in our world – an apple hanging on a tree, a blank piece of paper, money in your wallet - can be either elevated to קדושה or stay in the realm of קליפה, depending on how we use them. These things are not inherently קדושה – they lack a revealed experience of ה' – but they have enough spiritual potential available that can be accessed, uplifted, and transformed into something good. That’s why it is קליפת נוגה (shining shell) – its concealment is thin enough that the spark of G-dliness within it can be revealed. This is in contrast to שלש קליפות הטמאות, where the “shell” is so “thick” – meaning, the concealment of ה' is so intense – that the item cannot be elevated.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

ישעיה מז:ח

כי עתה שמעי זאת עדינה היושבת לבטח האמרת בלבבך **אני ואפסי עוד** אלמנה לא אשב ולא אדע שכול:

Now hear this, you spoiled one who sits securely, who says in her heart "I am, and there is none besides me, I will not sit as a widow, and I will not know bereavement."

The ישעיה prophet's prophecies about the downfall of בבל, describing how this empire considers itself the ultimate power. The phrase "אני ואפסי עוד" is a claim of ultimate arrogance. The מאמר uses this פסוק to illustrate how the סטרא אחרא arrogantly possesses the attitude of "I am and nothing else matters," which reveals just how separate and independent it feels from ה'.

יחזקאל כט:ט

והיתה ארץ מצרים לשממה וחרבה וידעו כי אני ה' יען אמר לי ואני עשיתני:

The land of מצרים will become desolate and ruined, and they will know that I am ה', because he said "The river is mine, and I made it."

יחזקאל prophet's prophecies against פרעה and פרעה claimed ownership over the Nile River, saying "ה' היא רעי" (the river is mine), and even worse, "ואני עשיתני" (I made it myself). This represents the ultimate denial of ה's role as Creator. The מאמר brings this פסוק as another example of how קליפה expresses its arrogance by claiming independent existence and even creative power, denying that everything comes from ה'.

במדבר כד:יג

ויאמר בלעם אל בלק הלא גם אל מלאכך אשר שלחת אלי דברתי לאמר לא אוכל לעבר את פי ה' לעשות טובה או רעה מלבי אשר ידבר ה' אתו אדבר:

Did I not also tell your messengers whom you sent to me, saying "I cannot transgress the word of ה' to do good or evil on my own; what ה' speaks, that I will speak."

בלעם represents the forces of קליפה, yet even he declares that he cannot transgress ה's will. The מאמר brings this פסוק as an example of how even סטרא אחרא recognizes ה' and does not disobey His will.

Guiding Questions

1. Why does the מאמר give the משל of a father teaching his son? How does this clarify the way that לקוחות אלקות interacts with קדושה versus קליפה?
2. What is the difference between the explanation given in this מאמר for why סטרא אחרא is called "אלקים אחרים" versus the explanation given in במאמר ב?
3. What do we learn from the משל of a person tied up inside a sack?
4. What do we learn from the משל of the נשמה in a body?
5. Why does the מאמר bring the concept that arrogance is equivalent to עבודה זרה? What does this reveal about the essence of עבודה זרה?
6. According to this מאמר, what motivates the סטרא אחרא? Why is a person who sins considered even worse than the סטרא אחרא itself?

מאמר ד

Summary

This מאמר concludes the discussion that began in מאמר ב about the הרע's deceptive strategies for leading us to do עבירות.

Building on what we've explained previously, this מאמר shows the falsity of the הרע's claim that we can sin without truly separating from 'ה. In reality, when we sin, we distance ourselves from 'ה and move further than the lowest spiritual forces, and we lose the status that makes us naturally superior to all other creatures. In addition, every עבירה blemishes the overall connection our נשמה has to 'ה.

Understanding this truth allows us to see past the הרע's deception, and avoid any temptation for עבירה.

Key Words and Ideas

אהבה מסותרת

This phrase literally means "hidden love."

It refers to the natural love that every נשמה has for 'ה, inherited from יצחק, אברהם, and יעקב. Though distractions of daily life might conceal it, it is always there. It comes out in extreme situations, like when a Jew is faced with a choice between abandoning their אידישקייט or dying על קידוש ה'. In those cases, even Jews who seem outwardly disconnected may choose to die rather than sacrifice their connection to 'ה. The מאמר explains that this very same אהבה מסותרת should really prevent us from any sort of עבירה, since all עבירות disconnect us from 'ה. It's because the שטות רוח tricks us into thinking we will still remain connected, regardless, that we continue to sin.

'ה תתאה דשם הויה

This phrase literally means "the lower 'ה of שם הויה."

The name of 'ה, known as הויה represents 'ה's light in unlimited form. The letters י-ה-ו-ה spell out היה הווה ויהיה - past, present, and future - 'ה as he exists beyond time and space entirely. The letters also symbolize the process of 'ה's חיות coming into the world.

י = the initial potential, symbolized by the tiny dot of the י.

ה = development of that potential, symbolized by the lines of the ה stretching both up-down and side-to-side. This ה is also called ה עילאה, the upper ה."

ו = drawing that potential downward into creation, symbolized by the vertical direction of the letter ו.

ה = unpacking all of the details of that potential within creation. This ה is also called "ה תתאה" – "the lower ה" – because it channels and directs חיות to all of creation.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

דברים לב:ט

כִּי חֶלֶק ה' עַמּוֹ יַעֲקֹב חֶבֶל נַחְלָתוֹ:

For 'ה's portion is His people, יעקב is the cord of His inheritance.

In this פסוק from שירת האזינו, משה is teaching בני ישראל about their eternal relationship with 'ה. He emphasizes that – even when they sin and face גלות – they remain 'ה's chosen portion among all the nations. משה uses the image of a "חבל" (cord) to show that בני ישראל are permanently connected to 'ה, like a rope that may stretch but never breaks.

The מאמר references the explanation of this פסוק from פרק ה התשובה, תניא, which uses the metaphor of a rope to describe the נשמה's connection to 'ה. Just as a rope has one end tied above and another below, the נשמה is connected to its source in the "ה"א תתאה of ה' שם הוי"ה while it is down in this world, clothed in a human body. This חבל (cord) represents the flow of חיות that keeps every נשמה alive and connected to its source. The חבל is made up of 613 "strands", which correspond to the 613 מצוות. Doing a מצוה strengthens a strand, and thus the overall rope. Conversely, doing an עבירה weakens the corresponding stand, as well as the rope as a whole.

סנהדרין לח. א

תנו רבנן: אדם נברא בערב שבת ומפני מה? שלא יהו המינים אומרים שותף היה לו להקדוש ברוך הוא במעשה בראשית דבר אחר שאם תזוח דעתו עליו אומר לו **יתוש קדמך במעשה בראשית**

*Our Rabbis taught: "Man was created on ערב שבת. Why? So that heretics couldn't say he was a partner with ה"ה in creation. Another reason: so that if his mind becomes proud, we can say to him: **A gnat came before you in creation.**"*

This teaching shows us how serious an עבירה really is. Even a tiny gnat, which represents the lowest level of קליפה (it takes in but doesn't give out), was created before man. As the מאמר explains, this is because when a person does even a minor עבירה, they distance themselves from ה' will more than all the impure animals and insects. For these creatures fulfill their purpose, while the sinner rebels against ה'.

בראשית ט:ב

וּמִוֹרָאֲכֶם וְחִתְּכֶם יִהְיֶה עַל כָּל חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וְעַל כָּל עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תִּרְמַשׁ הָאָדָמָה וּבְכֹל דְּגֵי הַיָּם בְּיַדְכֶם נִתְּנוּ:

The fear and dread of you will be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that moves on the earth and upon all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are given.

This פסוק was said to נח and his sons after the flood, establishing man's authority over all living creatures. The word וּחִתְּכֶם is explained by חז"ל as related to חיות (life), teaching us that as long as a person is alive, their צלם makes all creatures afraid of them. The מאמר uses this verse to show the natural superiority that humans have over other creations.

שבת קנא. ב

ותניא ר' שמעון בן אלעזר אומר תינוק בן יומו חי אין צריך לשומר מן החולדה ומן העכברים אבל עוג מלך הבשן מת צריך לשומר מן החולדה ומן העכברים שנאמר (בראשית ט, ב) ומוראכם וחתכם יהיה כל זמן שאדם חי אימתו מוטלת על הבריות כיון שמת בטלה אימתו אמר רב פפא נקיטינן אריה אבי תרי לא נפיל הא קא חזינן דנפיל ההוא כדרמי בר אבא דאמר רמי בר אבא **אין חיה רעה שולטת באדם עד שנדמה לו כפנהמה**

It was taught: רבי שמעון בן אלעזר says: "A day-old baby doesn't need to be protected from weasels and mice, but even עוג מלך הבשן, when dead, needs to be protected from weasels and

mice." As it says (Bereishis, 9:2): "Your fear and dread will be [upon all that is on the face of the earth]." - as long as a person is alive, animals are afraid of them; once they die, that fear disappears. רב פפא said: "We know that a lion won't attack two people." But we see that lions do attack! That happens as רמי בר אבא taught: **"A wild animal can't overpower a person unless he seems like an animal to it."**

This גמרא describes a duality within human nature: When we make the right choice, we can reach incredible heights; this greatness of human beings is reflected in the fact that even a newborn baby naturally makes all animals afraid. However, when we make the wrong choice - becoming spiritually "dead" like עוג מלך הבשן - we fall below the level of the very animals that should be afraid of us.

The מאמר uses this quote to support the idea that sinning lowers humans from their elevated status to a state which is even lower than animals.

Guiding Questions

1. What does the סוטה woman think that allows her to sin, and how does the יצר הרע trick us into thinking in a similar way?
2. What does every איד possess that allows them to conquer their יצר הרע?
3. What do we understand about the effects of our עבירות from the fact that a gnat was created before a human?
4. What happens to the cord that connects us to ה' when a person sins? What about a sin that would result in כרת?

מאמר ה

Summary

In this מאמר, the רבי רש"ב describes another aspect of the רוח שטות: the יצר הרע convinces a person that doing עבירות somehow leads to good. This aspect of the יצר הרע's deception is described in the following פסוק from ספר דברים: "למען ספות" כי בשרירות ליבי אלך, למען ספות". (See Key Words and Ideas below).

By analyzing this פסוק, the מאמר will give us insight into what the יצר הרע's argument is and why it is false.

As an introduction to explaining this פסוק – and, by extension, explaining how the יצר הרע convinces us to sin – the מאמר introduces us to the מלכות of ספירה. מלכות ספירה gives life to all worlds, and has a constant desire (רצוא) to go back and be one with its source, like fire that naturally wants to rise upward. It is painful for מלכות to descend into the lower worlds, especially since our עבירות cause it to have to give חיות to חיות קליפה.

We will continue this discussion in the next מאמר and reach a conclusion in מאמר יא.

Key Words and Ideas

אצילות-בריאה-יצירה-עשיה/עשר ספירות

These are the four spiritual worlds that exist within creation. These different worlds are not in different physical spaces, but four different realms of reality or states of consciousness.

עולם האצילות is a reality where ה' is completely and openly revealed, resulting in all creations in that world feeling complete ביטול ה'. Creations in the three lower worlds - בריאה, יצירה, - have progressively lower awareness of ה', and thus feel varying levels of independence from Him. We exist in the world of עשיה, and thus our natural state is to feel completely independent and separate from ה'.

Each world also has עשר ספירות, which are ten modes through which ה' gives חיות to and runs the world.

מלכות דאצילות

מלכות is the last of of the עשר ספירות. The "job" of מלכות within each world is to take that world's חיות and revelation of ה' and channel it to the world below it. In the case of מלכות דאצילות, the ספירה takes the revelations of ה' from אצילות and transmits it to the lower worlds of בריאה-יצירה-עשיה.

מלכות of אצילות is also called כנסת ישראל, because all Jewish נשמות come from it. Another name that is used to describe it is "שכינה" – meaning, "[ה'] presence."

רצוא ושוב

This phrase originally comes from the description that יחזקאל (א:יד) gives of his vision of the מלאכים darting back and forth in שמים. In חסידות, these words are used to refer to a cycle of longing to return to ה' up above, followed by a commitment to fulfill one's purpose down below.

רצוא means "running" - a yearning to go up toward ה' and unite with the סוף.

שוב means "returning" - coming back to fulfill our purpose in this world.

עתיק

This is the name of the higher level of כתר, which is the highest of the ספירות. It serves as the bridge between the סוף and the world of אצילות.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

דברים כט:יח

וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע אֶת דְּבַרֵי הָאֱלֹהִים הַזֹּאת וְהִתְבָּרַךְ בְּלִבּוֹ לֵאמֹר "שְׁלוֹם יִהְיֶה לִי כִּי בְּשָׁרִירוֹת לִבִּי אֶלֶף לְמַעַן סְפוֹת הָרֹוּה אֶת הַצְּמָאָה"

And when he hears the words of this curse, he will bless himself in his heart saying: "Peace will be mine, for I will walk in the stubbornness of my heart, in order to 'ספות' the satisfied with the thirsty."

Kuntres Umaayon Study Guide

What does the word ספות mean?

רש"י explains the word ספות as "joining/connecting" while רד"ק explains it as "adding/increasing."

In later מאמרים, we will explain the deeper meaning of this פסוק, as well as the explanations of רש"י and רד"ק.

רש"י סנהדרין עו

על רוח וצמאה: רוח עכו"ם שהם שבעים ואינן צמאים ליוצרם. צמאה זו כנסת ישראל שצמאה ותאבה ליראת יוצרה ולקיים מצותיו

Regarding "satisfied" and "thirsty": **The satisfied are the non-Jews who are spiritually full and don't thirst for their Creator. The thirsty is כנסת ישראל who thirst and desire to fear their Creator and fulfill His מצות.**

משלי ה:ג-ד

כי נפת תטפנה שפתי זרה וחלק משמן חכה: ואחריתה מרה כלענה חדה כחרב פיפיות:

For the lips of a foreign woman drip honey, and her palate is smoother than oil; **but her end is bitter as wormwood**, sharp as a two-edged sword.

On a פשט level, המלך, שלמה is warning about the seductive but ultimately destructive nature of the foreign woman, whose initial sweetness leads to bitterness and destruction. This means that things that seem appealing at first can have terrible consequences. It is brought here in the מאמר to describe how הרע יצר operates - just like the אשה זרה, it makes false promises that seem sweet; but the end result is bitter and destructive.

תהלים קמה:יג

מַלְכוּתְךָ מַלְכוּת כָּל עוֹלָמִים וּמִמְשַׁלְתְּךָ בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר:

Your kingdom is a kingdom over all worlds, and Your dominion is in every generation.

The מאמר cites this to establish that ספירת המלכות serve as the source and root of all worlds - עשיה, בריאה, and יצירה. The phrase "כל עולמים" emphasizes that every world derives its existence and vitality from the ספירה of מלכות, channeling חיות throughout all levels of

creation.

נחמיה ט:ו

אתה הוא ה' לבדך אתה עשית את השמים שמי השמים וכל צבאם הארץ וכל אשר עליה הימים וכל אשר בהם ואתה מחיה את כלם וצבא השמים לך משתחוים:

*You alone are 'ה, You made the heavens, the heavens of heavens and all their hosts, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them, **and You give life to them all**, and the host of heaven bows down to you.*

On a פשוט level, this פסוק is part of נחמיה's prayer acknowledging 'ה as the sole Creator and Sustainer of all existence. This shows that 'ה not only created everything but continuously gives life and sustains all of creation. It is brought in the מאמר to show that אתה - "you give life to all" - all the letters from 'א to 'ת (represented in the word אתה) that flow from מלכות are what keep every created being alive and existing.

פרקי דרבי אליעזר פרק ג

עד שלא נברא העולם היה הקדוש ברוך הוא ושמו בלבד

Before the world was created, there was the Holy One, blessed be He, and His name alone.

This מדרש teaches about the state of the world pre-creation, when only 'ה and His "name" (meaning, his revelation) existed. It is brought here in the מאמר to explain that before creation, השם (the name) that would become the source of all worlds was united with 'ה. This is why מלכות (which is also called the שם – or the expression of – 'ה) has such a strong רצוא (desire to return). It was originally united with its source and naturally wants to return to that state of unity.

תהלים ל:יג

למען יזמרוך כבוד ולא ידם ה' אלהי לעולם אודך:

So that my soul may sing praise to You and not be silent; 'ה my God, forever I will thank You.

On a פשט level, דוד המלך is expressing his desire to constantly praise 'ה. It is brought in the מאמר to illustrate the concept of רצוא - the constant movement and yearning of מלכות to rise upward to its source, just like our נשמה naturally wants to continuously reach toward 'ה.

זוהר חלק ג קצא ע"א

נהורא תתאה קארי תדיר לנהורא עילאה ולא שכיך

The lower light constantly calls to the upper light and never stops.

This זוהר passage describes the reality of how lower levels of אור constantly yearn for and call out to higher levels. It is brought here in the מאמר to explain the inner nature of מלכות - even though it has descended to give life to the worlds, it maintains a constant pull upward, always "calling" to return to its higher source in אור אין סוף.

בראשית ב:ד

אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ בְּהִבְרָאָם בְּיוֹם עֲשׂוֹת ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם:

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth **when they were created**, on the day that ה' אֱלֹקִים made heaven and earth.

מדרש רבה בראשית פרשה יב

בהבראם: ב"ה" בראם.

When they were created: **with a "ה" He created them.**

This מדרש breaks up the word "בהבראם" – "when they were created" into the phrase "ב"ה" בראם" – meaning that ה' used the letter "ה" to create the world. It is brought here in the מאמר to support the idea that the letter "ה" (representing מלכות) gives life to the lower worlds.

ירמיה כג:כט

הֲלוֹא כֹה דִבַּרְתִּי כְּאֵשׁ נֹאֵם ה' וְכַפְטִישׁ יַפְצֵץ סֶלֶעַ:

Is not My word like fire, declares ה', and like a hammer that breaks rock into pieces?

On a פשט level, the נביא is describing the powerful nature of ה' word - it's like fire that burns and a hammer that can break even the hardest stone. It is brought here in the מאמר to support the comparison between מלכות and fire - just as fire naturally rises upward, so too ה' word (מלכות) naturally wants to rise upward to its source.

מדרש איכה פתיחתא כד

מיד באו עשרים ושתיים אותיות, באה אל"ף להעיד בישראל שעברו על התורה, אמר לה אברהם, אל"ף את ראש לכל האותיות ובאת להעיד בישראל ביום צרתם, זכרי יום שנגלה הקדוש ברוך הוא על הר סיני ופתח בך (שמות כ, ב): אנכי ה' אלהיך, ולא קבלוך אמה ולשון אלא בני, ואת באת להעיד בבני. מיד עמדה אל"ף לצד אחד ולא העידה בהן. באתה בי"ת להעיד בהם בישראל

*Immediately the twenty-two letters [of the א-ב] came. **The letter "א" came to testify** against בני ישראל, that they had transgressed the תורה. תורה אברהם said to her: "א, you are the head of all of the letters, and you come to testify against בני ישראל on the day of her distress? Remember the day when ה' revealed Himself on הר סיני and opened with you: "אלוקיך": "אנכי ה' אלוקיך". No nation or tongue accepted you except my children, and you come to testify against them?*

*The letter "א" immediately stood to the side, and did not testify. **The letter "ב" came to testify...***

This מדרש describes how the letters of the בית אלף came to testify about the sins of בני ישראל, and how אברהם responded. It is brought in the מאמר to explain that the letters above are fundamentally different from human words - they have their own רצון (will) and חכמה (wisdom), unlike ours which are just lifeless tools for expressing thoughts.

זוהר חלק ג קצא ע"א

בשעתא דאיהו גו רחימו סגיא מגו דחיקו דרחימו דלא יכלא למסבל אזעירת גרמה בזעירו סגי עד דלא אתחזיאת מינה אלא זעירו דנקודא חדא ומאי איהי יו"ד

When it is in great love, from the pressure of love that it cannot bear, it diminishes itself greatly until nothing is seen of it except a tiny point, and what is it? The יו"ד.

This זוהר passage describes the intense spiritual longing of מלכות to unite with her Source. As the מאמר explains, the "ה" (which is מלכות) wants to transform into a יו"ד (representing a return to its source, united with ה').

חולין ס"ב

לכי ומעטי את עצמך

Go and diminish yourself.

This phrase is from a famous story in the גמרא where the moon is told to make itself smaller. It is brought here in the מאמר to describe how מלכות, which is compared to the moon, descends and "become smaller" by taking on the role of giving life to the lower worlds of בריאה-יצירה-עשיה, rather than remaining in its high spiritual state, one with ה'.

In the continuation of that same story, ה' comforts the moon who is sad because it is small, by telling it that many great צדיקים (like שמואל and דוד) will also call themselves "small." This part of the story, and how it relates to מלכות, will be explained in the next מאמר.

שמות כה:ח

ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם:

And they shall make for Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell among them.

On a פשט level, ה' is commanding בני ישראל to build the משכן. It is brought here in the מאמר to explain the concept of the שכנה investing itself in the lower worlds, with the קדש הקדשים serving as the central point where the שכנה was most revealed.

משלי ה:ה

אֶשֶׁת כְּסִילוֹת הַמִּיָּה פְתִיזוֹת וּבִל יָדְעָה מָה: רַגְלֶיהָ יוֹרְדוֹת מוֹת שְׂאוֹל צְעָדֶיהָ יִתְמַכּוּ:

*The foolish woman is noisy; she is simple and knows nothing. **Her feet go down to death;** her steps lead to the grave.*

On a פשט level, שלמה המלך is warning against a path of foolishness that leads to spiritual death. It is brought here in the מאמר to describe what happens when חיות flows to קליפה - it's described as "רגליה יורדות מות" (her feet descend to death), showing how the שכנה's light can unfortunately end up giving חיות to קליפה, when people choose עבירות.

ויקרא טז:טז

וּכְפַר עַל הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִטְמֵאת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִפְשָׁעֵיהֶם לְכָל חַטֹּאתֵם וְכֵן יַעֲשֶׂה לְאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד הַשֹּׁכֵן אִתְּכֶם בְּתוֹךְ טְמֵאתֵם:

*And he shall atone for the holy place from the impurities of בני ישראל and from their transgressions for all their sins; and so he shall do for the מועד אהל **which dwells with them in the midst of their impurities.***

On a פשט level, this פסוק describes the עבודה of יום כפור where the כהן גדול brings a קרבן חטאת to atone for עבירות like entering the משכן while טמא.

It is brought here in the מאמר to show why מלכות was hesitant about its mission - because descending to give life to worlds where people have בחירה means that it would have to "dwell in the midst of impurity" and give חיות even to קליפה.

במדבר יט:יג

כָּל הַנֹּגֵעַ בְּמֵת בְּנֶפֶשׁ הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר יָמוּת וְלֹא יִתְחַטֵּא אֶת מִשְׁכָּנוֹ ה' טְמֵא וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל כִּי מִי נִדָּה לֹא זָרַק עָלָיו טְמֵא יִהְיֶה עוֹד טְמֵאתוֹ בּוֹ:

*Anyone who touches a dead person and does not purify himself **defiles 'ה'** משכן, and that person shall be cut off from ישראל because the water of purification was not sprinkled on him; he remains טמא, his טומאה is still upon him.*

On a פשט level, this פסוק teaches about טומאת מת and how failing to make oneself טהור affects and contaminates the משכן. This פסוק demonstrates how our actions can negatively impact the place 'ה' dwells. It is brought here in the מאמר to further illustrate why מלכות is reluctant to descend into this world.

ישעיה נ:א

כֹּה אָמַר ה' אֵי זֶה סֵפֶר כְּרִיתוֹת אֲמַכֶּם אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְתִּיהָ אוּ מִי מִנוֹשֵׁי אֲשֶׁר מְכַרְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לוֹ הֵן בְּעוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם וּנְמַכְרְתֶם וּבְפִשְׁעֵיכֶם שְׁלַחְתִּי אֲמַכֶּם:

*Thus says ה': Where is your mother's bill of divorce with which I sent her away? Or which of My creditors did I sell you to? Look, you were sold for your sins, **and for your transgressions your mother was sent away.***

On a פשט level, the נביא is addressing בני ישראל in גלות, explaining that their separation from 'ה isn't because He abandoned them, but because their עבירות caused the separation. It is brought here in the מאמר to explain what causes גלות השכינה - it's our פשעים (transgressions) that force the שכינה into exile, making the שכינה's influence concealed and contracted until קליפה can even be given to חיות.

Guiding Questions

1. According to רש"י and the רד"ק, what are the two explanations of the word ספות, and what does the צמאה and הרוה את הצמאה mean? Who are the הרוה and צמאה?
2. What are the two questions the רבי רש"ב asks on the פסוק of "שלום יהיה לי...?"
3. What does פסוק of "ואתה מחיה את כולם" hint to the ספירה of מלכות? Why is מלכות called a שם?
4. What is the constant inner desire of בחינת מלכות, and how does the מאמר compare this to fire?
5. What is the fundamental difference between human speech and 'ה's speech? What special quality do the אותיות of 'ה's speech possess?
6. Why does the "ה" (representing מלכות) want to transform into a יו"ד?
7. What is the שכינה and why is it compared to the heart of the world?
8. Why was מלכות reluctant to do her mission of "לכי ומעטי את עצמך"?

מאמר 1

Summary

This מאמר further explores the descent of מלכות, and our נשמות, into this world. The purpose of their descent is ultimately to elevate the lower worlds, and allow a powerful revelation of ה' to shine. This process will reach completion, in its ultimate sense, when משיח comes.

Until that time, both the ספירה of מלכות and our נשמות experience a powerful thirst for אלוקות, which cannot be fully quenched in this world where ה' is concealed.

In contrast, the נפש הבהמית is רווה - satisfied. This is because the נפש הבהמית desires physical pleasures that are readily available.

The יצר הרע deceives us into believing that we can live life according to the desires of the נפש and still receive חיות from the ספירה of מלכות. In truth, however, this חיות cannot and will not last.

Key Words and Ideas

שם הויה vs. שם אלקים

The different names of ה' describe different ways in which He appears to us. שם הויה represents ה' Essence which is beyond nature. שם אלקים represents ה' as He invests Himself within and governs the physical world with its rules, boundaries, and limitations.

עבודת הבירורים

This means the work of refining this physical world and elevating the sparks of holiness embedded within it. We do this when we use physical things for holy purposes: eating to have strength for מצוות, making money to give צדקה, or even just appreciating ה' creation. The מאמר explains that accomplishing this task is the whole purpose of why מלכות (and our נשמות) descend into lower, more physical realms.

ידיעת המציאות vs. השגת המהות

These are two very different levels of knowing something. ידיעת המציאות means you know that something exists. השגת המהות means you truly understand its essence and what it is.

Right now, we can only have ידיעת המציאות of 'ה - we know He exists, we can see His effects in the world, but we can't truly grasp or describe who He is, in essence. As the מאמר explains, this is why the נפש אלוהית cannot satisfy its spiritual longing: 'ה's true essence remains hidden from us.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

בראשית כא:ו

וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרָה צְחָק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹהִים כֹּל הַשְּׁמַע יִצְחָק לִי:

And שרה said: **"ה has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me."**

On a פשוט level, שרה is expressing her joy at the miraculous birth of יצחק when she was ninety years old. After years of being unable to have children, 'ה fulfilled His promise and gave her a son, causing her tremendous happiness - "laughter."

It is brought here in the מאמר to explain that specifically because of the name אלקים - which represents the expression of 'ה that creates physical existence and material challenges – that we are able to bring deep תענוג to 'ה.

בראשית א:א

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

In the beginning, 'ה created the heavens and the earth.

This is the opening verse of the תורה, describing how 'ה created the entire universe. The name אלקים is specifically used here, as it describes 'ה as the creator of the natural world with its laws and limitations.

משלי לא:טו

קָמָה בְּעוֹד לַיְלָה וַתֵּתֶן טָרֶף לְבֵיתָהּ וְחֶק לַנְּעֻרֹתֶיהָ:

*She rises while it is still night **and gives food to her household** and portions to her maidservants.*

On a פשט level, this פסוק describes the אשת חיל who wakes early to provide for her family's needs. The word טרף literally means "prey" or "food," showing her dedication to caring for those under her responsibility.

In the the context of this מאמר, the woman in this פסוק is a reference to מלכות, and the food or prey symbolizes the בירורים.

טרף has the גמטריא of 289 (80=ף, 200=ר, 9=ט), which is the same as the גמטריא number of hidden ניצוצות in the world: רפ"ח (when utilizing the method of עם הכולל¹).

זכריה יד:ח

וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם הַהוּא יֵצְאוּ מֵיִם חַיִּים מִירוּשָׁלַיִם חֲצִיִּם אֶל הַיָּם הַקְּדֻמוֹנִי וְחֲצִיִּם אֶל הַיָּם הָאֲחֵרוֹן בְּקִיץ וּבְחֹרֶף יִהְיֶה:

And it will be on that day that living waters will flow out from ירושלים, half of them toward the eastern sea and half toward the western sea; in summer and winter it will be.

On a פשט level, the נביא is describing ימות המשיח when חיות will flow from ירושלים (and the שם המקדש) to the entire world. The "eastern sea" refers to the Dead Sea, and this represents how even the most "dead" places will receive life.

It is brought here in the מאמר to illustrate what will happen when משיח comes, after מלכות completes all the בירורים. מלכות (represented by ירושלים) will transform from being the lowest of all of the ספירות, which receives from the ספירות above it, to being the source of חיות for the other ספירות.

ישעיה ל:כ

וַיֵּתֶן לָכֶם אֲדוֹנָי לֶחֶם צָר וּמִיָּם לַחַץ וְלֹא יִכְנֹף עוֹד מוֹרֶיךָ וְהָיוּ עֵינֶיךָ רְאוּת אֶת מוֹרֶיךָ:

*And 'ה will give you bread of adversity and water of affliction, but **your Teacher will no longer hide Himself**, and your eyes will see your Teacher.*

1. This is a common method used in many גמטריאות; when the גמטריא is off by just one number, that is not seen as an issue, and one number is added to account for the value of the word as a whole. In this case, רפ"ח = s 288. Then we add +1 for the value of the entire word רפ"ח, equaling 289.

On a פשט level, ישעיה is prophesying about a time when, after a period of difficulty, 'ה will reveal Himself clearly to עם ישראל. The "Teacher" (מורך) refers to 'ה Himself, who will no longer be concealed but will be openly visible.

It is brought in the מאמר to explain why the נפש האלקית remains צמאה (thirsty) in this world. Currently, in this physical world we only have השגת המציאות (a knowledge *that* 'ה exists). We don't have השגת המהות (a grasp of what אלקות *is like*) – though we will have it when משיח comes. Therefore, the נשמה's thirst for 'ה cannot be satisfied.

גמרא שבת קנה:ב

לית דעניא מכלבא ולית דעתיר מחזירא

*There is nothing poorer than a dog and **nothing richer than a pig.***

The גמרא explains that a dog is poor because its food is rare and it depends on people for food scraps, often going hungry. But a pig is rich because it eats garbage that is readily available - it can always find something to satisfy its appetite without difficulty.

This concept is brought here in the מאמר to explain how the נפש הבהמית can easily satisfy its desires, because גשמי pleasures are readily available in this world.

תהלים מטיג

אדם ביקר בל ילין נמשל כבהמות נדמו:

*A person in honor who does not understand **is compared to animals and is like them.***

On a פשט level, דוד המלך is teaching us that when people have honor or status but lack understanding and proper behavior, they become no different from animals.

It is brought here in the מאמר to explain how Jewish sinners receive חיות. Like animals, they draw their חיות for their body and נפש הבהמית from קליפה - indirectly and without alignment with 'ה's will - rather than from the realm of קדושה.

Guiding Questions

1. What makes the descent of the נשמה into a body worthwhile, and what does it accomplish through this process? Which פסוק from חומש hints to this idea?
2. How does ירידה to the lower worlds parallel what happens with the נשמה's ספירת המלכות?
3. What happens when מלכות completes refining all of the sparks of קדושה in this world?
4. What characterizes someone in a state of רווחה versus someone who is צמאה?
5. What does the phrase למען ספות הרווחה את הצמאה mean (according to פרק ג of the מאמר), and how does this process work?
6. How does the way a איד who sins receive lifeforce from ה' differ from the way a non-Jew does?

מאמר ז

Summary

This מאמר deepens our understanding of how חיות from 'ה flows differently to קדושה and קליפה, and why a איד can only temporarily receive חיות while connected to קליפה.

בני ישראל receive lifeforce from 'ה from His פנימיות - due to His innermost desire – through their performance of מצוות עשה and avoiding מצוות לא תעשה.

When a איד sins, he temporarily causes קליפה to receive more חיות than usual, since a איד's נשמה and the מצוות he has performed allow them to channel חיות from קדושה. However, this cannot last: eventually the sinner stops receiving חיות, and the קליפות themselves take revenge on him.

Key Words and Ideas

אור טובב

There are two fundamental ways that 'ה relates to the world. אור ממלא (literally: filling light) is when 'ה expresses Himself in a limited way, which can be felt and revealed within this world. אור טובב (literally: "transcendent light") refers to 'ה's infinite, unlimited expression. אור טובב is present everywhere but is too lofty to be grasped or revealed. .

עליות העולמות

At certain times, the upper worlds become completely focused on receiving חיות from above, causing them to temporarily stop transmitting חיות to the levels beneath them. The מאמר explains that during these times, the קליפות receive no חיות at all. Since they can only receive חיות as a side effect, after it first flows to קדושה, when the flow of חיות to קדושה pauses, the קליפות are cut off as well.

(שבת is one example of a time when עליית העולמות takes place.)

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

במדבר ו:כה

יְבָרְכֶךָ ה' וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ יֵאָר ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחַנֶּךָ

May 'ה bless you and guard you; **may 'ה make His face shine upon you** and show you favor.

This פסוק is part of ברכת כהנים. On a פשט level, this ברכה asks 'ה to show favor to בני ישראל, represented by the image of His "face shining" upon them.

It is brought here in the מאמר to demonstrate that בני ישראל specifically receive the פנים of 'ה – רצון – meaning, 'ה has a deep and inherent desire to give חיות to the אידן.

תהלים ה:ה

כִּי לֹא אֵל חַפֵּץ רָשָׁע אֶתָּה לֹא יִגֹּרְךָ רָע

For You are not a God who desires wickedness; **evil cannot dwell with You.**

On a פשט level, this פסוק expresses המלך דוד's confidence that 'ה will help him defeat his enemies, since 'ה despises evil.

It is brought here in the מאמר to explain why מצות לא תעשה are necessary - they ensure that 'ה doesn't flow to places that are שנוי (hated) by 'ה.

ישעיה מב:ח

אֲנִי ה' הוּא שְׁמִי וְכִבּוֹדִי לֹא אֶחָר לֹא אֶתֶן וְתַהֲלִתִּי לַפְּסִילִים

I am 'ה, that is My name, and **My glory I will not give to another**, nor My praise to idols.

This declaration by ישעיהו הנביא emphasizes 'ה's absolute uniqueness, and the fact that His divine glory is not shared with false gods or idols.

It is brought here in the מאמר to explain why someone involved in עבירות cannot receive חיות from 'ה. Since 'ה will not allow His glory to dwell in places connected to קליפה or forbidden things, a person must be able to receive חיות from קדושה.

תהלים נ:טז

וּלְרָשָׁע אָמַר אֱלֹקִים מַה לָּךְ לְסַפֵּר חֻקֵי וּתְשֹׂא בְרִיתִי עָלַי פִּיךָ וְאַתָּה שֹׁנֵאת מוֹסֵר וּתְשַׁלֵּךְ דְּבַרֵי אַחֲרַיךָ

But to the wicked, 'ה says: "What right do you have to speak My laws and carry My covenant on your lips when you hate discipline and throw My words behind you?"

On a פשט level, this פסוק is part of a long rebuke of those who speak about תורה, but don't practice what they preach.

It is brought in the מאמר to support the idea the תורה learning and מצוה observance of someone who hasn't done תשובה are not desirable to 'ה. Even if such a person studies and performs מצות, his עבירות makes it impossible for his תורה and מצוות to draw down 'ה's light.

Guiding Questions

1. What are the two ways that חיות flows from 'ה, and which type do בני ישראל receive?
2. How does the king's feast משל help us understand these two forms of חיות?
3. What is the main purpose of תורה ומצות according to this מאמר, and how do מצות עשה and מצות לא תעשה work together?
4. What type of חיות does איד receive if he does עבירות? Why does he initially get extra חיות, but then get cut off?
5. According to the מאמר, why doesn't 'ה accept the תורה and מצות of someone who hasn't done תשובה?

מאמר ח

Summary

This מאמר explains why קליפה can potentially receive more abundant חיות than קדושה.

This is because קדושה receives חיות only from within השתלשלות סדר. Meaning, it is measured, calculated, and given only in limited amounts to those who are deserving. Therefore, within השתלשלות סדר, קליפה does not and cannot receive חיות.

But there's a higher level of אלוקות, beyond השתלשלות סדר, which is beyond all structure and limitation – this level is called "מקיף העליון." On this level, the actions of limited, created beings do not make any impact. Therefore, even קליפה can receive חיות, and not just in limited measure, but abundantly.

Key Words and Ideas

יניקת החיצונים

This phrase literally means "the nursing of the קליפות." It refers to how קליפות receive extra חיות by latching onto and leeching from קדושה.

סדר השתלשלות

This literally translates to: "the ordered chain of descent." It refers to the organized system of worlds and spiritual levels ה' created to reveal Himself and interact with creation. Within סדר השתלשלות, ה' reveals Himself in a limited way, and our actions impact what kind of השפעה we receive from Him. "Outside" of סדר השתלשלות – to ה' Himself, as He is beyond any limitation – the actions of creations do not impact ה'; therefore, the השפעה is abundant, and might be given even to those who are undeserving.

אריך אנפין

This phrase literally means "long face." It is the lower level of the ספירה of כתר, and serves as a bridge between the אור אין סוף and the created worlds. It remains above the worlds, but is connected to the worlds, such that it can channel חיות into them.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

משנה אבות פרק ה משנה ב

עשרה דורות מאדם ועד נח להודיע כמה ארך אפים לפניו שכל הדורות היו מקעיסין ובאין ועד שהביא עליהם את מי המבול. עשרה דורות מנח ועד אברהם להודיע כמה ארך אפים לפניו שכל הדורות היו מקעיסין ובאין ועד שבא אברהם וקבל שכר כלם

*There were ten generations from אדם until נח; **this teaches us how patient He is, for all these generations kept angering Him until** He brought upon them the waters of the flood. There were ten generations from נח until אברהם; this teaches us how patient He is, for all these generations kept angering Him, until אברהם came and received the reward of them all.*

This משנה establishes that ה' sustained twenty generations of sinful people due to His ארך אפים (patience). The מאמר connects the phrase of "ארך אפים" to the kabbalistic level of "אריך", which is beyond השתלשלות. On that level, our actions don't affect ה'; therefore, even רשעים can receive הפשעה.

עירובין כב

מאי דכתיב ארך אפים ארך אף מבעי ליה אלא ארך אפים לצדיקים ארך אפים לרשעים

What does the verse mean when it says ארך אפים [plural form of "patience"]? It should say ארך אף [singular form of "patience"]! Rather, ארך אפים indicates patience for [two categories of people,] רשעים and צדיקים.

מלאכי ג:ו

כי אני ה' לא שניתי ואתם בני יעקב לא כליתם

For I am ה', I have not changed, and you, children of יעקב, have not been destroyed.

In מאמרי חסידות, this פסוק is often used to support the idea that ה' Himself remains unaffected by creation.

איוב לה:ז

אם חטאת מה תפעל בו ורבו פשעיך מה תעשה לו. אם צדקת מה תתן לו או מה מידך יקח

If you sin, what do you accomplish against Him? If your transgressions multiply, what do you do to Him? If you are righteous, what do you give Him, or what does He receive from your hand?

This פסוק expresses that human actions - good or bad - cannot affect 'ה Himself. 'ה is unlimited and unchanging; our limited physical actions surely cannot impact Him. The מאמר brings this to reinforce the idea that אור אין סוף, as it is beyond השתלשלות, is completely unaffected by our actions.

מדרש רבה לך לך פרשה מד

הא-ל תמים דרכו אמרת יהוה צרופה מגן הוא לכל החוסים בו אם דרכיו תמימים הוא על אחת כמה וכמה רב אמר לא נתנו המצות אלא לצרף בהן את הבריות וכי מה איכפת ליה להקדוש ברוך הוא למי ששוחט מן הצואר או מי ששוחט מן העורף הוי לא נתנו המצות אלא לצרף בהן את הבריות

"G-d's way is perfect, 'ה's word is refined, He is a shield for all who take shelter in Him" (תהילים יח:לא) - *if His ways are perfect, how much more so is He [perfect]!* רב said: **The מצות were only given to refine people.** What difference does it make to whether הקדוש ברוך הוא someone slaughters from the front of the neck or from the back? Rather, the מצות were only given to refine people.

This מדרש explains that the purpose of מצוות cannot be to give anything to 'ה, because He is perfect. Rather, the point of מצוות is to help and refine us. The מאמר brings this teaching to further support the idea that our actions only matter within the construct of השתלשלות.

שמות כג:כה

ועבדתם את ה' אלקיכם וברך את לחמך ואת מימך והסרתי מחלה מקרבך

You will serve 'ה your G-d, and He will bless your bread and your water, and I will remove illness from among you.

This פסוק promises that proper service of 'ה brings ברכות of sustenance and health. The מאמר points out that the phrase "serving 'ה" indicates that our actions *do* make a difference to Him, and clarifies that this is only true *within* השתלשלות.

פסחים ק"ח

אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי הני כ"ו הודו כנגד מי כנגד כ"ו דורות שברא הקדוש ברוך הוא בעולמו ולא נתן להם תורה וזן אותם בחסדו

תהילים פרק הלל הגדול **These twenty-six "הודו's" [verses in הלל הגדול, which is פרק תהילים] correspond to the twenty-six generations after הקדוש ברוך הוא created His world and but did not give the תורה, yet He sustained [His creations] due to His kindness.**

The מאמר brings this גמרא to support the idea that רשעים receive השפעה from 'ה'סד that is above השתלשלות.

קהלת ט"א

כי שבתתי וראיה תחת השמש כי לא לקלים המרוץ ולא לגבורים המלחמה וגם לא לחכמים לחם וגם לא לזבנים עשר וגם לא לידעים חן **כי אין מעשה וחשבון ודעת וחכמה בשאול** אשר אתה הלך שמה

*I saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, and also bread does not come to the wise, nor wealth to the understanding, nor favor to those with knowledge, **for there is no action, calculation, knowledge, or wisdom in שאול** where you are going.*

מאמר says that that in שאול (the netherworld, or גהנום) there's no calculation. The מאמר uses this פסוק to support the idea that the השפעה given from beyond השתלשלות, which can go even to רשעים, is abundant. It is not measured and calculated, like the השפעה given within השתלשלות.

במדבר כא:כז

על כן יאמרו המשלים **באו חשבון** תבנה ותכונן עיר סיחון

Therefore, those who recite parables say: **Come to [the city of] חשבון**, let it be built and established as the city of סיחון.

בבא בתרא עח

על כן יאמרו המשלים באו חשבון באו ונחשוב חשבוננו של עולם הפסד מצוה נגד שכרה ושכר עבירה נגד הפסדה

"Therefore, those who recite parables (משלים) say, come to חשבון" - **Come and let us calculate (ונחשוב) the world's accounting: weigh the loss of a מצוה against its reward, and the reward of a עבירה against its loss.**

On a פשוט level, the פסוק refers to rebuilding the city חשבון that belonged to סיחון. The גמרא interprets this פסוק metaphorically: המשלים means "those who rule (מושל) over their הרע" and חשבון means "calculation." The משלים say we should calculate the consequences of our actions - when tempted to do an עבירה, weigh its temporary pleasure against long-term damage; when a מצוה seems difficult, weigh its temporary cost against eternal reward.

The מאמר brings this as part of its explanation of how, within הסדר השתלשלות, there are precise consequences for our actions.

ביצה טז

כל מזונותיו של אדם קצובים לו מראש השנה ועד יום הכפורים, חוץ מהוצאת שבתות והוצאת יום טוב והוצאת בניו לתלמוד תורה, שאם פחת — פוחדתיו לו, ואם הוסיף — מוסיפין לו

All of a person's sustenance is predetermined [during the time period between] ראש השנה and יום כיפור, aside from expenses for טוב שבת, and חינוך. If one [spends less], [his sustenance] is lessened; if one [spends] more, [his sustenance] is increased.

ראש השנה טז

רבי יוסי אומר: אדם נידון בכל יום, שנאמר: ותפקדנו לבקרים. רבי נתן אומר: אדם נידון בכל שעה, שנאמר: לרגעים תבחננו

רבי יוסי says: **A person is judged every day, as it says: "You visit him every morning."** רבי נתן says: **A person is judged every hour, as it says: "You test him every moment."**

רבי יוסי says that we're judged daily. רבי יוסי's view is based on the פסוק of "ותפקדנו לבקרים" - "You visit/recall him every morning" (איוב ז:יח). רבי נתן goes further, saying we're judged hourly based on the פסוק of "לרגעים תבחננו" - "You test him every moment" (איוב ז:יח).

The מאמר brings this teaching to show how precisely חשבון operates - there is constant, detailed calculation of our deeds determining what השפעה we receive.

(We will do a further analysis of this discussion later on in this המשך, in מאמר יח)

איוב לז:יב

והוא מסבובות מתהפך בתחבולתיו לפעלים כל אשר יצום על פני תבל ארצה

And it turns around in circles according to His plans, to do their work, whatever He commands them upon the face of the inhabited earth.

According to רש"י, the meaning of this פסוק is that ה' reorganizes world events in accordance with our actions, as described by the גמרא below:

ראש השנה יז

הרי שהיו ישראל רשעים גמורין בראש השנה ופסקו להם גשמים מועטים לסוף חזרו בהן... הקדוש ברוך הוא מורידן בזמן על הארץ הצריכה להן. הרי שהיו ישראל צדיקים גמורין בראש השנה ופסקו עליהם גשמים מרובין לסוף חזרו בהן... הקדוש ברוך הוא מורידן שלא בזמן על הארץ שאינה צריכה להן

If Israel were complete on Rosh Hashana and sparse rains were decreed for them, but later they repented... הקדוש ברוך הוא causes the rain to fall at the right time on land that needs it. If Israel were complete on צדיקים Rosh Hashana and abundant rains were decreed for them, but later they regressed... הקדוש ברוך הוא causes the rain to fall at the wrong time on land that doesn't need it.

The מאמר quotes this teaching as part of its explanation to show precise calibration of השפעה that happens within השתלשלות.

זהר חלק א קט"ב

הקדוש ברוך הוא מסבב סבובין ואייתי עובדין בעלמא לאתקיימא ולבתר דחשיבו בני נשא דיתקיימו אינון עובדין קודשא בריך הוא מהפך לון לאינון עובדין מכמה דהוה בקדמיתא... בתחבולתו חסר י'... דאיהו טקלא דאסתרת קמיה... אי מטיבין בני נשא עובדיהון ההיא טקלא דסחרא אסחרת לון לימינא... אתו בני נשא לאבאשא... קודשא בריך הוא אסחור ליה בסטרא דשמאלא ומהפך מסבובות

הוא **makes circling motions** and brings events into the world to be established... which is the **wheel** that revolves before Him... If people improve their deeds, that **revolving wheel turns toward the right side for them**... When people **come to do evil**... הקדוש ברוך הוא **turns it to the left side**.

This זה describes how the ספירה of מלכות - likened to a potter's wheel - shapes the events in our world, just as a wheel shapes the clay placed upon it. When people do good the "wheel turns to the right," meaning that מלכות channels חסד and ברכה (symbolized by the right side) into this world. When people do evil, the "wheel turns to the left," meaning that מלכות channels גבורה and punishment into the world (symbolized by the left side).

The מאמר quotes this teaching to illustrate how השפעה given within סדר השתלשלות is precisely measured and distributed in accordance with our actions.

משנה אבות סוף משנה כ"ב

הוא היה אומר הילודים למות והמתים להחיות והחיים לדון **ודע שהכל לפי החשבון** ואל יבטיחך יצרך שהשאול בית מנוס לך שעל כרחך אתה נוצר ועל כרחך אתה נולד ועל כרחך אתה חי ועל כרחך אתה מת ועל כרחך אתה עתיד לתן דין וחשבון לפני מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא

He used to say: *Those born are destined to die, the dead to be revived, and the living to be judged. **Know that everything is according to the calculation.** Don't let your יצר הרע convince you that the grave is a refuge for you, for against your will you are formed, born, live, die, and destined to give judgment and accounting before* הקדוש ברוך הוא.

מסכת חגיגה, ה, ב

רבי אילא הוה סליק בדרגא דבי רבה בר שילא. שמעיה לינוקא דהוה קא קרי: "כי הנה יוצר הרים ובורא רוח ומגיד לאדם מה שיחו". אמר: עבד שרבו מגיד לו מה שיחו תקנה יש לו?! מאי "מה שיחו"? אמר רב: **אפילו שיחה יתירה שבין איש לאשתו מגידים לו לאדם בשעת מיתתו**.

אילא was going up the stairs in the house of רבה בר שילא [who was a teacher of young children.] He heard a child reading [the פסוק of] "For behold, He Who forms the mountains and creates the wind and **declares to man what is his speech.**" (אמות דיג)

אילא said: "With regard to a servant whose master tells him what his speech is – what is his remedy?"

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[The גמרא asks:] What is [the meaning of the phrase] "what is his speech"?

רב said: **Even superfluous speech between a man and his wife** is told to a person at the time he passes away [and he will need to give an accounting for it].

This teaching is brought as part of the מאמר's description of how exactly and precisely the השפעה within השתלשלות סדר is measured.

Guiding Questions

1. The מאמר explains two different sources from which קליפות receive השפעה. What are these two sources, and what kind of השפעה do they provide?
2. Why were the generations from אדם to אברהם able to survive and receive sustenance even though they constantly angered 'ה?
3. (a) What does it mean that אור אין סוף is "above השתלשלות"?
4. (b) Why don't our good or bad actions affect this level?
5. What's the difference between השפעה that comes "according to תורה" versus השפעה that comes from רב חסד?
6. What is the imagery of the potter's wheel described in the זוהר? What does that imagery represent about how 'ה runs the world?

מאמר ט

Summary

This מאמר does a deeper dive into two central ideas:

A) How and why הפשעה that is given **within** סדר השתלשלות is precisely measured and distributed according to merit.

B) How and why קליפות are nevertheless able to receive abundant השפעה by tapping into energy that is from **beyond** סדר השתלשלות.

Using the analogy of the way רצון and שכל function within the human psyche, the רבי רש"ב explains the difference between אור within סדר השתלשלות and אור that transcends it, and how and why they work differently.

Key Words and Ideas

אורות וכלים

The word אור literally means "light." As used in חסידות, it refers to the pure, unbounded energy or expression of something.

The word כלי literally means "container." In חסידות, it refers to tools or channels that express, contain and/or give form to the אור.

A כלי limits and directs the אור in order to reveal and express it.

These concepts are abstract and are best understood through examples. Below are a few examples of אורות and כלים brought in various places in חסידות:

כלי	אור
מוח - Physical brain	חכמה - Intelligence
עין - Physical eye	כח הראי' - Power of sight
אותיות הדיבור - Words	שכל - Ideas
ספירות (חכמה, בינה, דעת, וכו')	אור אלוקי

As our מאמר will explain, the אורות and כלים are tailored to fit one another. The אור of שכל cannot be channeled through the כלי of the human eye. And an אור that is too powerful cannot be put into a כלי; for example, an idea that is very lofty or abstract might not be able to be put into words.

חכמה

As the מאמר discusses, חכמה is the first of the ספירות. It literally means "wisdom" or "insight" and refers to the first stage of creating or understanding something new: that flash of creative insight. It is associated with ביטול, because having that flash of insight requires being totally open and receptive to that new thing.

עשר ספירות

Ten specific ways in which ה' gives חיות to and runs the worlds within השתלשלות. They are כלים for the אור אלוקי, and shape the way it is expressed to us. They are the powers that transmit Divine content from higher to lower levels by processing it. There are ten ספירות in total. Three of them are intellectual: דעת, בינה, חכמה.

And seven are emotive: מלכות and חסד, גבורה, תפארת, נצח, הוד, יסוד.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

עובדיה א:ד

אם תגביה כנשר ואם בין כוכבים שים קנך משם אורידך נאם ה':

Though you make yourself as high as an eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down, says ה'.

עובדיה warns the nation of אדום that despite their arrogance and belief that they're untouchable, ה' will bring them down. The eagle symbolizes ultimate pride and transcending natural boundaries.

The מאמר uses the eagle soaring beyond natural boundaries as a symbol of how קליפות "raise themselves" to access שפע from above השתלשלות, where the rules of השתלשלות don't apply, and even those undeserving can receive השפעה.

משלי ל:יט

דֶּרֶךְ הַנֶּשֶׁר בַּשָּׁמַיִם דֶּרֶךְ נָחֵשׁ עַל־י צוּר דֶּרֶךְ אֲנִיָּה בְּלֵב יָם וְדֶרֶךְ גֶּבֶר בְּעֵלְמָה:

The way of an eagle in the heavens, the way of a serpent upon a rock, the way of a ship in the heart of the sea, and the way of a man with a young woman.

In this פסוק, שלמה המלך, describes mysterious phenomena that leave no traceable path.

This פסוק is brought to support the idea of how קליפות access השפעה through pathways that transcend the normal rules of השתלשלות.

Guiding Questions

1. Using the example of רצון and שכל in our bodies, explain the difference between an אור אור פנימי and an אור מקיף.
2. How does the משל of רצון vs. שכל explain the difference between the אור within השתלשלות and the אור which is above סוף השתלשלות?
3. What are the four reasons for why the אור within השתלשלות involves precise calculation?
4. How can אחרא אחרא receive abundant שפע even though they're completely inappropriate vessels? What does the מאמר mean when it compares them to a נשר?
5. According to this מאמר, why do idol worshippers often have more material success than an איד?

מאמר י

Summary

This מאמר explains why it is foolish for a איד to think that he can do עבירות and still receive abundant חיות from מקיף העליון, like קליפות do.

A איד is chosen by ה' on a פנימיות level; meaning ה' deeply desires to be in a close relationship with every איד. In addition, every איד's נשמה chooses ה'.

This mutual choice means that a איד can only receive השפעה in פנימיות manner – that is, through a genuine, deep and authentic connection with ה' through מצוות and תורה. It is impossible to receive חיות like קליפה does, where השפעה is given without any connection or relationship to the Source of חיות.

For this reason, the אידן received abundant חיות during the times of the בית המקדש, but experience suffering while in גלות as a result of עבירות: our actions matter to ה', and therefore bring real consequences. For the same reason, when אידן are in pain and cry out to ה', it matters deeply to Him.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

דברים כט:יט

לא יאבה ה' סלח לו כי אז יעשן אף ה' וקנאתו באיש ההוא ורבצה בו כל האלה הכתובה בספר הזה ומחה ה' את שמו מתחת השמים:

'ה will not be willing to forgive him, for then ה's anger and jealousy will smoke against that man, and every curse written in this book will lie upon him, and ה' will blot out his name from under heaven.

This פסוק comes right after the sentence "והיה כי ישמע את דברי האלה הזאת והתברך בלבבו", which has been the center of our discussion until now.

On a פשט level, this פסוק means that ה' will not forgive a person who sins, and instead will punish him.

Our מאמר uses this פסוק to support the idea that a איד cannot receive השפעה from מקיף, and will thus face consequences for doing עבירות.

דברים לב:ט

כי חלק ה' עמו יַעֲקֹב חֶבְלֵי נַחֲלָתוֹ:

For 'ה's portion is His people, יַעֲקֹב is the lot of His inheritance.

This פסוק describes the special relationship between 'ה and ישראל. This means that ישראל are not just another nation, but rather His special "portion" and intimately connected to Him.

דברים יד:ב

כי עם קדוש אתה לה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ וּבָרַךְ בָּחַר ה' לֵהְיוֹת לוֹ לְעַם סְגוּלָה מִכָּל הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה:

*For you are a holy people to 'ה your God, **and 'ה has chosen you** to be His treasured people from all the peoples on the face of the earth.*

This פסוק emphasizes 'ה's active choice of ישראל as His nation. This means that ישראל's relationship with 'ה is based on His deliberate choice, and desire to be in an intimate relationship.

תהלים קלה:ד

כי יַעֲקֹב בָּחַר לוֹ יְיָהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְסֻגּוּלָתוֹ:

For 'ה chose יַעֲקֹב for Himself, ישראל as His treasure.

Together with the previous פסוק, this reinforces the concept of 'ה's בחירה of ישראל.

שמות יט:ה

וְעַתָּה אִם שָׁמוֹעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ בְּקוֹלִי וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת בְּרִיתִי וְהֵייתֶם לִי סְגוּלָה מִכָּל הָעַמִּים כִּי לִי כָּל הָאָרֶץ:

*Now, if you will listen to My voice and keep My covenant, **you will be My treasure** from all peoples, for all the earth is Mine.*

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This פסוק makes it clear that ישראל's status as 'ה's סגולה requires their active commitment to מצות.

איכה ג:כד

חֲלָקִי ה' אִמְרָה נַפְשִׁי עַל כֵּן אוֹחִיל לוֹ:

'ה is my portion, says my soul, therefore I will hope in Him.

This פסוק is brought to show how בני ישראל chooses 'ה in return. To illustrate this mutual בחירה, the מדרש brings the following מדרש on this פסוק.

מדרש רבה איכה (על איכה ג:כד)

רבי אבובי בשם רבי יוחנן אמר למלך שנכנס למדינה והיו עמו דוכסין ואיפרכין ואיסקרטילוטין והיו גדולי מדינה יושבים באמצע המדינה, חד אמר אנא נסיב דוכסין לגבי, חד אמר אנא נסיב איפרכין לגבי, וחד אמר אנא נסיב איסקרטילוטין לגבי, היה פקח אחד לשם אמר אנא נסיב למלכא דכולהו מתחלפין ומלכא אינו מתחלף, כך עכו"ם מהן עובדין לחמה מהן עובדין ללבנה ומהן עובדין לעץ ואבן אבל ישראל אינו עובדין אלא להקדוש ברוך הוא הדא הוא דכתיב חלקי ה' אמרה נפשי

Rabbi Abba in the name of Rabbi Yochanan said: [This is like] a king who entered a city, and with him were dukes, governors, and military commanders. The dignitaries of the city were sitting in the center of the city. One said, "I will align myself with the dukes," one said, "I will align myself with the governors," and one said, "I will align myself with the military commanders." There was one wise person there who said: **"I will align myself with the king, for all of them [the officials] are replaceable, but the king is not replaceable."**

The choice of the wise man in the מדרש illustrates בני ישראל's choice to be in a פנימיות relationship with 'ה.

ויקרא כו:ג-ד

אם בְּחַקְתִּי תִלְכוּ וְאֵת מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וְעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם: וְנָתַתִּי גֶשְׁמִיכֶם בְּעֵתָם וְנָתַתִּי יְבוּלָה וְעֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה יִתֵּן פְּרִיֹו:

If you follow My statutes and observe My commandments and perform them, then I will give your rains in their season and the land will yield its produce, and the tree of the field will give its fruit.

This פסוק presents the ברכות that come from following 'ה's commandments. This shows how for a איד, prosperity and ברכה are linked to maintaining a relationship with 'ה through תורה and מצוות.

ישעיה סג:ט

בְּכָל צָרָתָם לֹא צָר וּמְלֶאךָךְ פָּנָיו הוֹשִׁיעֵם בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ וּבְחַמְלָתוֹ הוּא גָאֵלֵם וַיִּנְטֵלֵם וַיִּנְשָׂאֵם כָּל יְמֵי עוֹלָם:

In all their troubles, He was troubled, and the מלאך of His presence saved them; in His love and mercy He redeemed them, and He lifted them and carried them all the days of old.

This פסוק illustrates 'ה's deep involvement in בני ישראל's suffering. This is due to 'ה's פנימיות connection to the Jewish people.

שמות ב:כג

וַיֶּאֱנָחוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן הָעֲבֹדָה וַיִּזְעָקוּ וַתַּעַל שׁוֹעַתָם אֶל הָאֱלֹקִים מִן הָעֲבֹדָה:

The children of ישראל sighed from the labor and cried out, and their cry rose up to God from the labor.

This פסוק describes בני ישראל's desperate cry to 'ה during their slavery in מצרים. It is brought here in the מאמר as an example of how בני ישראל's crying out awakens 'ה's רחמים, because of the deep connection 'ה has with the Jewish people.

תהלים קז:יט

וַיִּזְעָקוּ אֶל ה' בְּצָרָה לָהֶם וּמִמְצָקוֹתֵיהֶם יוֹשִׁיעֵם:

They cried out to 'ה in their distress, and He saved them from their troubles.

This פסוק brings another proof for the power of crying out to 'ה during times of trouble and receiving salvation.

Guiding Questions

1. How does the ק"ד explain the word ספות in the פסוק of "למה לי כי בשרירות לבי אלך"? What does it indicate about how someone may think they can get away with doing עבירות?
2. Why is the above argument flawed?
3. What מדרש does the מאמר bring to describe the mutual בחירה between הקב"ה and ישראל?
4. What are the two consequences of בני ישראל having a פנימיות relationship with ה'?

מאמר י"א

Summary

This מאמר continues to describe the פנימיות relationship that בני ישראל share with 'ה. Because of this deep relationship, our תפילות and actions matter to Him. A איד can elicit רחמים from 'ה through heartfelt תפילה, and receives חיות only by connecting to 'ה, and drawing down His light through תורה and מצוות.

It is therefore false and foolish for a איד to think that he can continue to receive חיות while separating from 'ה and doing עבירות. Any איד who sins receives חיות is only temporary - either as a reward for a מצוה which was done or as momentary "payment" from קליפות for bringing them extra חיות.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

נחמיה ט:ד

ויקם על מעלה הלויים ישוע ובני קדמיאל שבניה בני שרביה בני כנני ויצעקו בקול גדול אל ה' אלקיהם:

And לויים **and** stood on the platform of the לויים **and** **cried out with a loud voice to 'ה their G-d.** *ויקם על מעלה הלויים ישוע, ובני קדמיאל, שבניה, בני שרביה, בני כנני*

This פסוק describes the scene during the time of עזרא, when the Jews who returned from בבל engaged in national תשובה. The לויים led the people in תפילה as part of this process.

It sets up the מאמר's exploration of when loud davening is appropriate and powerful.

מלכים א יח:כח

ויקראו בקול גדול ויתגדדו כמשפטם בחרבות וברמחים עד שפך דם עליהם:

And they called out with a loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and spears until blood poured out on them.

This פסוק describes the נביאים of בעל ה' הכרמל הר desperately trying to get their god to respond and send a fire to consume their קרבן. Their loud voices and self-mutilation showed the powerlessness of their deity.

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It is brought here in the מאמר (along with רש"י's commentary) to illustrate why davening loudly is generally undesirable.

ישעיה כא:יב

שֹׁמֵר מָה מְלִילָה שֹׁמֵר מָה מְלִילָה: אָמַר שֹׁמֵר אֶתָּא בִקֵּר וְגַם לִילָה אִם תִּבְעֵינָן בְּעֵינֵינוּ שָׁבוּ אִתֵּינוּ:

*Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said: **Morning has come**, and also night. If you will inquire; return back, come.*

On a פשט level, this נבואה addresses those asking about the end of their troubles. The watchman announces that dawn is breaking, but warns that night may return - there's hope, but vigilance is still needed.

This פסוק is brought here in the מאמר to explain the concept that אותיות (which share a root with the word אתא – come) represent revelation and expression (represented by בוקר – morning). Louder or larger words indicate greater energy and intensity.

שמות יט:טז

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי בַּהֵיאוֹת הַבִּקֹּר וַיְהִי קִלּוֹת וּבְרָקִים וְעָנָן כָּבֵד עַל הַהָר וּקוֹל שׁוֹפָר חָזֵק מְאֹד וַיִּחַרְדוּ כָּל הָעָם אֲשֶׁר בַּמַּחֲנֶה:

*And it was on the third day when it was morning, there was thunder and lightning and a heavy cloud on the mountain **and a very strong sound of the שופר**, and all the people in the camp trembled.*

This פסוק describes the revelation at תורה, מתן תורה, when loud sounds accompanied ה' presence on הר סיני.

It is brought in the מאמר as an example of how a loud voice indicates greater meaning and revelation.

דברים ה:יט

אֶת הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה דִּבֶּר ה' אֶל כָּל קְהֵלְכֶם בְּהָר מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ הָעֹנֵן וְהָעֲרָפֶל קוֹל גְּדוֹל וְלֹא יִסָּף וַיִּכְתְּבֶם עַל שְׁנֵי לְחוֹת אֲבָנִים וַיִּתְּנֶם אֵלַי:

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These words 'ה spoke to your entire congregation on the mountain from within the fire, cloud, and thick darkness - **a great voice that did not repeat** - and He wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me.

This פסוק also describes מתן תורה, and demonstrates how a powerful sound houses a powerful revelation.

יונה ג:ח

וַיִּתְכַסּוּ שָׂקִים הָאָדָם וְהַבְּהֵמָה וַיִּקְרְאוּ אֶל אֱלֹקִים בְּחִזְקָה וַיָּשְׁבוּ אִישׁ מִדַּרְכּוֹ הִרְעָה וּמִן הַחֲמָס אֲשֶׁר בְּכַפְיָהֶם:

And let them cover themselves with sackcloth, both man and beast, and **let them call out to אלקים with strength**, and let each person turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in their hands.

This פסוק describes the king of תשובה's instructions to his people for how to do תשובה.

It is brought here in the מאמר as an example of when loud and powerful crying indicates a deep and powerful expression of connection to 'ה.

דברים ז:י

וּמִשְׁלָם לְשֹׂנְאָיו אֶל פְּנֵיו לְהֶאֱבִידוֹ לֹא יֵאָחֵר אֶל שֹׂנְאוֹ אֶל פְּנֵיו יִשְׁלַם לוֹ:

And He repays His enemies to their face to destroy them - He does not delay; to His enemy, to his face He will repay him.

On a פשט level, this warns that while 'ה is patient with the righteous, He deals swiftly with those who are completely evil, giving them their punishment directly and immediately.

It is brought here in the מאמר to describe sinners who have no merits, and receive immediate punishment.

יחזקאל כ:לב-לג

וְהָעוֹלָה עַל רוּחְכֶם הִיוּ לֹא תִהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם אוֹמְרִים נִהְיֶה כְּגוֹיִם כְּמִשְׁפְּחוֹת הָאָרְצוֹת לְשֵׁרֵת עֵץ וְאֶבֶן: חֵי אֲנִי נְאֻם ה' אֱלֹקִים אִם לֹא בְיַד חִזְקָה וּבְזִרוּעַ נְטוּיָה וּבְחֲמָה שְׂפוּכָה אֶמְלוֹךְ עֲלֵיכֶם:

And what comes into your mind will never be - what you are saying 'Let us be like the nations, like the families of the lands, to worship wood and stone.' As I live, says 'ה

אלקים, surely with a strong hand and an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I will rule over you.

On a פשט level, 'ה is responding to Jews who want to abandon their special relationship and be like other nations, worshipping idols. 'ה declares this can never happen - due to the eternal connection בני ישראל have with 'ה, they will always be ruled by 'ה.

It is brought here in the מאמר to illustrate the core principle that Jews cannot successfully receive חיות from חיצוניות, like non-Jews do.

ישעיה נב:ג

כִּי כֹה אָמַר ה' חֲנֹם נִמְכַרְתֶּם וְלֹא בְכֶסֶף תִּגְאָלוּ:

For thus says 'ה: **You were sold for nothing** and not with money will you be redeemed.

On a פשט level, this is part of ישעיה's prophecy of comfort, explaining that ישראל's exile wasn't a real "sale" (since no payment was received), so their redemption won't require "payment" either - it will come purely from 'ה's mercy.

It is brought in the מאמר (via מדרש תנחומא) to prove that the Jewish people were never truly "sold" out of 'ה's possession. Just as a servant sold "for nothing" remains under his original master's authority, Jews can never truly separate from 'ה.

דברים כט:יב

לְמַעַן הַקִּים אֹתְךָ הַיּוֹם לֹא לְעַם וְהוּא יִהְיֶה לְךָ לֵאלֹהִים כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר לְךָ וְכַאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבוֹתֶיךָ לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב:

In order to establish you today as His people and He will be your God, **as He spoke to you and as He swore to your forefathers - to אברהם, to יצחק, and to יעקב.**

In this פסוק, משה explains that the covenant 'ה made with the Jewish people isn't new - it's fulfilling the eternal promises made to the אבות. This emphasizes the permanent, unbreakable nature of the relationship בני ישראל have with 'ה.

מדרש רבה במדבר פרשה ב פיסקא טז

אף על פי שאתם לא עמי שתבקשו להפרש ממני אני לא אהיה לכם אין דעתי משתווית עמכם אלא בעל כרחכם תהיו עמי

Even though you say "we are not Your people" - that you seek to separate from Me - I will not be [resigned to this]. My will does not agree with you. Rather, against your will you will be My people.

This מדרש is commenting on the פסוק from יחזקאל, emphasizing 'ה's unwillingness to let the Jewish people abandon their special relationship.

It is brought here in the מאמר to explain that 'ה's insistence on maintaining the covenant comes from His deep inner love (אהבה פנימית) for the Jewish people - even when they want to break free, His essential connection to them won't allow it.

סנהדרין קה:א

אמר רב נחמן כל כי האי ריתחא לירתח רחמנא עלן ולפרוקינן

Said רב נחמן: ***Would that such anger [as described in the פסוק] would come upon us from רחמנא and He would redeem us!***

This גמרא is commenting on the פסוק in יחזקאל about 'ה ruling with "wrath poured out." Rather than seeing this as purely negative, רב נחמן recognizes it as an expression of 'ה's love and deep connection with us, which will ultimately lead to גאולה.

It is brought in the מאמר to support the idea that due to a איד's deep connection and relationship with 'ה, his actions cannot and will not go without consequences.

Guiding Questions

1. The מאמר starts with a question about davening loudly. Why is davening loudly usually a problem, and how does the מאמר resolve it?
2. What does the מאמר mean when it says that letters (אותיות) are like "dawn breaking" - what are they revealing? How does this connect to the idea of a loud voice in תפילה?
3. What are the two reasons for why some רשעים have temporary success?

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4. What does the מאמר learn from the פסוק from יחזקאל of "והעולה על רוחכם", and the מדרש based upon it?
5. The מאמר talks about a איד who thinks "שלום יהיה לי" - that everything will be fine even when doing wrong. Why is this thinking is mistaken, and what the reality is instead?
6. How does everything the מאמר has taught us help explain why suffering sometimes comes to the Jewish people, and what positive purpose it serves?

מאמר י"ב

Summary

This מאמר exposes another deceptive strategy of the יצר הרע: convincing a person that their actions will go undetected. This is both false and foolish, as we inevitably reveal our inner world through our speech and behavior - even in seemingly casual conversations or glances. More importantly, ה' sees everything and eventually arranges for hidden actions to be revealed.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

בְּרָכוֹת כח:ב

יְהִי רְצוֹן שְׁתֵּהא מוֹרָא שְׁמַיִם עֲלֵיכֶם כְּמוֹרָא בְּשַׁר וְדָם אָמְרוּ לוֹ תַלְמִידָיו עַד כַּאֲן אָמַר וּלְוֹאֵי תִדְעוּ כְּשֶׁאָדָם עוֹבֵר עֲבִירָה אֹמֵר שְׁלֵא יִרְאֵנִי אָדָם

May it be ה's will that **your fear of Heaven should be like your fear of people**. His students said to him: Only that much? He said: Would that it were so! Know that when a person sins, **he says "I hope no person sees me."**

This גְּמָרָא records the final words of רַבֵּן יוֹחָנָן בֶּן זַכַּאֵי to his students. The students were surprised that he only wanted their מוֹרָא שְׁמַיִם to equal their מוֹרָא בְּשַׁר וְדָם, not exceed it. רַבֵּן יוֹחָנָן בֶּן זַכַּאֵי explained that if people truly feared ה' as much as they fear other people, they would stop committing so many עֲבִירוֹת. It is brought here in the מְאָמַר to demonstrate why the יצר הרע needs to trick people into thinking "no one will see me."

יְרֵמְיָהוּ כג:כד

הַמִּסְתוֹר יִסְתֵּר אִישׁ בַּמִּסְתָּרִים וְאֵנִי לֹא אֶרְאֶנּוּ נֶאֱמַר יְהוָה הֲלוֹא אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ אֲנִי מְלֵא נֶאֱמַר ה'

"Can a person hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him?" says ה'. **"Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?"** says ה'.

This פְּסוּקֵי teaches that ה' sees everything and fills all of creation - no one can hide from Him. It is brought in the מאמר to prove that the יצר הרע's promise that "no one will see you" is false, because ה' sees and knows everything, even things hidden from people.

נסח תפלה

הכל גלוי וידוע לפניך, אין דבר נעלם ממך ואין נסתר מנגד עיניך

Everything is revealed and known before You; nothing is hidden from You and nothing is concealed from Your eyes.

This is a passage from the *Shema* which emphasizes 'ה's complete knowledge. It is brought in the *Maamar* to reinforce the idea that trying to hide our actions from 'ה is futile.

אבות פרק ד משנה ד

דע מה למעלה ממך עין רואה ואזן שומעת וכל מעשיך בספר נכתבין ואל תתחבר לרשע ואל תתיאש מן הפרענות כל המחלל שם שמים בסתר נפרעין ממנו בגלוי אחד שוגג ואחד מזיד בחלול השם

*Know what is above you: an eye that sees, an ear that hears, and all your deeds are written in a book. Do not befriend the wicked and do not despair of punishment. **Anyone who desecrates G-d's name in private is punished publicly** whether intentionally or unintentionally it is the same* חילול השם

As *רש"י* explains, when someone sins secretly, 'ה eventually reveals their shame publicly, so that people will recognize them as a רשע and so that 'ה's name won't be damaged through people saying, "Look at this righteous person who suffered."

משלי כו:כו

יבסה שנאתו במשאון תגלה רעתו בקהל

*Though his hatred may be concealed by darkness, **his wickedness will be exposed in front of the assembly.***

This *Psalm* teaches that someone who hides their evil actions will eventually be exposed publicly.

Guiding Questions

1. What is the main deception of the יצר הרע discussed in this מאמר, and how is this connected to what יוחנן בן זכאי told his students before he passed away?
 2. How does a person end up revealing their inner רע to others, even when they think they're hiding it? Explain the two main ways the מאמר describes this happening.
 3. How does ה' ultimately respond to secret wrongdoing, and why?
 4. Which kind of person is most susceptible to this false argument of the יצר הרע, and why?
-

מאמר י"ג

Summary

This מאמר tackles a third trick of the הרע: convincing a person to excuse their mistakes by blaming them on inborn nature or on environment, instead of taking responsibility. The מאמר's discussion of this argument and why it is foolish will continue through יד.

'ה created us specifically so our נפש האלקית could overcome our נפש הבהמית, and He gives us the exact spiritual tools we need for our particular challenges. Our נפש הבהמית might **seem** stronger than the נפש אלקית; but in truth, the נפש אלוקית is rooted in a higher source, and has the power to overcome the נפש הבהמית.

Key Words and Ideas

עולם התהו

This literally means "the world of chaos/emptiness." עולם התהו was the first world 'ה created, before the one that we live in. In עולם התהו, the revelation of 'ה was very powerful and intense – so powerful that the world couldn't handle its intensity. This caused what קבלה calls "שבירת הכלים" – the "shattering of the vessels." Sparks of this intense revelation from עולם התהו fell to the world of תיקון (see below), where we can now elevate them through our 'ה עבודת.

עולם התיקון

This literally means "the world of rectification/repair." עולם התיקון is the world that was created after עולם התהו. Unlike עולם התהו, this world has less apparent revelation of 'ה, such that the world can properly contain it. Our entire purpose is to elevate the fallen sparks from עולם התהו and complete the תיקון that began when this world was created.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

כתובות סז:א

לפום גמלא שיחנא

According to the camel, so is the load.

The מאמר brings this teaching to explain why people with stronger natural temperaments (like anger) are not truly "victims" of their nature. If someone has a particularly strong הרע ה'יצר, ה' gives them a correspondingly strong נפש אלקית to overcome it.

משלי יח:ז

צדיק הראשון בריבו ובא רעהו וחקרו:

The first to state his case seems right, until his opponent comes and examines him.

On a פשט level, this פסוק refers to legal proceedings - when someone presents their argument first without opposition, it sounds convincing. But when the other side responds and cross-examines, the truth emerges.

It is brought here in the מאמר to explain why the נפש הבהמית seems so powerful compared to the נפש האלקית. The animal soul gets to present its "case" first - from birth through age thirteen - without opposition, so it becomes deeply established in our habits and desires. Only later does the נפש אלקית begin to actively "cross-examine" and challenge these established patterns.

משנה סנהדרין צא:ב

מאימתי יצר הרע שולט באדם ... משעת יציאה

From when does the יצר הרע rule over a person...from the moment of birth.

This משנה is discussing the stages of human development and when our יצר הרע begins to influence us. The מאמר brings this to demonstrate the timing advantage that the נפש הבהמית possesses. This "head start" explains why overcoming our natural inclinations feels so difficult.

מדרש רבה בראשית נח פרשה לדיב

דרש מנעוריו משעה שננער לצאת ממעי אמו

He expounded: "From his youth" - from the moment he is shaken to emerge from his mother's womb.

This מדרש is interpreting the word מנעוריו (from his youth) to mean from the very moment of birth - when the baby is "shaken" to emerge. The מאמר brings this to reinforce that the יצר הרע's influence begins at the earliest possible moment, giving it maximum time to establish itself in our nature and habits.

קהלת דיג

טוב ילד מסכן וחכם ממלך זקן וכסיל,

"Better is a poor and wise child than an old and foolish king."

מדרש רבה

טוב ילד מסכן וחכם זה יצר טוב, ולמה נקרא שמו ילד כי אין מזדווג לאדם אלא מבן יג שנה ולמעלה ... ממלך זקן וכסיל זה יצר הרע ... ולמה קורא אותו זקן שהוא מזדווג לו מילדותו ועד זקנתו

The good child refers to the יצר טוב, and why is it called a child? Because it is only with a person from age thirteen and up... The old and foolish king is the יצר הרע... and why is it called old? Because it is with him from childhood until old age.

This מדרש is interpreting קהלת's cryptic verse about a child being better than a king. The מאמר brings this to strengthen its: how can the "child" (יצר טוב/נפש אלקית) overcome the "old king" (יצר הרע/נפש בהמית)?

מדרש רבה בראשית נח פרשה לד

נשמה מאימתי ניתנה באדם ... משעת פקידה

From when was the soul given to a person...from the moment of conception.

This מדרש is discussing when exactly the נשמה enters the body. The מאמר brings this to clarify that while the נפש האלקית is present from conception, it doesn't actively function until age thirteen. This explains how both souls can be present simultaneously, but only one is actively influencing behavior during childhood.

בְּרֵאשִׁית לוֹ:לֹא

וְאֵלֶּה הַמְּלָכִים אֲשֶׁר מָלְכוּ בְּאֶרֶץ אֲדוֹם לִפְנֵי מֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

These are the kings who reigned in the land of אֲדוֹם before any king reigned over the children of יִשְׂרָאֵל.

On a פְּשֻט level, this introduces the list of אֲדוֹמִי kings who ruled before יִשְׂרָאֵל had monarchy. In עוֹלָם הַתְּקוּן, these represent the "seven kings" of עוֹלָם הַתְּהוֹ (תְּהוֹ) that preceded קְבֻלָּה.

It is brought here in the מֵאמֵר to show that תְּהוֹ (represented by אֲדוֹם/עֵשָׂו) preceded תְּקוּן (יִשְׂרָאֵל/יַעֲקֹב). This parallels how the נֶפֶשׁ בְּהֵמִית (תְּהוֹ) appears first, while the נֶפֶשׁ אֱלֹקִית (תְּקוּן) comes later, despite being higher in its source.

בְּרֵאשִׁית כה:כו

וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן יָצָא אָחִיו וַיֵּדוּ אַחְזָת בְּעֵקֶב עֵשָׂו וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב וַיִּצְחַק בֶּן־שְׁשִׁים שָׁנָה בְּלִדְתָּ אֹתָם

Afterward his brother emerged with his hand grasping עֵשָׂו's heel, so he was named יַעֲקֹב; יַעֲקֹב was sixty years old when they were born.

This פְּסוּק describes the birth of the twins, יַעֲקֹב and עֵשָׂו, with עֵשָׂו emerging first and יַעֲקֹב holding onto his heel. The מֵאמֵר uses this to illustrate the principle that what appears first chronologically is not necessarily first in essential priority. יַעֲקֹב's grasping עֵשָׂו's heel hints that he has a claim to firstborn status despite being born second.

רַשִׁ"י עַל בְּרֵאשִׁית כה:כו

מִשָּׁל לְשִׁפּוֹפֶרֶת נִכְנָס רֵאשׁוֹן יוֹצֵא אַחֲרוֹן, דִּיעֲקֹב נוֹצֵר מִטְּפָה הָרֵאשׁוֹנָה

This is like a tube - what goes in first comes out last; יַעֲקֹב was formed from the first drop.

רַשִׁ"י is explaining how יַעֲקֹב could be considered the true firstborn despite being born second. Using the analogy of a tube (like a narrow funnel), he explains that יַעֲקֹב was conceived first but emerged second. The מֵאמֵר brings this to demonstrate that in their essential root, תְּקוּן (עֵשָׂו/נֶפֶשׁ בְּהֵמִית) precedes תְּהוֹ (יַעֲקֹב/נֶפֶשׁ אֱלֹקִית), which explains why the אֱלֹקִית has the power to overcome the animal soul despite its apparent disadvantages.

Guiding Questions

1. How and why does a person blind himself from seeing his own faults and shortcomings?
 2. What are the two excuses that בעלי תשובה sometimes make to justify their past wrongdoing?
 3. Why are these excuses incorrect?
 4. What's the difference between the נפש הבהמית and נפש האלקית in terms of when they enter a person and begin to influence them? How is this reflected in their source in the worlds of תוהו and תיקון?
 5. How does the מאמר use the example of יעקב ועשו to explain which soul is really "first"?
-

מאמר י"ד

Summary

Continuing on the theme of taking responsibility for our actions, this מאמר explores the reasons it is foolish and harmful to make excuses for ourselves.

The מאמר dismantles common excuses:

We can't blame our nature, because before we were born, our נפש אלוקית took a שבועה that it would overcome the נפש הבהמית. The word שבועה connects to שובע (satiation), meaning taking this oath gives the נפש אלוקית the strength it needs to succeed.

And we can't blame bad friends, because we were the ones who chose those relationships.

When we make these excuses, we prevent real תשובה by undermining the feeling of regret and sorrow needed for genuine change.

Key Words and Ideas

ארבע יסודות

The four elements (fire, water, air, and earth) that form the foundation of all creation, both physical and spiritual. Every creation is made of these four elements in different combinations.

In terms of our נפש הבהמית, each element produces specific types of negative מדות:

- Fire creates anger and pride because fire naturally rises and seeks to dominate.
- Water creates desires for physical pleasures and indulgences because water nourishes growth.
- Air creates frivolity, showing off, joking around, and involvement in empty pursuits because air is light and lacks substance.
- Earth creates laziness and sadness because earth is heavy and static.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

נדה ל:ב

משביעין אותו תהי צדיק ואל תהי רשע

They make him swear: "Be righteous and do not be wicked."

This גמרא describes what happens to a נשמה before it enters the body. After being taught the entire תורה, the נשמה is made to take an oath to be righteous and avoid wickedness.

ישעיה נז. טז

כי לא לעולם אריב ולא לנצח אקצוף כי רוח מלפני יעטוף ונשמות אני עשיתי

For I will not contend forever, neither will I be wrathful eternally, for spirit from before Me would be overwhelmed, and the souls that I have made.

This פסוק from ישעיה speaks of 'ה as the Creator of souls, emphasizing His direct involvement in their formation. The מאמר – based on the רבי in אלטער רבי – uses this to support the idea that we all have two souls, the נפש הבהמית and the נפש האלקית.

ויקרא יז. יא

כי נפש כל בשר דמו בנפשו הוא ואני נתתיו לכם על המזבח לכפר על נפשתיכם כי נפש הבשר בדם היא והוא יכפר על הנפש

For the soul of all flesh - its blood is with its soul, and I have given it to you upon the מזבח to atone for your souls, for the soul of the flesh is in the blood, and it will atone for the soul.

On a פשוט level, this פסוק explains why blood is forbidden to eat and why it's used in קרבנות: because the life force (soul) of the animal is contained in its blood. The מאמר uses this to describe the nature הבהמית, which is clothed in the blood of a person and is characterized by passion and bodily desires.

בראשית ב. ז

וַיִּצַר ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאָדָם עֹפָר מִן הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו נְשָׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה

And ה' formed man of dust from the ground, **and He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life**, and man became a living soul.

This פסוק describes how ה' gave life to אדם הראשון, using the imagery of breathing to convey the intimate, direct nature of this gift from ה'. As the מאמר explains, based on פרק ב of תניא, this פסוק describes the נפש אלוקית.

תפילת שחרית

אֱלֹקֵי נְשָׁמָה שְׁנַתַּת בִּי טְהוֹרָה הִיא אֶתְּךָ בְּרֵאתְךָ אֶתְּךָ יִצְרַתְּךָ אֶתְּךָ נִפְחַתְּךָ בִּי וְאֶתְּךָ נִפְחַתְּךָ בִּי

My G-d, the soul You placed within me is pure. You created it, You formed it, You breathed it into me, **and You breathed it into me.**

This ברכה we say each morning connects directly to the פסוק in בראשית about ה' breathing the אדם into נשמת חיים.

שמות ד. כב

וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל פְּרַעֲהַ כֹּה אָמַר ה' בְּנֵי בְכֹרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

And you shall say to פרעה: So said ה', **'My firstborn son, ישראל.'**

The original context of this פסוק is ה' telling משה what to say to פרעה, establishing the relationship between ה' and the Jewish people.

The מאמר uses this to demonstrate the parent-child relationship between ה' and Jewish souls. Just as a child is drawn from the father's mind, so too (כביכול) each Jewish soul is drawn from ה' מחשבה וחכמה.

דברים יד. א

בְּנֵים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם לֹא תִתְגַּדְדוּ וְלֹא תִשְׂיִמוּ קַרְחָה בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם לְמַת

You are children to ה' your G-d; you shall not cut yourselves nor make a bald spot between your eyes for the dead.

This פסוק establishes the relationship between 'ה and the Jewish people, emphasizing their status as His children. The מאמר uses this to reinforce the concept that Jewish souls come from 'ה's חכמה.

הקדמה לתיקוני זהר

דאיהו חכים ולא בחכמה ידיעא אלא הוא וחכמתו אחד

That He is wise, but not with a known wisdom, rather He and His wisdom are one.

This זהר explains that 'ה's wisdom is not separate from Him like human wisdom, but is completely unified with His essence. The מאמר uses this to clarify the source of Jewish souls. Since Jewish נשמות come from 'ה's חכמה, and His wisdom is completely one with His essence (not separate like human attributes), this means that Jewish נשמות come from 'ה Himself.

קהלת ד:ט

טובים השנים מן האחד אשר יש להם שכר טוב בעמלם

Two are better than one, for they have good reward for their labor.

שלמה המלך is teaching about the value of partnership and companionship over being alone. The מאמר uses this to emphasize the importance of choosing good friends and avoiding bad ones.

ירמיה נ. לו

חרב אל הבדים ונאלו חרב אל גבוריה וחתו

A sword is upon the boasters and they shall become foolish; a sword is upon her mighty men and they shall be dismayed

ברכות סג. ב

מאי דכתיב "חרב אל הבדים ונאלו" — חרב על שונאיהם של תלמידי חכמים שיושבים בד בבד ועוסקים בתורה

What does it mean, "A sword is upon the boasters and they shall become foolish"? A sword upon the enemies of Torah scholars who sit separately (בד בבד) and study Torah.

The מאמר uses this quote to reinforce the importance of seeking out good friends who will strengthen rather than weaken our connection to תורה and מצות.

משלי י. יב

שנאה תעורר מִדְּנִים וְעַל כָּל פְּשָׁעִים תִּכְסֶה אֱהָבָה

Hatred stirs up quarrels, but over all transgressions, love will cover.

This teaches that genuine love leads to overlooking others' faults and focusing instead on their positive qualities. The מאמר uses this to illustrate how self-love causes us to overlook our own faults.

אבות פרק א

וַיְהוֹשֶׁעַ בֶּן פְּרַחֲיָה אוֹמֵר עֲשֵׂה לְךָ רַב וּקְנֵה לְךָ חֵבֵר וְהוּי דֵּן אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לְכַף זְכוּת

*יהושע בן פרחיה says: Make for yourself a teacher and **acquire for yourself a friend**, and judge all people favorably.*

This famous משנה teaches the importance of finding a genuine friend for mutual spiritual and intellectual growth. The מאמר uses this to emphasize how crucial good companionship is for spiritual development.

אבות פרק א

וּנְתַאי הָאֲרָבִלִי אוֹמֵר הֲרַחֵק מִשְׁכַּן רָע וְאַל תִּתְחַבֵּר לְרָשָׁע וְאַל תִּתְיַאֵשׁ מִן הַפְּרָעוֹת

*נתאי הארבלי says: **Distance yourself from a bad neighbor, do not connect to the wicked, and do not despair of retribution.***

This משנה warns about the negative influence of keeping bad company. The מאמר uses this to show the opposite effect of bad companionship.

במדבר טז:

וַיִּקַּח קָרַח בֶּן יִצְהָר בֶּן קֵהֶת בֶּן לֹוִי וְדָתָן וְאַבִּירָם בְּנֵי אֱלִיאָב וְאוֹן בֶּן פֹּלֵת בְּנֵי רְאוּבֵן

And Korach the son of יצהר, son of קהת, son of לוי took, along with דתן and אבירים the sons of אליאב, and און son of פלת, sons of ראובן.

רש"י על וְדָתָן וְאַבִּירָם

בְּשִׁבְלֵי שְׁהִיָּה שְׁבֵט רְאוּבֵן שְׂרָוִי בְּחֻנֵּיתָם תִּימְנָה שָׁכַן לִקְהֵת וּבְנָיו הַחֹנִיִּים תִּימְנָה, נִשְׁתַּתְּפוּ עִם קָרַח בְּמַחְלָקָתוֹ — **"אוי לְרָשָׁע אוֹי לְשָׁכְנוֹ..."**

Because the tribe of ראובן was dwelling in their camp on the south side, neighboring קהת and his sons who were also camping on the south side, they joined with קרח in his rebellion - **"Woe to the wicked one and woe to his neighbor."**

The מאמר uses this to illustrate the dangerous consequences of bad companionship.

ברכות לד. ב

בְּמָקוֹם שְׁבַעְלֵי תְּשׁוּבָה עוֹמְדִין מְקוֹם שְׁבַעְלֵי תְּשׁוּבָה עוֹמְדִים צְדִיקִים גְּמוּרִים אֵינָן עוֹמְדִין

In the place where תשובה stand, complete צדיקים do not stand.

This גמרא teaches that those who return to ה' after sinning can reach even higher levels than those who never sinned. The מאמר uses this to highlight what is lost when we justify our sins instead of doing proper תשובה.

Guiding Questions

1. What are the two נפשות that every person has, and what are their different sources and characteristics?
2. According to the מאמר, what is the meaning of the שבועה (oath) that we are given before birth?
3. According to the מאמר, why might someone claim that their "natural passion" is too strong for them to overcome? What is the מאמר's response to this claim?
4. What response does the מאמר give to the claim that עבירות are caused by others?
5. What are the two problems that stem from making excuses, and how does it damage the effectiveness of our תשובה?

מאמר ט"ו

Summary

The מאמר begins by explaining that human beings are entrusted with a נשמה loftier than all other creations, yet are also created from the coarsest material: the earth. These two things are connected: it is precisely because our נשמות are so lofty that they are empowered to elevate and transform the coarse material world, and our negative and unrefined characteristics. This transformation is the purpose for which ה' created the world.

The מאמר then explains that in order to succeed in our mission, we need to battle against the נפש הבמהמית, and avoid the temptations and foolish arguments that it uses to try to convince us to sin. The רבי רש"ב references some of the tricks we've already discussed, and then introduces a new one: arrogance. The רבי talks about how harmful this trick is, and emphasizes the value of the עבודה of a simple Jew, who serves ה' humbly, without any airs or self-importance.

The רבי רש"ב will continue his discussion of the dangers and foolishness of arrogance in the next מאמר.

Key Words and Ideas

צורה

צורה literally means "form." This refers to the spiritual qualities and purpose of something.

חומר

חומר literally means "matter." This refers to the physical substance and material existence of something.

איתכפיא

איתכפיא literally means "bending" or "subduing." It refers to the עבודה of overcoming and subduing קליפה. In חסידות, this means actively fighting against the קליפות and forces that oppose קדושה.

איתהפכא

איתהפכא means "transforming" or "completely turning around." Often used in the expression "איתהפכא חשוכא לנהורא" meaning transforming darkness into light. This is the higher, and often secondary level of עבודה which involves taking things that could lead us away from 'ה and using them to serve Him instead.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

תהלים קד:ד

עֲשֵׂה מְלֹאכֵי רֹחוֹת מִשְׁרָתֵי אֵשׁ לַהֵט

He makes His מלאכים winds, **His ministers flaming fire.**

This פסוק describes how 'ה creates the מְלֹאכֵי. It is brought in the מאמר to establish that all of 'ה's creations - both צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם (heavenly hosts) and צְבָא הָאָרֶץ (earthly creatures) - have both spirit and form.

בראשית ב:ז

וַיִּצְרֶה אֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאָדָם עֹפָר מִן הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו נְשִׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה

And אֱלֹקִים ה' formed **man from dust of the earth** and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

On a פֶּשֶׁט level, this פסוק describes the unique way 'ה created humans in two stages - first forming the physical body, then breathing life into it. It is brought here in the מאמר to demonstrate how humans are created with the coarsest material specifically because our נשמות are the highest.

בראשית א:יא

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים תִּדְשָׂא הָאָרֶץ דֶּשֶׂא עֹשֶׂב מִזְרִיעַ זֶרַע עֵץ פְּרִי עֹשֶׂה פְּרִי לְמִינֹו אֲשֶׁר זָרְעוּ בּוֹ עַל הָאָרֶץ וַיְהִי כֵן

And 'ה said: **Let the earth sprout vegetation, seed-bearing plants, fruit trees that produce fruit according to their kinds, with their seeds in them, upon the earth.** And it was so.

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This פסוק describes the third day of creation when plant life was created. It is brought here in the מאמר to contrast this process with human creation - all other living things (including plants and animals) emerged complete, while humans were created in the unique two-stage process that required a separate breathing of the נְשָׁמָה into the body.

חגיגה טז:א

שֵׁשׁ דְּבָרִים נֶאֱמָרוּ בְּבְנֵי אָדָם שְׁלֹשָׁה כְּמַלְאכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת וְשְׁלֹשָׁה כְּבְהֵמָה שְׁלֹשָׁה כְּמַלְאכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת — יֵשׁ לָהֶם דַּעַת כְּמַלְאכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת, וּמַהֲלֵכִין בְּקוֹמָה זְקוּפָה כְּמַלְאכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת, וּמְסַפְּרִים בְּלִשׁוֹן הַקֹּדֶשׁ כְּמַלְאכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת. שְׁלֹשָׁה כְּבְהֵמָה — אוֹכְלִין וְשׂוֹתִין כְּבְהֵמָה, וּפְרִין וְרַבִּין כְּבְהֵמָה, וּמוֹצִיאִין רְעֵי כְּבְהֵמָה

Six things were said about human beings: three like the ministering angels, three like animals. Three [aspects] like the ministering angels — they have knowledge like the ministering angels, and they walk with upright stature like the ministering angels, and they speak in the holy tongue like the ministering angels. Three [aspects] like animals — they eat and drink like animals, and they are fruitful and multiply like animals, and they excrete waste like animals.

This גמרא discusses the unique nature of human beings, who combine both spiritual and physical aspects. It is brought here in the מאמר to support the idea that humans can either fall lower than animals or rise higher than angels.

משלי כט:כג

גָּאוֹת אָדָם תִּשְׁפִּילְנוּ וְשֹׁפֵל רוּחַ יִתְמוֹךְ כְּבוֹד

A person's pride will humble them, but the humble in spirit will attain honor.

On a פשט level, this פסוק teaches that pride leads to downfall while humility leads to true honor. It is brought in the מאמר to show how pride can completely destroy even the most elevated person's spiritual accomplishments.

יבמות קכט:ב

שֶׁהַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְדַקְדֵּק עִם סְבִיבָיו כְּחוּט הַשְּׂעָרָה

'ה is **exacting with those close to Him like a hair's breadth.**

This גמרא is discussing how 'ה judges righteous people more strictly than ordinary people. It is brought here in the מאמר to explain why a learned person who takes pride in their accomplishments is judged more harshly than a simple person.

תהלים נג

אֶלְקֵינוּ יָבֵא וְאֵל יִחַרֵּשׁ אֵשׁ לְפָנָיו תֹּאכַל וְסִבִּיבָיו נִשְׁעָרָה מְאֹד

Our אֶלְקֵינוּ will come and not be silent; fire will consume before Him, and **around Him it storms greatly.**

On a פְּשׁוּט level, this פְּסוּק describes 'ה's intense presence and judgment. This means that those who are close to 'ה (סִבִּיבָיו) experience His presence more intensely. It is brought here in the מֵאמָר as a supporting פְּסוּק for the previous גְּמָרָא about 'ה being exacting with those close to Him, like תִּלְמִידֵי חֲכָמִים.

יומא פוא

היכי דמי חילול השם? אמר רב: כגון אנא אי שקילנא בשרא מטבחא ולא יהא שכיני טפי

What is an example of 'חילול ה'? Rav said: **For example, if I would buy meat from the butcher without paying immediately.**

רב's example of what constitutes a 'חילול ה' indicates how a תִּלְמִיד חֲכָם must be more careful than others about even seemingly minor actions. It is brought here in the מֵאמָר to explain why learned people who become proud are worse than simple people.

Guiding Questions

1. How and why are human beings created differently than other creations?
2. What does the משל of the wall teach us about ourselves?
3. What are the two extreme possibilities of human potential in this world?
4. What is the purpose of all the upper worlds and the entire system of creation?
5. What are the weapons of war and tactical strategies of the יצר הרע?
6. In what way does the יצר הרע trap a צדיק? Even if it doesn't actually lead to a sin?
7. What is the merit of the עבודה of the simple person? Why is it better than the עבודה of a תלמיד חכם?
8. What are the negative effects of גאווה?

מאמר ט"ז

Summary

This מאמר continues to discuss the tactic of the הרע, one that can affect even תלמידי חכמים: arrogance. The רבי explains why arrogance is foolish: why take pride in abilities that come entirely from ה' and are the purpose for being created?

The רבי then explains why the שטותים we've discussed in מאמרים יב-טז – excusing one's behavior, attributing credit to oneself, and arrogance – are even worse than the core שטות which cause us to do עבירות.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

אבות פרק ג:ז

רבי אלעזר איש ברתותא אומר, **תן לו משלו שאתה ושלקך שלו**. וכן בְּדוּד כֹּא הוּא אֹמֵר (דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים א כט) כִּי מִמֶּךָ הַכֹּל וּמִיָּדְךָ נִתְּנָו לָךְ. (דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים א:כט)

ר' אלעזר from ברתותא says: **Give to Him from what is His, for you and what is yours belongs to Him.** And so דוד says: "For everything is from You, and from Your hand we have given to You." (Divrei Hayamim 1:29)

This משנה teaches that everything we have actually belongs to ה' and comes from Him. It is brought here in the מאמר to demonstrate why גאווה is foolish.

דברים ה:יח

וְזָכַרְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי הוּא הֵנִיחַ לְךָ כַּח לַעֲשׂוֹת חֵיל לְמַעַן הִקִּים אֶת בְּרִיתוֹ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם בְּיוֹם הַזֶּה:

You shall remember 'your G-d, **for it is He who gives you power to achieve strength, in order to confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.**

This פסוק appears in מִנְשֵׁה's farewell speech to בני ישראל, warning them not to forget ה' when they become successful. It is brought here in the מאמר to show that even when we work hard in our עבודָה, ה' is the one who gives us the actual strength and ability to accomplish anything.

אבות פרק ב:ח

הוא היה אומר, אם למדת תורה הרבה, אל תחזק טובה לעצמך, כי לך נוצרת.

He would say: If you have learned much תורה, do not think well of yourself, for this is what you were created for.

This is brought up here in the מאמר to explain why we shouldn't take credit for our learning of תורה: we're just doing what we were created to do.

בראשית א:א

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

In the beginning, ה' created the heavens and the earth.

רש"י על בראשית א:א

למה פתח בבראשית, היה לו להתחיל בחדש הזה לכם... אלא בשביל התורה שנקראת ראשית ובשביל ישראל שנקראו ראשית

Why did it begin with "in the beginning"? It should have started with "This month shall be for you"... **Rather, it was for the sake of the תורה which is called "ראשית" and for the sake of who are called "ראשית."**

This famous רש"י explains why the תורה begins with creation rather than the first מצוה. It is brought here in the מאמר to establish that the entire world was created for the purpose of learning and ישראל fulfilling their mission.

שבת פח:א

שְׁתַּנְּאֵי הַתְּנָה הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּמַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית אִם יִקְיִמוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת תּוֹרָתִי מוֹטָב וּבְאִם לֹא יִחְזֹר אֶת הָעוֹלָם לְתֵהוּ וּבֵהוּ

The Holy One made a condition at the time of creation: If ישראל will fulfill My תורה, good; but if not, I will return the world to chaos and void.

This גמרא discusses the conditional nature of creation itself. It is brought in the מאמר to emphasize that the entire world's existence depends on ישראל learning תורה and keeping מצוות.

שמות רבה פרשה מח על פסוק

אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם אלה בזכות מי נבראו ובזכות מי עומדין, בזכות אלה שמות בני ישראל, ואלה בזכות מי הם עומדין בזכות אלה העדות והחקים והמשפטים

“These are the generations of heaven and earth when they were created.” These, in whose merit were they created and in whose merit do they exist? In the merit of these names of the children of ישראל. And these, in whose merit do they exist? In the merit of these testimonies, statutes, and judgments.

This מדרש interprets the word “אלה” (these) in the פסוק to refer to both ישראל and the תורה. It is brought in the מאמר to reinforce that creation exists specifically for ישראל to learn תורה and fulfill מצוות - making this our core purpose.

קהלת יב:יג

סוף דבר הכל נשמע את האלהים ירא ואת מצותיו שמור כי זה כל האדם

The end of the matter, when all has been heard: Fear ‘ה’ and keep His מצוות, for this is the whole of man.

This פסוק is brought in the מאמר to show that יראת ה’ and keeping מצוות is the entire purpose of man; when we do what we were created for, there’s no reason to take personal credit.

מגילה ו:ב

ואמר ר' יצחק אם יאמר לך אדם יגעתי ומצאתי תאמן לא יגעתי ומצאתי אל תאמן יגעתי ולא מצאתי אל תאמן

ר' יצחק said: If someone tells you “I worked hard and I found” - believe them. **“I didn’t work hard and I found” - don’t believe them.** “I worked hard and didn’t find” - don’t believe them.

This גמרא teaches that genuine success in learning requires effort and hard work. It is brought here in the מאמר to refute the שטות רוח that tells intellectually gifted people they don’t need to work hard because their abilities are so great - the גמרא makes it clear that without effort, no real achievement is possible.

עירובין נד:א

חֵשׁ בְּרֹאשׁוֹ יַעֲסוֹק בְּתוֹרָה וְחֵשׁ בְּגֵרוֹנוֹ יַעֲסוֹק בְּתוֹרָה חֵשׁ בְּמַעְיוֹ יַעֲסוֹק בְּתוֹרָה חֵשׁ בְּכָל גּוּפוֹ יַעֲסוֹק בְּתוֹרָה

If his head hurts, he should engage in תורה study; if his throat hurts, he should engage in תורה study; if his stomach hurts, he should engage in תורה study; if his whole body hurts, he should engage in תורה study.

This גמרא teaches that תורה study is healing for all physical ailments. It is brought here in the מאמר to expose the falseness of health-related excuses that the שטות gives people to avoid intensive תורה study - the גמרא shows that תורה actually strengthens rather than weakens us.

משלי ד:כב

כִּי־חַיִּים הֵם לְמַצְאֵיהֶם וְלִכְל־בָּשָׂרוֹ מֵרַפָּא:

For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh.

This פסוק is talking about words of תורה being like medicine. It is brought here in the מאמר alongside the גמרא from עירובין to prove that תורה study heals the body rather than harming it, refuting the שטות that physical ailments should prevent the study of תורה.

Guiding Questions

1. According to the מאמר, what is the שטות that particularly affects תלמידי חכמים?
2. What are the four levels of שטות mentioned in the מאמר, in order of severity?
3. What are two the different false excuses that the הרע יצר gives people to avoid serious תורה study? Why are they false?

מאמר י"ז

Summary

Having discussed the רוח שטות that can afflict תלמיד חכמים, the רבי רש"ב now turns to the שטות that affects the businessman.

The מאמר describes בעלי עסקים so consumed by business that they skip בצבור, rush through תפילה without understanding the words, and avoid setting regular times for תורה learning. Their excuse? They believe any time spent on spiritual matters will cause financial loss. But this thinking reveals fundamental שטות - forgetting that all our ברכה comes from 'ה.

The מאמר concludes by questioning the reason we need to invest any physical effort in working at all if everything comes from 'ה ברכה. In addition, the רבי רש"ב points out contradictory statements in חז"ל regarding how and when a person's פרנסה is decided by 'ה.

We will explore these questions over the next מאמרים, through מאמר כ"ה.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

אבות פרק ב:ב

יפה תלמוד תורה עם דרך ארץ שיגיעת שניהם משפחת עון וכל תורה שאין עמה מלאכה סופה בטלה וגוררת עון

study is beautiful together with worldly occupation, for the effort of both makes one forget sin, and any תורה study that is not accompanied by work will ultimately be nullified and cause sin.

This משנה teaches the importance of combining תורה learning with earning a פרנסה. The מאמר references this here to establish that business activity itself is permitted and even necessary. However, the מאמר goes on to explain that the problem arises when people become so absorbed in their business that it interferes with their spiritual obligations.

דברים טו:יח

וברכך ה' אלקיך בכל אשר תעשה

And 'ה your G-d will bless you **in all that you do**.

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On a פשט level, this פסוק promises ברכות based on our efforts and work. It is brought here in the מאמר to raise a fundamental question: if ברכה ה' is what brings success, and our פרנסה is predetermined from ראש השנה, why do we need to work at all?

ראש השנה טז:א

רבי יוסי אומר: אדם נידון בכל יום, שנאמר: "ותפקדנו לבקרים"

Rabbi Yosei says: **"A person is judged every day,"** as it is stated: "And You visit him every day." (Iyov 7:18)

This statement indicates that פרנסה is decided more often than just once a year on ראש השנה.

זהר חלק ב סב.ב

רב ייבא סבא הנה מתפלל בכל יום קודם האכילה על מזונו שינתן לו... דאף על גב דהוה ליה למיכלא לא הוי מתקן ליה עד דשאל ליה מבי מלכא בצלותא

רב ייבא סבא would daven every day before eating for his sustenance to be given to him... for even though he had food to eat, he would not prepare it until he requested it from the King through prayer.

This passage from the זהר describes the practice of a sage who, despite having food already available, would still pray for his sustenance before each meal. It is brought here to illustrate that פרנסה is decided by ה' each and every day, not just on ראש השנה.

Guiding Questions

1. According to the מאמר, what specific שטות affects business people?
2. What is the response to this שטות?
3. The מאמר presents an apparent contradiction between two statements from חז"ל. What are these seemingly conflicting ideas about פרנסה (livelihood)?
4. Which two questions does the מאמר leave off with at the end?

מאמר י"ח

Summary

The רבי רש"ב continues the discussion begun in the previous מאמר about פרנסה by addressing a seeming contradiction about the nature of פרנסה:

Are our needs for the entire year determined during the ימים נוראים, or do we need to request them again each day?

In this מאמר, he explains that during תשרי ה', sends new חיות to sustain all worlds for the entire year. However, this חיות has to go through a process before it can be properly received by creations. This process starts on ראש השנה, and culminates on שמיני עצרת.

During נעילה of כיפור, five גבורות are released. These forces divide and channel the flow of חיות into measured portions for each creation. This process is also called a "חותם" ("seal"), because it both seals and protects the חיות, ensuring it only reaches the intended places.

Key Words and Ideas

בנין המלכות - The Building of Malchus

are modes through which ה' relates to the world: חכמה (wisdom), בינה (understanding), חסד (kindness), and so on. A single ספירה on its own is incomplete. It needs to be part of a פרצוף, a complete, unified system capable of receiving, processing, and transmitting חיות.

בנין המלכות is the process through which the ספירה of מלכות is turned into a complete פרצוף that can channel ה's energy down to our world. This whole "building project" happens primarily on ראש השנה, but continues throughout the עשרת ימי תשובה, peaking on כיפור.

כתר/עתיק יומין

כתר is ה's initial desire to create, prior to actual existence. It is the very first step in ה' creating something new or bringing new חיות into the world.

כתר can be further subdivided into two levels; the higher level, which is referenced in our מאמר, is called (עתיק יומין). The name עתיק means "removed" or "separate," highlighting how this level is lofty and beyond the entire השתלשלות.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

עבודה זרה ג:ב

שְׁלִישִׁיּוֹת הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא יוֹשֵׁב וְזָן אֶת כָּל הָעוֹלָם כּוֹלוּ מִקַּרְנֵי רְאָמִים עַד בֵּיצֵי כְּנִים

In the third [part of the day] the Holy One, Blessed be He, sits and sustains the entire world, from the horns of re'emim to the eggs of lice.

This statement is brought to describe how 'ה's חיות extends to every level of creation.

תהלים קטו:יג

כּוֹס יִשׁוּעוֹת אֲשֶׁא וּבִשְׁמִי אֶקְרָא

I will lift the cup of salvations, and call upon the name of 'ה.

The זוהר uses this פסוק to teach that a כוס של ברכה (a cup of wine used for a מצוה such as הבדלה, קידוש, or ברכת המזון) must rest on five fingers. The five fingers correspond to the five גבורות, also called ישועות. As the מאמר explains, the גבורות are called ישועות (salvations) because they enable 'ה's חסד to be properly channeled and received by creations.

Guiding Questions

1. Which three statements from חז"ל about פרנסה does this מאמר reconcile?
2. What is the progression of the אור from its concealment on ראש השנה to its various stages of revelation during the יומים טובים?
3. What are the three משלים that the מאמר uses to explain the גבורות 'ה?
4. What are the two functions of the "חותם נעילה"?

מאמר י"ט

Summary

This מאמר begins to answer the question raised in the previous מאמר.

The חסד allocated during the ימים נוראים descends to the world of אצילות - spiritual potential, without physical expression. Daily judgment determines how this potential will manifest in our physical world - whether as health, children, wealth, or some combination.

This is why we daven daily: we are asking that the general חסד allotted to us on ראש השנה be drawn down and revealed in the particular, tangible blessings that we need.

Key Words and Ideas

זעיר אנפין (ז"א) ונוקבא

זעיר אנפין literally means "the small face" and refers to the six ספירות of חסד through יסוד. מלכות נוקבא literally means "the feminine" and refers to מלכות.

In order for מלכות to transmit חיות to the worlds, it must unite with and receive energy from the six higher ספירות. This process is called יחוד ז"א ונוקבא.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

דברים ד:כד

כִּי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ אֵשׁ אֹכֵלָה הוּא אֶל-ל קָנָא:

For 'ה **your God is a consuming fire**, a jealous G-d.

On a פשט level, this פסוק warns בני ישראל that 'ה is a fire that consumes everything who punishes when we don't serve Him as we should.

It is brought here to support the idea that אצילות is like the element of fire. Just as fire doesn't combine with other elements and always rises upward, אצילות has no connection with the lower worlds בריאה-יצירה-עשיה; it is a reality where everything is totally בטל to 'ה and feels no sense of independence from אלוקות.

שמות כ:ט-יא

שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל מְלַאכְתְּךָ... כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה ה' אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ אֶת הַיָּם וְאֶת
כָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּם וַיִּנַּח בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי

Six days you will work and do all your labor... For in six days 'ה made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day.

On a פשט level, this establishes the pattern of six days of work followed by שבת, a day of rest. It is brought here in the מאמר to explain that each of the six weekdays corresponds to a specific ספירה and requires particular עבודה.

תהלים קלט:טז

גִּלְמֵי רֵאוּ עֵינֶיךָ וְעַל סִפְרְךָ כָּלֵם יִכְתְּבוּ יָמִים יֵצְרוּ וְלוֹ אֶחָד בָּהֶם

Your eyes saw my unformed body, and in Your book they were all written - days were formed, and for Him one among them.

On a פשט level, this describes how 'ה sees and records all our days before we are even born. It is brought here in the מאמר to explain that our מלאכה (work) is to reveal the reality that 'ה is one within this physical world. The word אחד is explained as an acronym:

א = אין סוף ברוך הוא

ח = seven heavens and earth

ד = four directions of the world

Guiding Questions

1. What the three statements from חז"ל about פרנסה does this מאמר reconcile?
2. What is the progression of the אור from its concealment on ראש השנה to its various stages of revelation during the יומים טובים?
3. What are the three משלים that the מאמר uses to explain the גבורות 'ה?
4. What are the two functions of the "חותם נעילה"?

מאמר כ'

Summary

This מאמר continues to explain how רבי יוסי's statement that people are judged daily does not contradict the fact that ראש השנה is the day of judgement.

On ראש השנה and יום כיפור, the overall amount of חסד is allocated for each person and the entire world at the level of אצילות. However, this חסד has no specific physical form yet - it's pure spiritual energy without any description of how it will manifest in עולם הזה.

Daily judgment determines the practical question: how will this allocated חסד actually show up in our lives? Will it come as health, children, or wealth? Will it manifest physically, or as spiritual reward in עולם הבא? This is decided daily based on our actions and תפילות.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

תהלים פא:ה

כִּי חֶק לְיִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא מִשְׁפָּט לְאֱלֹקֵי יַעֲקֹב

For it is a statute for ישראל, a judgment for the G-d of יעקב.

This פסוק refers to ראש השנה as a special day of judgment for ישראל. The מאמר brings this to address a key question: if people are judged daily (רבי יוסי) or every moment (רבי נתן), what makes ראש השנה unique?

דברים יא:יב

אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ דֹרֵשׁ אֹתָהּ תָּמִיד עֵינֵי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּהַ מְרֵאשִׁית הַשָּׁנָה וְעַד אַחֲרֵית שָׁנָה

A land that ה' your God seeks out constantly, the eyes of ה' your God are upon it from the beginning of the year until the end of the year.

On a פשט level, this describes how ארץ ישראל receives special attention from ה' throughout the year. This means ה' watches over ארץ ישראל particularly from "beginning of year" (ראש) onward. It is brought here in the מאמר to emphasize that ראש השנה initiates a year-long process of supervision, supporting the idea that the year's חסד is allocated on ראש השנה.

Guiding Questions

1. What difficulty arises from the opinions of רַבִּי יוֹסִי and רַבִּי נִתָּן about daily and hourly judgment?
 2. How does the מַאֲמַר answer the above questions?
 3. What is the difference between the הֶקְדָּד established on רֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה versus the daily judgments? Why can't the הֶקְדָּד on רֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה directly determine what happens in our physical world?
-

מאמר כ"א

Summary

This מאמר shifts to examine the opinion of the other חכמים, who disagree with יוסי יוסי's view that man is judged daily, and instead say that a person is judged only on ראש השנה.

The מאמר questions this view. Based on what we explained, the חסד allocated on ראש השנה is in the world of אצילות, and not in the particular physical form it takes once it comes into our world.

The מאמר explains that חסד of אצילות does in fact contain the roots of the physical manifestation of חסד in this world. Thus, it is possible to say that everything is decided on ראש השנה.

Key Words and Ideas

צמצום

צמצום is a foundational concept in קבלה and חסידות that describes the process through which 'ה created the world. Before creation, אור אין סוף was all that existed, leaving no possibility for any finite reality to exist. When 'ה created the world, He first had to create a צמצום, concealing this infinite light and leaving a "void" (חלל/מקום פנוי) where finite creations could exist.

This initial concealment, called צמצום הראשון (or "the first צמצום" or "צמצום בדרך סילוק"), completely removed the revealed light in order to allow a new reality to exist. This was "צמצום in a way of removal."

After צמצום הראשון, there are other stages of צמצום that progressively conceal and channel 'ה's light as it descends through the various spiritual worlds. One stage, which happens primarily between the world of אצילות and the lower worlds of עשיה and יצירה, בריאה, is called a פרסא ("curtain"). The משל of a window which is covered with a curtain that filters and downgrades the quality of the sunlight illustrates this: the sun is the same, but the curtain dims and alters the light. Similarly, the פרסא conceals the intensity and quality of the revelation of 'ה, so that אלוקות becomes less apparent.

השתלשלות עילה ועלול

This phrase literally means "a chain of cause and effect." In our מאמר, it describes the process by which חיות descends through the worlds of יצירה, בריאה, אצילות, and עשי'ה. Each new stage of revelation within these worlds has a clear relationship and connection to the level above it. The עלול (effect) reflects and contains aspects of its עילה (cause). This differs from the צמצום הראשון which completely conceals the אור אין סוף and allows for the creation of something totally new, the world of אצילות.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

ראש השנה, טז, א

דַּתְנִיָּא: הַכֹּל נִידוּנִין בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה, וְגַזַּר דִּין שְׁלֵהֶם נְחָתָם בְּיוֹם הַכְּפוּרִים, דְּבַרֵּי רַבִּי מֵאִיר. רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אֹמֵר: הַכֹּל נִידוּנִין בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה, וְגַזַּר דִּין שְׁלֵהֶם נְחָתָם כֹּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד בְּזִמְנֹו: בְּפֶסַח — עַל הַתְּבוּאָה, בְּעֶצְרַת — עַל פִּירוֹת הָאֵילָן, בְּחֶג נִידוּנִין עַל הַמַּיִם. וְאָדָם נִידוּן בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה, וְגַזַּר דִּין שְׁלוֹ נְחָתָם בְּיוֹם הַכְּפוּרִים. רַבִּי יוֹסֵי אֹמֵר: אָדָם נִידוּן בְּכָל יוֹם, שְׁנֵאָמַר: "וַתִּפְקְדֵנוּ לְבִקְרִים". רַבִּי נֹתָן אֹמֵר: אָדָם נִידוּן בְּכָל שָׁעָה, שְׁנֵאָמַר: "לְרֹגְעִים תִּבְחַנְנוּ"

For it was taught: **Everyone is judged on ראש השנה, and their decree is sealed on יום כיפור.** The above is the opinion of רבי מאיר.

רבי יהודה says: everyone is judged on ראש השנה, and the decree is sealed for each creation in its time. Regarding grain – on פסח; regarding tree produce – on שבועות; regarding water – on סוכות.

רבי יוסי says: A person is judged every day, as it is stated: "And you visit him every morning." (איוב ז:יח)

רבי נתן says: **A person is judged every hour, as it is stated: "You test him at every moment."** (איוב ז:יח)

The quote above seems to record a מחלוקת about when man is judged. In previous מאמרים, we've discussed the views of רבי יוסי and רבי נתן, who say that man is judged every day or even every moment. In our מאמר, we will analyze the view of the other חכמים, who say that man is judged on ראש השנה and יום כיפור.

בראשית רבה פרשה י

אין לך עשב מלמטה שאין לו מזל מלמעלה המכה בו ואומר גדל כו' וגבוה מעל גבוה וגבוה עליהם

There is no blade of grass below that doesn't have a מזל from above that strikes it and tells it "Grow!" "And there is one higher than the high, and higher than them" (from קהלת ז:ה).

This מדרש teaches that every element of creation has its specific מזל above. It is brought here in the מאמר to support the idea that the חסד allocated on ראש השנה contains the roots of all שפע given throughout the year.

Guiding Questions

1. Based on the end of the previous מאמר, what is our question now about the view of the חכמים?
2. Which are more incomparable: אצילות and ה' himself, or the world of אצילות and the world of עשי'ה?
3. What is the difference between the type of צמצום that is necessary to create the world of אצילות, as opposed to the צמצום that happens between אצילות and the lower worlds?
4. What is the משל for the type of צמצום which occurs between the world of אצילות and the lower worlds? What does this משל teach us?
5. Why does the מאמר use the משל of the sweetness of an apple?
6. According to the מאמר, how does it make sense for the חכמים to say that everything that will happen in the coming year is decided on ראש השנה and יום הכפורים?

מאמר כ"ב

Summary

This מאמר continues to explore the views of רבי יוסי and the other חכמים regarding when man is judged. The מאמר presents two different explanations of what they are disagreeing about, and why.

The first explanation is that both רבי יוסי and the חכמים agree that on ראש השנה, the general חסד descends to מלכות דאצילות, and each day its specific form is determined. The only point of disagreement is whether or not there is a full-fledged דין each day which determines the physical form of the חסד.

The second explanation is that רבי יוסי and the חכמים are not disagreeing at all; they are just talking about different aspects of the חסד. The חכמים are talking about the spiritual אור and חיות of the חסד, which is all determined on ראש השנה. In contrast, רבי יוסי is referring to the tangible, physical form of the חסד, which is decided each and every day.

Key Words and Ideas

בריאה יש מאין

This phrase literally means "the creation of something from nothing."

This refers to ה'’s unique ability to bring into existence something that never existed before in any form. This phrase is often contrasted with השתלשלות, where one level emerges and develops naturally from the level above it that already existed.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

שמות טו:ב

עֲזִי וְחַמְרַת לִי-הוּא וַיְהִי לִי לִישׁוּעָה זֶה אֱלֹהֵי אָבוֹתַי וְאֶרְמְמֶנּוּהוּ

*My strength and song is הוּא, and He has become my salvation; **this is my G-d and I will glorify Him**, the G-d of my father and I will exalt Him.*

שבת קל"ג:ב

דתניא: "זה אלי ואנוהו", התנאה לפניו במצות

It is taught: this is my G-d and I will glorify Him: Beautify Him through מצות.

This גמרא supports the idea that abundant physical חיות can be a positive thing which enables us to perform more מצוות.

מלכים א ח:נט

ויהיו דברי אלה אשר התחננתי לפני ה' קרבים אלה' אלקינו יומם ולילה לעשות | משפט עבדו ומשפט עמו
ישראל דבר יום ביומו

May these words of mine, with which I have made supplication before 'ה, be close to 'ה our G-d day and night, to judge His servant and His people ישראל, as each day requires.

This פסוק comes from the שלמה המלך's dedication prayer when the בית המקדש was completed. It is brought here in our מאמר as an additional source which indicates that man is judged each day.

דברים ל:טו

ראה נתתי לפניך היום את החיים ואת הטוב ואת המות ואת הרע

See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.

On a פשט level, משה is presenting בני ישראל with the fundamental choice: follow 'ה's תורה and receive blessing and life, or abandon it and face consequences and death. This means that life and goodness are inherently connected to spiritual reality and closeness to 'ה, while death and evil are linked with separation from one's Source.

It is brought here in the מאמר to explain why בריאה-יצירה-עשייה are called "death" compared to אצילות - in these worlds, 'ה's light is so hidden that physical existence can feel separated from its Source.

משלי לא:טו

וְתָקַם בְּעוֹד לַיְלָה וַתֵּתֶן טָרֶף לְבֵיתָהּ וְחֶק לְנַעֲרֹתֶיהָ

*She rises while it is still night **and gives food to her household** and portions to her maidservants.*

On a פשט level, this פסוק describes the אשת חיל who wakes early to provide for her family's needs.

It is brought here to describe how מלכות of אצילות descends to bring חיות to the lower worlds of בריאה-יצירה-עשייה.

Guiding Questions

1. According to the first explanation brought in the מאמר (in פרק א), what is the מחלקת between חכמים and רבי יוסי about?
2. Why does the מאמר bring a second explanation of the opinions of חכמים and רבי יוסי?
3. What is the fundamental difference between השתלשלות and יש מאין? What kinds of things come into being through each?
4. According to the second explanation brought in the מאמר (in פרקים ב-ג), what is the מחלוקת between רבנן and רבי יוסי about?

מאמר כ"ג

Summary

This מאמר returns to address the question we posed at the end of יז: מאמר יז: Why does the פסוק say "ברכה ה' - וברכך ה' אלקיך בכל אשר תעשה" - implying we need to do work to receive ה'?

The מאמר explains that while ה' is the source of all השפעה, physical ברכה must come specifically through the מזלות (natural forces). The מזלות are like tools in a craftsman's hand - they have no independent power. ה' uses them as tools to conceal His infinite light, allowing limited physical creations to exist and receive His ברכה.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

דברים לג:יד

וּמִמְגַד תְּבוֹאוֹת שֶׁמֶשׁ וּמִמְגַד גֶּרֶשׁ יְרֵחִים

And from the delightful fruit of the crops of the sun and from the delightful fruits of the crops of the months.

This פסוק describes agricultural abundance flowing through the cycles of the sun and moon. As the מאמר explains, this is the reason people came to practice זרה עבודה - by mistakenly attributing independent power to the מזלות, which are in truth only ה' messengers in the natural order.

ישעיה יטו

הֲיִתְפָּאֵר הַגֶּרֶן עַל הַחֶצֶב בּוֹ: אִם-יִתְגַּדֵּל הַמְשׂוֹר עַל-מְנִיפּוֹ כְּהַנִּיף שֶׁבֶט וְאֵת-מְרִימָיו כְּהָרִים מִטָּה לֹא-עֵץ.

Should the axe boast itself against the one who wields it, or should the saw magnify itself against the one who holds it, as if a rod could wave those who lift it, or a staff could lift up the one who is not wood.

The נביא uses this משל to show the absurdity of non-Jewish kings like סנחריב claiming credit for their success. The מאמר applies this imagery to the מזלות - they're merely instruments in ה' hands and have no reason to be worshipped or credited with independent power.

תהלים פד:יב

כי שמש, ומגן ה' אלקים: חן וכבוד, יתן יהוה; לא ימנע-טוב, להלכים בתמים.

For ה' is the sun and the shield, ה' gives grace and glory, He does not withhold his reward to those who walk with him without blame.

This פסוק illustrates how the name אלקים – which represents natural forces – functions like a shield that covers and moderates the intense אור אלקי (represented by שמש), making it possible for created beings to exist.

Guiding Questions

1. What is the main question raised by the פסוק of "וברכך ה' אלקיך בכל אשר תעשה"?
2. How does the מאמר explain the connection between the word צו and עבודה זרה?
3. What is the משל and נמשל of the axe and the woodchopper?
4. What are the two opinions regarding the nature of the חסד in the world of אצילות?
According to which opinion/s is it necessary for the חסד to be further concealed and lowered through the worlds, and why?
5. Why is it necessary for the השפעה to be enfolded in the מזלות?

מאמר כ"ד

Summary

This מאמר continues exploring how 'ה allocates our material needs for the year, and specifically answers the question of why it comes through natural means.

How much and what sort of השפעה we receive throughout the year depends only on 'ה. He determines it based on how we kept תורה ומצוות the previous year and the תשובה we do during תשרי and אלול.

The forces of nature, which conceal 'ה's involvement, are not independent powers but rather a veil. Their purpose is to protect us - so that the overwhelming light of 'ה can be received in a way that benefits us.

The danger lies in mistaking these natural forces of having their own power, instead of recognizing that 'ה is behind everything. This mistaken thinking is a form of עבודה זרה.

Key Words and Ideas

יג מידות הרחמים

The thirteen מידות of רחמים through which 'ה channels compassion for בני ישראל. These מידות were used by משה to ask for forgiveness after חטא העגל. During אלול, these מדות shine and help us spiritually, making it much easier for us to do תשובה and connect to 'ה.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

תהלים קד:כד

מָה רַבּוּ מַעֲשֵׂיךָ ה' כָּלֵם בְּחָכְמָה עָשִׂיתָ מְלֵאָה הָאָרֶץ קִינִינָךְ

How many are Your works, 'ה! You made them all with wisdom; the earth is full of Your possessions.

On a פשט level, דוד המלך marvels at 'ה's incredible creations throughout the world. It is brought here in the מאמר to explain that when we study תורה, especially פנימיות התורה, we're connecting to 'ה's חכמה and understanding the incredible depth and greatness of His creation, which leads to אהבה ויראה.

תהלים צב:ו

מה גדלו מעשיך ה' מאד עמקו מחשבתך

How great are Your works, 'ה! Very deep are Your thoughts.

On a פשט level, this פסוק praises 'ה for the greatness and profound depth of His creation and plans. This means that 'ה's "thoughts" - His divine wisdom and planning behind creation - are incredibly deep and beyond our full understanding. It is brought here in the מאמר to emphasize that learning about יחודו ואחדותו יתברך, אלקות, and the spiritual worlds helps us appreciate the incredible depth of 'ה's חכמה, which should be studied with our human שכל.

Guiding Questions

1. What משל of the merchant does the מאמר bring, and what is the נמשל?
2. Why does 'ה choose to hide His אור through the natural system of מזלות instead of giving השפעה openly and supernaturally?
3. What משל does the מאמר give to illustrate this idea?
4. Why must this light descend specifically into human beings in the physical world?

מאמר כ"ה

Summary

This מאמר concludes our discussion about the רוח שטות which affects businessmen: the mistaken belief that natural means of earning a living have independent power, and that studying תורה and keeping מצוות take away time from earning our פרנסה. In reality, our תורה and מצוות are actually what draws down ברכה ה'! The physical work we do is only secondary; we only need to do the minimum necessary to create natural channels for ברכה ה' to come into our lives.

Understanding this idea allows us to access our inborn אמונה that natural forces are not ח"ו separate from ה', and frees us to draw down ברכה ה' into our lives through investing in תורה and מצוות.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

דברים ט"ז:ח

לא־יקָשָׁה בְּעֵינֶיךָ בְּשִׁלְחֶךָ אֶת־וְעַבְדְּךָ אֲשֶׁר שָׂמָנָה לְךָ שְׂכָר שְׂכִיר עֶבֶדְךָ שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים וּבֵרַכְךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה

*It shall not be difficult in your eyes when you send [your servant] away free from you, for he has worked for you six years for double the wage of a hired worker, and **ה' your אלקים will bless you in all that you do.***

The מאמר uses this פסוק to explore why עשייה (active work) is necessary for receiving ברכה ה'.

ישעיהו מ"ה:ט"ו

אֲכַן אֶתְּךָ אֶל־מִסְתַּתֵּר אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מוֹשִׁיעַ

Indeed, You are a G-d who conceals Himself, G-d of Israel, Savior.

This פסוק distinguishes between revealed and concealed אלקות. The מאמר explains that א-ל refers to אלקות clothed in natural garments, while revealed אלקות is visible even without contemplation.

שמות ט"ו:ד'

מִרְכַבֹּת פָּרְעֹה וְחֵילוֹ יָרָה בַיָּם וּמִבְּחַר שְׁלִשְׁוֹ טָבְעוּ בַיָּם־סוּף

*Pharaoh's chariots and his army He cast into the sea, and his choice officers **were sunk in the Sea of Reeds.***

The מאמר uses the root word טבע from טבעו to explain the meaning of טבע (nature). Just as something sunk in the sea is covered and hidden by water, so too אלקות is concealed within natural processes.

דברים ח':י"ז

וְאָמַרְתָּ בְּלִבְבְּךָ כַּחַי וְעֵצָם יְדִי עָשָׂה לִי אֶת־הַחֵיל הַזֶּה

And you will say in your heart: "My strength and the power of my hand made this wealth for me"

This פסוק describes the danger of לבושי הטבע - they can cause a person to mistakenly think their business success comes from their own efforts rather than from ה's ברכה.

ישעיהו א':ג'

יָדַע שׁוֹר קִנְהוֹ וְחֲמוֹר אֲבוֹס בְּעֵלְיוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָדַע עַמִּי לֹא הִתְבוּנָן

An ox knows its owner and a donkey its master's feeding trough, but Israel does not know, My people do not contemplate.

This פסוק criticizes those who lack awareness of ה', descending lower than animals who recognize where their sustenance comes from.

דברים כ"ח:ל"ד

וְהֵייתָ מְשֻׁגַע מִמַּרְאֵה עֵינֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּרְאֶה

And you will be driven mad by what your eyes see.

This פסוק is from the תוכחה in תבא כי פרשת, which describes the terrible punishments which will befall the Jewish people if they do not follow ה' will. As the מאמר explains, this פסוק also describes the מדה כנגד מדה punishment of someone who is swayed by the שטות of the יצר הרע.

Guiding Questions

1. What is the difference between how we receive our sustenance in גלות, and how we will receive it in the times of משיח?
2. What are the two ways that אלקות relates to creation? What is the משל that is brought to illustrate the difference?
3. What is the progression of עבירות that results from believing that more work equals more פרנסה?
4. Why is the belief that excessive business involvement increases פרנסה considered true שטות?
5. What is the מדה כנגד מדה consequence for buying into this שטות?

מאמר כ"ו

Summary

After having gone through the various שטותים of the הרע יצר, this מאמר goes to the root of it all, and explores what makes us susceptible to רוח שטות in the first place. After חטא עץ הדעת, man lost his natural awareness of אלוקות and gained an awareness of physical pleasures, leaving him vulnerable to the הרע יצר's שטות.

This מאמר also introduces a holy type of שטות, called שטות דקדושה. This form of שטות causes us to transcend all reasoning in service of 'ה.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

כתובות יז, א

אָמְרוּ עָלָיו עַל רַבִּי יְהוּדָה בֶּר אֵילְעָאֵי שְׁהִיָּה נוֹטֵל בְּד שֶׁל הַדָּס, וּמְרַקֵּד לְפָנֵי הַכֶּלֶה, וְאוֹמֵר: "כֶּלֶה נָאֵה וְחַסְדָּה". רַב שְׁמוּאֵל בֶּר רַב יִצְחָק מְרַקֵּד אֶתְלֵת. אָמַר רַבִּי זִירָא: קָא מְכַסִּיף לֶן סָבָא: כִּי נַח נִפְשִׁיה, אִיפְסִיק עֲמוּדָא דְנוּרָא בֵּין דִּידֵיהּ לְכוּלֵי עֲלָמָא, וְגַמִּירִי דְלָא אִפְסִיק עֲמוּדָא דְנוּרָא אֶלָּא אִי לְחַד בְּדָרָא, אִי לְתַרִּי בְּדָרָא. אָמַר רַבִּי זִירָא: **..אֶהְנִיָּה לִיה . . . שְׁטוּתִיהּ לְסָבָא**

They said about רבי יהודה בר אילעי that he would take a myrtle branch and dance before the כלה, saying "beautiful and gracious כלה."

רב שמואל בר יצחק would dance with three [branches].

רב שמואל בר יצחק said: "The old man [רב שמואל בר יצחק] is embarrassing us."

When [רב שמואל בר יצחק] passed away, a pillar of fire separated between his [coffin] and everyone else. And we have a tradition that a pillar of fire only separates for one or two [of the greatest men] in a generation.

*רב שמואל בר יצחק said: **The old man's . . . foolishness [benefitted him].***

This story in the גמרא is an example of שטות דקדושה – behavior which goes beyond rational bounds in the service of a מצוה. In this case, a great אמורא danced in a way which did not seem to befit his honor for the purpose of שמחת חתן וכלה. This behavior caused him to merit the great honor of a pillar of fire appearing at his funeral.

שמואל ב ט:יא

וַיְהִי וַיֵּצֵא אֶל־עַבְדֵי אֲדֹנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לָם הַשְּׁלוֹם מִדְּוַע בְּאֵי־הַמְּשָׁעֵה הַזֶּה אֵלַיךְ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו אַתָּם יָדַעְתֶּם אֶת־הָאִישׁ וְאֶת־שִׁיחוֹ:

And *יהוא* went out to greet the servants of his master. They said to him: "Is all well? **Why did this madman come to you?**" And he replied: "You know this man and his ramblings."

This פסוק describes a נביא, one of the students of אלישע, as a madman. The מאמר uses this פסוק as an example of שטות דקדושה; the נביאים were called משוגע – crazy – because נבואה takes the נביא outside of the normal state of reality.

יואל ד:יח

וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִטְפוּ הַהַרְיִים עֲסִיס וְהַגְּבְעוֹת תִּלְכְּנָה חֶלֶב וְכָל אַפְיָקֵי יְהוּדָה יִלְכוּ מִיַּם וּמַעַיִן מִבַּיִת ה' יֵצֵא וְהִשְׁקָה אֶת נַחַל הַשְּׁטִיִּים:

And it will be on that day that the mountains will drop sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk, and all the brooks of יהודה will flow with waters; **and a fountain will come forth from the house of the 'ה and water the valley of שטיים.**

This פסוק is the דיבור המתחיל of the entire קונטרס. On a פשט level, the נביא is describing the times of משיח, when משיח will flow from the בית המקדש to even the most distant places. Over the course of this קונטרס, the מאמר will use this פסוק as a springboard to explain how we can transform even our נחל שטיים – place of foolishness/irrationality– to קדושה.

בראשית ג':ז

וַתִּפְקַחְנָה עֵינֵי שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי עִרְמָם הֵם וַיִּתְּפוּ עָלֶיהָ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם חֲגָלֹת

And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves girdles.

This פסוק describes the immediate aftermath of הדעת עץ חטא. The מאמר contrasts this new "דעת" with their previous state - they gained awareness of physical sensations (such as shame of nakedness) but lost their previous knowledge and awareness of 'ה.

בראשית ב':כ"ה

וַיְהִיו שְׁנֵיהֶם עֲרוּמִים הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְלֹא יִתְבַּשְׂשׁוּ

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

This פסוק describes אדם and חוה before the חטא. The מאמר emphasizes that their lack of shame wasn't ignorance. Their consciousness was entirely focused on אלקות, making physical sensations irrelevant to them.

זוהר חלק ג' רסא:ב

וּתְפַקְחְנָה עֵינֵי שְׁנֵיהֶם בְּעַפְשָׂא דְהַאי עֲלְמָא, מַה דְּלֹא הוּא קוּדְם, דְּהוּוּ מְשַׁגְחִין וּפְקַחִין לְעִילָא

And the eyes of both of them were opened to the cloudiness of this world, which had not been before, for they had been looking and open to Above.

This זוהר explains that the "opening of eyes" after the חטא was in fact a loss of spiritual vision. Before the חטא, their perception was directed upward. After the חטא, they became focused on the superficial, clouded aspects of this physical world.

שמואל א' י"ט:כ"ד

וַיִּפְשַׁט גַּם־הוּא אֶת בְּגָדָיו וַיִּתְנַבֵּא גַם־הוּא לְפָנַי שְׁמוּאֵל וַיִּפּוֹל עָרֹם כָּל־הַיּוֹם הַהוּא וְכָל־הַלַּיְלָה

And he also stripped off his clothes and he also prophesied before שמואל, and lay naked all that day and all that night.

This פסוק describes שאול when he received נבואה. The מאמר uses this to demonstrate that אדם achieve a nullification of physical awareness - similar to אדם הראשון before the חטא. When receiving נבואה, they lose awareness of physical needs like clothing, representing the state of שטות דקדושה - which transcends normal reasoning.

משנה עדיות ה:ו

עֲקֵבִיא בֶן מֵהַלְלָאֵל הַעִיד אַרְבַּעַה דְּבָרִים. אָמְרוּ לוֹ, עֲקֵבִיא, חֲזֹר בִּי בְּאַרְבַּעַה דְּבָרִים שְׁהֵייתְ אֹמֵר וְנַעֲשֶׂךָ אֵב בֵּית דִּין לְיִשְׂרָאֵל. אָמַר לְהוֹן, מוֹטֵב לִי לְהִקְרָא שׁוֹטָה כָּל יְמֵי, וְלֹא לַעֲשׂוֹת שְׁעָה אַחַת רָשָׁע לְפָנַי הַמְּקוֹם, שְׁלֹא יִהְיוּ אֹמְרִים, בְּשִׁבְלֵי שְׁרָרָה חֲזַר בּוֹ

Kuntres Umaayon Study Guide

לאל מהללאל testified to four [הלכות which the other חכמים disagreed with. The other חכמים] said to him: "עקביא, retract your opinion on those four things, and we will make you the head of the בית דין."

He replied to them: **"I prefer to be called a fool my entire life rather than be wicked for even one moment before ה';** for I don't want people to say that I retracted for the sake of gaining leadership."

לאל מהללאל chose to appear "foolish" rather than compromise on הלכה. The מאמר cites this as an example of שטות דקדושה.

בראשית ב':ז'

וַיִּצְרֶה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם עֹפָר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים

And ה' formed man from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the soul of life.

מס' ברכות סא:א

בְּשֵׁנֵי יוּדֵי"ן שְׁנֵי יִצְרִים בְּרָא הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, אֶחָד יִצְרֵ טוֹב וְאֶחָד יִצְרֵ רָע

With two yuds - two inclinations ה' created, one good inclination and one evil inclination.

This גמרא explains that even before עץ הדעת חטא אדם הראשון, יצר הרע and יצר טוב had both. However, the מאמר explains, before the חטא his awareness was focused on אלקות and the יצר הרע had no influence over him. Only after the חטא, when physical sensation became dominant, did the יצר הרע gain power.

Guiding Questions

1. What is the difference between דעת before and after עץ הדעת חטא?
2. How do דמויות נביאים demonstrate שטות דקדושה? What connection does this have to אדם הראשון before the חטא?
3. What are the two types of שטות mentioned in this מאמר? How do they differ in their relationship to דעת?

מאמר כ"ז

Summary

In this מאמר, the רבי רש"ב discusses the key to combating the שטות of the הרע: יצר הדקדושה. This is the power, rooted in the essence of our נשמה, to serve 'ה in a way that is beyond logic and reason. This transformation process is hinted to in the פסוק which is דיבור המתחיל of our מאמר: "ומעין יצא מבית ה והשקה את נחל השיטים": מעין ("wellspring") which transforms the "נחל שיטים" (the "valley of foolishness", i.e. our vulnerability to the שטות of the הרע) into דקדושה.

פסוקים ומאמרי חז"ל

שמות לד:ט

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱמֹנָא מִצְאֲתֵי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲדֹנָי יִלְךָ־נָא אֲדֹנָי בְּקִרְבְּנוּ כִּי עַם־קָשָׁה־עַרְףְּ הוּא וְסָלַחְתָּ לְעוֹנְנוּ וְלַחַטָּאתֵנוּ וְנִחַלְתָּנוּ

And he said, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, O 'ה, let my 'ה, I pray You, go among us; **for it is a stiff-necked people**; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Your inheritance."

This פסוק comes from משה's תפילה asking 'ה to forgive the Jewish people after the העגל חטא. The מאמר brings this as an example of how stubbornness and unreasonableness can be a positive quality. The stubborn determination that made בני ישראל sin is the same force that, when redirected, enables us to stand firm and resist the הרע.

ישעיה יט:ה

וְנִשְׁתּוֹ־מִים מֵהַיָּם וְנִהַר יִחָרֵב וַיִּבֶשׁ

And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and dried up.

The מאמר uses this פסוק to illustrate the difference between a נהר and a מעין. While a נהר can flow extensively but may eventually dry up, a מעין provides a constant, unending flow.

משלי יד:טו

פְּתִי יֵאֱמִין לְכָל דְבָר וְעֵרוֹם יָבִין לְאֲשֶׁרוֹ

The simple one believes every word, but the prudent man understands his going.

The רבי אלטער quotes this פסוק in תניא to explain the power of מסירת נפש. The מאמר connects this to "holy foolishness" and the complete belief in 'ה and His מצות, especially when facing the הרע's sophisticated arguments.

Guiding Questions

1. What specific advice does the מאמר give to someone who gets trapped by the הרע?
2. What is the advantage of stubbornness?
3. How does the מאמר explain the פסוק from our המתחיל (of "ומעין יצא מבית ה...")? Explain what each of the key words in the פסוק represents, as well as what idea the פסוק is conveying, as a whole.

מאמר כ"ח

Summary

This final מאמר summarizes the many types of שטות the הרע יצר tries to entrap us with. For someone who has been fooled by the הרע יצר, the antidote, as discussed previously, is to fight back with שטות דקדושה - drawing on the power implanted within each Jewish נשמה. The ultimate goal is to subdue the הרע יצר entirely and allow the נשמה's light to shine, enabling us to live with דעת דקדושה: infusing קדושה into the ordinary patterns of everyday life.

Guiding Questions

1. What are the two main categories of שטות the הרע יצר tries to convince us with?
2. What type of person needs to act with שטות דקדושה?
3. What is the ultimate goal of 'עבודת ה'?

Answer Key

מאמר א

- The מאמר gives two definitions of שיטים:
 - מדרש רבה (foolishness), based on שטות (a)
 - הטיה (straying from the right path), based on ספר השרשים (b)
- They're connected because when we act foolishly, we automatically stray from what's right - and when we stray from truth, it shows we're being foolish.
- We get pulled toward physical pleasures because the הרע tricks us by saying "כי טוב לפניו" (this is good for you) and "כי תאוה הוא לעינים" (it looks so appealing). This is the same language the פסוק uses when describing the הדעת עץ.
- Four levels of pleasure:
 - תענוג בעניינים גשמיים/גופניים (Physical pleasure). These are tangible physical pleasures, like tasty food (b)
 - תענוג בקול (Pleasure from a voice). These are more refined pleasures, like hearing a beautiful voice or music.
 - תענוג בענייני מידות (Emotional pleasure). This is an even higher form of pleasure, which comes from positive character traits, like doing חסד for someone else.
 - תענוג שבשכל (Intellectual pleasure). This is the highest form of pleasure, which comes from learning and understanding ideas. Within this category, learning תורה is an even higher and purer form of pleasure, and is the appropriate pursuit of איד, who has a נפש אלקית.
- אברהם didn't just do חסד instinctively, but purposefully. His generosity in feeding his guests was guided by his goal of teaching people about ה'. This is demonstrated by the description in the מדרש of how, after they ate, he'd bring them to recognize ה' as the true Provider.
- שכל needs to control all our מדות. We use שכל to know when and how to act, and to have the right כוונות behind those actions. Without שכל guiding us, we act like animals, driven only by instinct.

- Learning תורה is the ultimate תענוג because when we learn תורה, we become united with ה' חכמה within it. When we learn חסידות, in particular, we are connecting with an even deeper dimension of חכמה – the פנימיות of it. Also, learning חסידות – which is about spiritual ideas – sensitizes a person to רוחניות, and leads to אהבה and יראת ה'.
- (a) We don't fulfill the purpose for which we were created.
(b) We lower our נשמה to the level of the lowly things we take pleasure in. And in a sense, we behave even worse than animals: Animals don't know better, but we have שכל and choose to ignore it.
- We should ask ourselves: "Is this really what's good for me, given who I am, and the holiness of my נשמה? Is this why I was created?"

מאמר ב

- The יצר הרע uses a gradual approach described by חז"ל: "Today it says do this, tomorrow do that, until finally it tells you to worship idols." It starts with telling us to overindulge in permitted things. This makes our נפש הבהמית become stronger, eventually leading us to do עבירות greater.
- Our נפש הבהמית becomes weaker while our נפש האלקית gets stronger - תוקפא דגופא חולשא דנשמתא (when the body gets stronger, the נשמה gets weaker). We lose connection to תורה and תפילה. Even though we still believe in ה' and know the תורה is true, that knowledge stops affecting us emotionally, and no longer stops us from doing עבירות.
- Jewish souls cannot be separated from ה'. Even Jews who sin will give up their lives for קידוש השם rather than worship idols. The יצר הרע tricks us into undermining our connection to ה' by saying that even if we do an עבירה, we're still connected to אלקות in the same way as any other Jew.
- ה' draws its life force from הרצון העליון קדושה - due to ה' deep, inherent desire. The אחרא סטרא

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draws its life force from העליון דרצון אחרים - the "back" of 'ה's will. 'ה gives חיות קליפה unwillingly, and only as a means to an end, like someone throwing something to his enemy over his shoulder, because he has to.

5. Something that is אמת never ceases or stops existing. The מאמר gives the example of נהרות המכזבין (lying rivers) - they're called כזב (false) because they sometimes stop flowing. Only something that never ceases is called אמת.
6. אמת and חיים are the same concept - something is "alive" because it does not cease to exist. The פסוק says אמת is 'ה because 'ה אלקים אמת הוא אלקים חיים (never ceases), therefore He is חיים. Anything connected to אלקות is also alive, like תורה and בני ישראל.

מאמר ג

1. The father teaching his son illustrates the concept of התלבשות פנימי (internal investment). The father conveys the idea with love and a desire for his son to understand what he is sharing. Similarly, 'ה gives חיות קדושה with a deep connection and desire to sustain it. With קליפה, by contrast, the חיות remains distant and separate, providing only superficial חיות that does not create a connection with the source.
2. In מאמר ב, the explanation is focused on the source of their חיות - סטרא אחרא is called אלקים אחרים because it derives its life force "בחינת אחרים" in a backhanded manner". In this מאמר, the explanation focuses on their very nature - they're called אלקים אחרים because they consider themselves to be independent gods, separate from 'ה.
3. Just as a human body tied up in a sack cannot express itself through the sack, so too, when the שכינה gives חיות קליפה, the שכינה is concealed and not expressed (i.e., in a state of גלות). Therefore, the קליפה is not impacted, and does not become בטל to the שכינה.
4. The human body reveals the נשמה, and carries out the נשמה's desires. In contrast, if a human soul were placed in an animal body (which isn't designed for it),

the soul couldn't reveal itself there. It would be like being tied up in prison; the animal body wouldn't be a vehicle of expression for it. The נשמה in a human body is a משל for how סטרא דקדושה receives חיות 'ה. The נשמה in an animal body is a משל for how קליפה receives חיות 'ה.

5. The עבודה זרה in גמרא equates arrogance to עבודה זרה because both involve considering oneself as an independent existence, separate from 'ה's holiness. עבודה זרה isn't necessarily complete denial of 'ה; rather it can even be the belief that something else can exist alongside Him as an independent force.
6. The סטרא אחרא, despite being called אלקים אחרים, still recognizes 'ה as the source of its existence (קרו ליה) and never actually transgresses His will. However, a person who sins is actively choosing to transgress 'ה's will, despite having the capacity to choose otherwise. This demonstrates a complete denial of 'ה's existence and authority.

מאמר ד

1. The עבירה woman thinks that by committing the עבירה of adultery, she won't become separated from 'ה. Similarly, the יצר הרע convinces us that we can sin without being separated from 'ה - that somehow we'll still maintain our connection to Him even while transgressing His will. This thinking is completely wrong; even a minor עבירה is going against 'ה's will, which creates separation from Him even more than the סטרא אחרא itself. The difference we imagine between "smaller" and "bigger" עבירות is just a feature of the שטות.
2. The אהבה מסותרת that exists naturally in every Jewish נשמה. This hidden love makes it impossible for us to separate from 'ה. If we would be conscious of this love and be aware of how every עבירה separates us from 'ה, we would be repulsed by the thought of an עבירה.
3. Even a gnat, which represents the lowest level of קליפה, is on a higher level than a person who does an עבירה. This is because these creatures still fulfill the purpose they were given by 'ה.

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4. The cord connecting the נשמה to ה' is woven from 613 strands, corresponding to the תרי"ג מצות. When we transgress one מצוה, the corresponding strand breaks, weakening the entire cord. For sins that carry כרת, the entire cord is completely severed and the ה' is disconnected from its source.

מאמר ה

1. "י" translates ספות as חיבור - joining things together, as quoted in the פסוק "ספו שנה על שנה" (add year to year).
The "ק" translates it to means תוספת - adding more, as in the פסוקים "לספות עוד" (to add more) and "עולותיכם ספו על זבחיכם" (add your עולות to your זבחים).
The פסוק is talking about how the רוה (those who are spiritually satisfied) will join with or be added to the צמאה (those who thirst). The רוה are the idol worshippers who feel spiritually full and don't have a yearning for ה'. The צמאה is כנסת ישראל who come from ספירת המלכות and are always thirsting and longing to connect to ה'.
2. A) The פסוק makes it sound like **because** the person is doing whatever they want, even עבירות, things will be good (שלום) for them. How can someone think this?
B) What is the meaning of the cryptic phrase "ספות" הרוה את הצמאה"?
3. The word "ואתה" hints to the letters א-ת, through which חיות flows in order to sustain creation. מלכות is called שם (name) because it's only an external expression (הארה) of ה's essence, just like a person's name refers to them but isn't their actual being.
4. מלכות has a constant desire (רצוא) to return to and be included in its source - אור אין סוף. The מאמר compares this to fire, which naturally wants to rise upward to its elemental source, and needs oil and a wick to be held down - similarly, מלכות naturally wants to ascend back to its origin rather than remain below to give life to the worlds.
5. Human speech uses letters that are lifeless vessels (דוממים) without will or wisdom on their own. They're just tools (כלים) for expressing thoughts. ה's speech, however, has רצון (will) and חכמה (wisdom). These letters themselves wanted to come before ה' to create the world, and they have their own intelligence which is why they're called משכילים (intelligent ones).
6. The "ה" - which represents מלכות - wants to become a יו"ד, because the יו"ד represents a return to the singular point of unity with ה'. The transformation represents מלכות's desire to escape its mission and return to oneness with ה'.
7. The שכינה is the "ה" when it descends and clothes itself in the worlds of בריאה-יצירה-עשיה to give them life. It's compared to the heart because just as the soul's main presence is in the heart and from there spreads life to all body parts, the קדש הקדשים was the heart of the world where the שכינה's main revelation was. From there, her light spreads out to enliven the entire world.
8. מלכות was reluctant to diminish herself and descend to give חיות to the lower worlds of בריאה-יצירה-עשיה which contain a mixture of good and evil. This is especially true in עשיה: people have free choice and might choose evil, potentially causing מלכות to have to give חיות to קליפה.

מאמר ו

1. The descent is worthwhile because through facing the physical body's lowliness and the world's concealment of ה', the נשמה achieves great personal elevation and creates great תענוג above. This is hinted to in the פסוק "אלוקים" (צחוק עשה לי אלקים) (בראשית כא:ו). It is the concealment of ה' in this world, which gives ה' great joy (צחוק).
2. Just as the נשמה's descent into a body enables it to accomplish הכנעה וביטול through עבודה, so too when מלכות descends to בריאה-יצירה-עשיה, it accomplishes בירורים (refinements) of those worlds.
3. When מלכות completes all the בירורים, it will become higher than all of the other ספירות, and give them

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energy rather than the other way around.

4. The **רווה** wants to fill his physical desires and has no **רצון** for אלקות; he is called "רוה" – "satisfied", because he is easily satisfied, as physical pleasures are readily available to him. The **צמאה** thirsts for אלקות but cannot satisfy this thirst because אלקות is not fully revealed in this world.
5. The sinner thinks he can have a good life even while following his desires and doing עבירות. He thinks this will be accomplished by drawing חיות from the thirsty one (the **מלכות** of ספירה which descends to give חיות to this world) to the satisfied one (the קליפות). This is possible because **מלכות** descends to give חיות to this physical world, where even קליפות exist. It can even give חיות to קליפה, in a בחינת אחוריים (a backhanded, reluctant, and unrevealed) way.
6. Only non-Jews are designed to receive חיות from ה' in an indirect, בחינת אחוריים way. A איד is not able to receive חיות like that longterm; any חיות he gets in such a way will only be temporary. Eventually, the חיות will not flow anymore, a natural punishment and consequence for his sinful behavior.

מאמר ז

1. There are two ways חיות flows: (a) מהפנימית - from the inner dimension of ה' רצון, which comes with His true desire and love, and (b) מאחוריים - from the "back" dimension, which flows without His real desire, like something thrown over the shoulder. בני ישראל receive שפע from פנימית הרצון, through their observance of מצות ומצות, while קליפות always receive from אחוריים.
2. The king prepares a grand feast for his important ministers and servants (בני ישראל), while the lowly servants and dogs only eat the scraps (the קליפות). This shows that the קליפות only receive the leftover חיות secondarily, after קדושה.
3. The main purpose of מצוות is to draw down the revelation of ה' into the world. The רמ"ח מצות עשה are different channels which each draw down specific

revelations of ה', while the מצות לא תעשה remove the obstacles and קליפות that might block this light from being revealed, and ensure that it is not revealed in the wrong places.

4. When a איד sins, he redirects some of the אור אלקי that was meant for קדושה toward the אחרא instead. This is because he has a נשמה, which is connected to קדושה, while also doing an עבירה, which connects him to קליפה. Since he was the one who channeled this extra light to the קליפות, he initially gets rewarded by receiving even more חיות than before. But this is only temporary - eventually this flow gets cut off, since a איד's natural place is to receive from הרצון, not from בחינת אחוריים.
5. The מאמר quotes the פסוק of "מה לך לספר חקי" - "What right do you have to speak My laws [when you hate discipline and throw My words behind you]?" The ראשית חכמה explains that someone who has done עבירות, and has not yet done תשובה cannot channel קדושה, as there's no proper place for the קדושה to rest.

מאמר ח

1. (a) From the חיצוניות of מלכות. This is a limited, contracted form of חיות that is given in a backhanded, after-the-fact way, as a byproduct of the חיות given to קדושה (also called בחינת אחוריים).
(b) From המקיף העליון. This is an abundant, unlimited form of חיות which comes from beyond השתלשלות, where our actions do not have an impact, and thus even undeserving creations can receive השפעה.
2. The twenty-six generations survived through ארך אפים - ה' patience and forbearance. This patience was possible due to אור אין סוף that's above השתלשלות, where our actions don't make an impact. This level gives השפעה freely, not based on whether we deserve it, which is why they could receive sustenance despite being רשעים.
3. a. אור אין סוף being "above השתלשלות" means it's completely beyond the normal order of worlds and doesn't "take up space" - meaning it's unaffected by anything that happens below. As the פסוק says "אני ה' "

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ה' doesn't change before or after creation. "לא שנית

b. Our actions simply don't reach or affect this infinite level because it exists completely beyond the realm where our deeds have any impact or relevance.

4. "according to תורה" comes through the normal system of השתלשלות, where there are precise calculations - if you do good, you receive good. If you sin, you are punished. השפעה from חסד ה' comes from above this system, flowing freely without any calculation of whether we deserve it or not.
5. The זוהר describes a potter's wheel which turns to the right when people do good, and to the left when people do bad. The מאמר explains that the wheel is the מלכות of ספירה, and the force that turns the wheel is the חכמה of ספירה. "Right" represents the חסד side of the ספירות, which channel reward and ברכה into the world. "Left" represents the גבורה side of the ספירות, which channel judgement and punishment. The ספירה of חכמה determines which kind of השפעה - good or bad - should be channeled into our world based on our actions.

מאמר ט

1. רצון is an אור מקיף - it's not embedded and integrated into any one specific limb of the body. Therefore, רצון works instantly throughout the entire body - as soon as you want to move your toe, it moves, immediately. In contrast, שכל is an אור פנימי, which is embedded and integrated into the brain, the one specific organ of the body which is fitting to receive it. Therefore, applying שכל to limbs other than the brain (e.g. our hands or feet, when learning a dance or a piece of music) requires time and practice.
2. The אור within השתלשלות is like שכל - it is an אור פנימי which is embedded and integrated into כלים. Because of this, whatever receives this אור must be fitting to receive it - meaning it must be בטל to ה'. The אור which is beyond השתלשלות is like רצון: it is an אור מקיף which does not need any specific channel in order to express itself. Therefore, it does not require that whatever receives from it is fitting

and ה' to בטל.

3. (א) The אור within השתלשלות is an אור פנימי, which requires being embedded and integrated into a specific כלי that is fitting to it.
(ב) The nature of the אור within השתלשלות is to be מסודר - organized, measured and calculated.
(ג) The אור within השתלשלות is channeled through specific כלים. When אור is channeled through a כלי, the אור must be tailored so that it does not damage the כלי. (For example, if emotions are ח"ו too intense, it can overwhelm the heart.)
(ד) The אור within השתלשלות is being channeled to lower worlds. When אור is being transmitted to something below it, it must be precisely calibrated in accordance with the lower level's ability to receive. (For example, when a teacher conveys an idea to a student, the teacher must limit the amount and kind of information they share so as not to overwhelm the student.)
4. אור מקיף from שפע access קליפות, which doesn't require proper כלים to receive it. Like an eagle that soars beyond normal heights, they "raise themselves" to the level of מקיף עליון, where חיות flows without measure or calculation, even to those who completely oppose ה' will.
5. Idol worshippers receive material abundance from above השתלשלות, where שפע flows without measure or calculation. A איד receives השפעה from within השתלשלות, which involves precise calibration and being worthy to receive the השפעה.

מאמר י

1. רד"ק explains that ריבוי ספות means (abundance/multiplication). A sinner might think he can receive abundant השפעה from the level of מקיף, which operates beyond the normal limitations that come through שדר השתלשלות.
2. מקיף עליון can receive from עובדי עבודה זרה and קליפה because they're connected to חיצוניות; they have no real relationship with ה'. But בני ישראל have a פנימיות connection with ה'. בני ישראל and ה' choose one

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another and have a deep, mutual relationship.

Therefore, the actions of בני ישראל matter to ה', and they must receive חיות in a way that is tailored to their actions.

- The מדרש of a king who entered a city with his ministers, governors, and commanders. Each person chose to align with different officials, but one wise person said, "I'll take the king himself, because all the others change but the king doesn't change." Similarly, גיורם worship different powers - sun, moon, wood and stone. Therefore, they can receive חיות in a חיצונית, which is unrelated to what they do. But ישראל choose to have a direct, פנימית relationship with ה', where their actions have direct consequences.
- A) Their חיות comes specifically through תורה and מצוות, and are punished when they do עבירות.
B) When ישראל cry out during their distress, they awaken רחמים רבים ש'ה.

מאמר י"א

- The problem: תפילה say raising your voice in חז"ל shows weak faith, but we do daven loudly on ראש יום כפור and השנה.
The solution: Sometimes you need a loud voice to convey deep emotion and break through to higher levels. Loud davening is appropriate when it comes from deep emotion and genuine need (like times of trouble or ראש השנה and יום כיפור) - not from thinking ה' can't hear you.
- Letters are how ideas become revealed - like when darkness turns to light at dawn. Before it was hidden, now it's visible. A loud voice in תפילה shows that deep feelings from inside your heart are being revealed.
- Temporary success of רשעים: (a) They're using up rewards from some good thing they did. (b) They are getting temporarily rewarded by קליפה for channeling extra חיות to them.
- This פסוק means ה' will never let אידן receive חיות from מקיף, like קליפות and the non-Jewish nations do. Even if Jews think that they want to abandon their

special connection and get their חיות the "easy way" they will be forced to return to ה'. The relationship between ה' and the Jewish people can never be broken; it is essential to who they are.

- This thinking is wrong because the איד assumes they can get the unlimited השפעה from מקיף, like the קליפות do. But since אידן have a פנימית relationship with ה', their actions matter to Him and have consequences. Therefore, if a איד does עבירות any השפעה they get will only be temporary.
- Suffering comes because ה' loves the Jewish people too much to let them stay disconnected from Him. It's like a wake-up call to make them realize they need to return to the proper path. The positive outcome is that it leads to גאולה and eventually תשובה.

מאמר י"ב

- The יצר הרע convinces people that "no one will see them" when they do עבירות. This connects to רבן יוחנן בן יראת שמים זכאי equal their fear of people knowing their sins- he pointed out that when someone sins they hope no one sees him, showing he fears people more than he fears ה'.
- People reveal their inner state in two main ways:
(a) Through their speech - even when telling seemingly innocent stories or casual conversation, they reveal what's going on inside.
(b) Through where they look - by looking at inappropriate places, they show the full depth of the רע within them.
- While someone's עבירות might be hidden from people, everything is revealed and known to ה', as the פסוק says "אם יסתר איש במסתרים ואני לא אראנו" - ה' responds by making their עבירות public. Our חכמים teach "כל המחלל שם שמים בסתר נפרעין ממנו בגלוי" - whoever sins in private gets punished publicly, so people will know they are רשעים and ה' name won't be damaged.
- People with refined temperaments and good שכל are

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less likely to fall for these foolish ideas. But people with coarse temperaments and strong emotions get carried away more easily, accepting foolish ideas and deceiving themselves in order to justify following their desires.

מאמר י"ג

1. Because of **אהבת עצמו** (self-love), when anything good happens, we naturally credit ourselves, and when anything bad happens, we blame others or external circumstances.
2. (a) Blaming their natural temperament: "I couldn't control myself."
(b) Blaming others: "Someone else influenced me; I wouldn't have done this on my own."
3. The person chose bad friends and environments, and more importantly, **ה'** gave us the **נפש האלקית** specifically to overpower the **נפש הטבעית**. This was the purpose for which we were created! **ה'** already serve with perfect **אהבה ויראה** and are always **ביטול**. But they have **יצר הרע**, so there's **חידוש** in their **עבודה**. We were created specifically with both **יצר הרע** and **יצר טוב** so that the **יצר טוב** can overpower the **יצר הרע**.
4. The **נפש הבהמית** starts influencing us from birth. The **נפש האלקית** only begins to actively work when we become **מצוה** **בר/בת**. This means the **נפש הבהמית** gets a "headstart" and becomes well-established through childhood habits and physical desires. This is reflected in their source of **תוהו** and **תיקון**: The **נפש הבהמית** comes from **עולם התוהו** and the **נפש האלקית** from **עולם התיקון**. Although the world of **תוהו** was created first, in its root source **תיקון** is actually higher than **תוהו**. This is why the **נפש האלקית**, despite coming later, has the power to overcome the **נפש הבהמית** - because its root is ultimately higher.
5. The **מאמר** explains that **יעקב** and **עשו** represent **תיקון** and **תוהו** respectively. **עשו** was born first (like **תוהו** appearing first in creation), but **יעקב** was really "the firstborn" in root. **רש"י** gives the example of a **שופרת** (tube) - what goes in first comes out last. **יעקב** was

conceived from the first drop, meaning that in their true source, **יעקב** (**יעקב**) comes before **תוהו** (**עשו**). This shows us that what appears first is not necessarily primary.

מאמר י"ד

1. Two **נפשות** with very different sources.
קליפה וסטרא אחרא: **נפש הבהמית**. It gives life to the body through the blood and produces bad **מדות** from the four elements: anger and pride (fire), desires for pleasure (water), frivolity and empty pursuits (air), and laziness and sadness (earth). For **נשמות ישראל**, this **נפש** comes from **קליפת נוגה**, so it also produces natural good **מדות** like compassion and kindness.
חלק אלקה ממעל: **נפש האלקית**. Comes from **ה'** directly - "חלק אלקה ממעל". This is compared to breath, where a person breathes out from their inner essence. Similarly, Jewish **נשמות** come from **ה'** "inner wisdom" because we are called "בני בכורי ישראל".
2. The word **שבועה** is connected to **שובע** (satisfaction/fullness). This **שבועה** gives the **נפש אלוקית** the fullness and strength to overcome the **נפש הבהמית**.
3. Someone might claim their **יצר הרע** is unusually strong and therefore they can't control themselves. The **מאמר** responds that if someone has particularly strong negative traits, that means their **נפש האלקית** is even stronger. The **נפש האלקית** has its source much higher than **תוהו** (which is where the **נפש הבהמית** gets its strength), so it always has greater potential power.
4. We are meant to distance ourselves from **רשעים** to begin with. The **עבירה** began when we chose to associate with the wrong people - that is our choice and our responsibility. When we blame others for our mistakes, we're trying to excuse something we are responsible for.
5. Two problems with making excuses:
 1. Excuses reduce our sense of responsibility, weakening the motivation to correct the wrong in proportion to the pleasure we gained from the sin. We think "I wasn't that guilty, so I don't need to work that hard to fix it."

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2. True תשובה requires real נפש. When we make excuses for our actions, we don't feel genuinely bitter about what we did. Without real pain and regret, our תשובה isn't authentic.

This prevents us from achieving the level where בעלי תשובה stand higher than צדיקים גמורים - we lose out on tremendous spiritual growth.

מאמר ט"ו

1. All other living beings were created with their body and נשמה together at the same time, but ה' first created אדם's body as a lifeless form from earth, and only afterward breathed the נשמת חיים into him. This is because we have a נשמה which is loftier than all other creations, as well as a physical body and natural character traits which are coarse. These two things are connected: our lofty נשמה has the unique capacity to elevate even the coarsest material of the physical world.
2. The inverse relationship is that the higher the נשמה, the coarser and more difficult body it receives. The משל of the wall teaches us that stones from the top of a wall fall farther away when they drop, while stones from the bottom fall close to the wall. Similarly, the highest נשמות are given the most challenging physical circumstances because they have the power to elevate even the coarsest material - that's precisely why they're sent down.
3. The two extremes are:
 - (1) We have the potential to fall lower than animals - because animals don't have דעת but we do, so when we act badly we are worse than animals who don't know better.
 - (2) We can rise higher than מלאכי השרת - because angels live in a spiritual world without challenge, but we can achieve דבקות while living in and elevating this physical world. The reason for these extremes is our unique position as the "middle creation" with both spiritual and physical aspects.
4. The purpose of all the worlds is to create this physical world where ה' can have "a dwelling place in the

lower worlds." All the spiritual worlds exist to eventually enable this lowest world where ה' presence can be revealed through our עבודה of transforming darkness into light and elevating the physical to spiritual.

5. The weapons of the יצר הרע are תאוות and עבירות. The strategies of the יצר הרע are the justifications and rationalizations that make people think they're doing the right thing when they're actually serving their own ego. These clever strategies can trap even those who would never fall for direct temptations.
6. The יצר הרע traps a צדיק through subtle justifications and getting him to take credit for his accomplishments, even if that line of thought doesn't lead to actual עבירות. These subtle flaws cause great damage even if they do not actually cause him to do an עבירה.
7. The merit of the simple person's עבודה is that it's purely עול - accepting ה' will without any personal enjoyment or ego. They daven and say תהילים even though they don't understand, purely because ה' wants them to. This is better than a עבודה's תלמיד חכם because the learned person might be doing it partly for intellectual pleasure and recognition, which makes their עבודה less pure. עול מלכות שמים is the foundation of all עבודה.
8. The trap of גאווה is that it makes someone serve themselves instead of serving ה'. When someone takes credit for their spiritual accomplishments, they turn their entire עבודה into a form of self-serving pleasure, just like eating or sleeping for personal enjoyment. גאווה also damages the first two letters of ה' name (י"ה), breaking the channel through which all true spiritual service flows and making their entire עבודה disconnected from its Source.

מאמר ט"ז

1. גאווה - when someone becomes proud or thinks well of themselves because of their learning or עבודה. This pride is called שטות because everything we have - our understanding, our abilities, our spiritual accomplishments - comes from ה', not from ourselves.

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- The four levels are:
 - שטות עבירה** - The person knows they did wrong and feels bad about it.
 - שטות ההצטדקות** - The person knows the action needs fixing but thinks, "It's not my fault - it's because of my environment/others who influenced me." This is even worse than the previous שטות, because it prevents full תשובה.
 - החזקת טובה לעצמו** - The person thinks, "I'm good in all my ways and don't need any fixing." This is even worse than the previous שטותים, because it prevents someone from seeing their flaws and fixing them at all.
 - גאות** - The person thinks, "I'm great because of my תורה learning and עבודה." This is the worst שטות, because it damaged one's connection with שם הוי' and prevents a person from utilizing their abilities.
- The שטות רוח gives two main types of false excuses:
 - (a) Intellectual excuses** - "Since I'm gifted, I don't need to work so hard." This line of thought makes them think they can achieve quickly what others achieve through much effort. This is שטות, because even if it is true, they could accomplish even more if they put in more time and effort! The truth is that even smart people require effort to see results.
 - (b) Health excuses** - "Intensive learning harms my health: it's too hard on my brain, hurts my eyes, or damages my physical health." This is a שטות because חש בראשו יעסוק בתורה... " study actually heals: "ולכל בשרו מרפא."

מאמר י"ז

- Excessive worrying and anxiety about business day and night, which prevents them from learning תורה and davening with a minyan. They imagine that if they take time for תפלה or to learn תורה, they'll lose out on business opportunities.
- The true source of wealth is ה': ברכת ה' teaches that ה' gives us strength to succeed, and specifically ה's blessing makes one wealthy. Business activity is only one way of making a vessel for ה'

blessing to rest upon, but the main thing is ה's blessing. Therefore, one needs to be devoted to ה' and realize that even minimal business activity is sufficient.

- The apparent contradiction is between two statements:
 - מזונותיו של אדם קצובים לו מראש השנה עד יום הכפורים (בציה טזא) - A person's livelihood is predetermined from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur.
 - ראש השנה טזא) - A person is judged every day.
 In addition, we daven every day for פרנסה, and the זוהר tells us about a sage named רב ייבא who would ask ה' for his meals before he ate each day.
- A) if our פרנסה is already set at the beginning of the year, why do we need to work at all?
 B) Why the need for daily judgement, if everything is decided on ראש השנה and יום כיפור?

מאמר י"ח

- (a) כל מזונותיו של אדם קצובים לו מראש השנה עד יום ראש הכפורים - a person's פרנסה is decided between יום כיפור and השנה.
 - (b) אדם נידון בכל יום - Man is judged every single day.
 - (c) רב ייבא - היה מתפלל בכל יום שיינתן לו מזונו רב ייבא 1 would daven every single day for his meal.
- New חיות emerges in a concentrated and concealed way on ראש השנה → It is revealed above on יום כיפור → It comes down into the worlds, but is still transcendent (מקיף) and not consciously felt on סוכות → It is integrated fully into the worlds (בפנימיות) on עצרת.
- Rain - even though rain is חסד, it needs to be divided into raindrops so it can be absorbed.
 - Just as a hand needs five separate fingers to perform actions, the ה' גבורות divide the general חסד into usable parts that can actually reach the recipients.
 - When a person speaks, there is the initial sound that comes from breath, but needs to be constricted by the throat and mouth to form specific sounds.
- It ensures חיות is channeled into manageable amounts that don't overwhelm individual creations.

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B) It ensures חיות doesn't flow to unworthy places.

מאמר י"ט

- The חותם דנעילה has two functions:
 - Distribution - ensuring that the general שפע reaches the right place and each person individually.
 - Protection - preventing the קליפות from drawing sustenance from the חסד. Just as a physical seal prevents strangers from reading a letter, the spiritual seal prevents unworthy forces from accessing the שפע.
- אצילות is like fire because fire doesn't combine with other elements and always rises upward. Similarly, אצילות has no connection with עשייה-יצירה-בריאה since אצילות is pure אלקות with no aspect of יש, while בריאה onwards there is the reality of יש. The חסד of אצילות has no specific physical form, and must be channeled through the lower worlds to become physical.
- The three categories are בנים (children), חיים (health/life), and מזונות (sustenance/wealth). Depending on the amount of חסד allocated and the person's worthiness, they might receive all three abundantly, only two of them, or just one. This is illustrated by the story where a wealthy childless couple approached the בעל שם טוב desperately wanting children. He told them that if they had children, they would lose their wealth and become poor. They chose children and indeed became poor. This shows that a צדיק's prayer can redirect how predetermined חסד manifests - changing the allocated חסד from one expression to another, but not the amount.
- Although the חסד was determined on ראש השנה and יום כפור, it exists only as spiritual חסד without any physical characteristics. Our daily תפילות request that this allocated spiritual חסד should clothe itself in specific physical matters like health and sustenance. We are asking for the חסד that was already allocated to us to be manifest as the specific physical things that we need.

מאמר כ

- The problem is that if people are judged every day, then ראש השנה wouldn't be special at all. But we know ראש השנה is called הדין, so it must have unique significance.
- Everyone agrees that ראש השנה and יום כיפור are when the measure of חסד is established for each person and the entire world. This is when מלכות receives the general amount of חיות that sustains all worlds for the whole year - like setting the "annual budget" of ברכה and חסד.
- The חסד from ראש השנה exists at the level of מלכות, as pure spiritual energy, without specific form or application to this world yet. Because אצילות and עשייה are completely different levels, this חסד needs to be "translated" into physical form. The daily judgments determine exactly how this general חסד will manifest - whether in children, health, livelihood, or other channels.

מאמר כ"א

- The question is: how can the חכמים say that everything is decided on ראש השנה? If the חיות on ראש השנה remains in מלכות דאצילות, how can it contain any likeness or relationship to the physical reality in this world?
- The gap between אצילות and אור אין סוף is absolute, because in אור אין סוף we are comparing 'ה's essence to a G-dly world (which is בטל to 'ה, but is not 'ה Himself). In contrast, אצילות and עשייה have some relationship with each other even if the gap between them is vast.
- The two methods are:
 - צמצום - where 'ה completely removes the original light and creates something totally new (like אור from אצילות to אין סוף).
 - פרסא - where the original light gets clothed and concealed but remains the same essential light in a different form (like אצילות to עשייה-יצירה-בריאה). The difference matters because צמצום creates complete separation, while פרסא maintains connection even

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while creating concealment.

- When a teacher wraps a difficult concept in a simple story, the story completely hides the original idea - some students might not even realize there's a deeper concept inside. But when the concept is revealed from the story, it's the same idea but in a different form than before it was "clothed." This is exactly how פרסא works: פרסא חכמה דאצילות gets clothed in the פרסא, creating חכמה דבריאה - it's the same essential חכמה but manifested in a completely different way.
- The physical sweetness derives from a spiritual form of sweetness in its מזל above. Just as "sweetness" can describe a physical taste as well as more spiritual things like a sweet melody or idea, the חסד of אצילות is the ultimate root of the sweetness of an apple.
- It makes sense because the spiritual חסד allocated to us on ראש השנה already contains the roots of everything that will develop from it. Since חסד דעשיה (which creates all physical realities) is rooted in חסד דאצילות, it is possible the higher level already includes everything that will "branch out" from it during the year.

מאמר כ"ב

- Both רבני יוסי and רבני רבון agree there is daily evaluation to determine the physical form that the חסד allotted on ראש השנה will take, but they disagree about its nature. רבני say it's פקידה (inspection/review) and a more casual examination, while רבני יוסי says it's דין גמור (full-fledged judgment).
- The first explanation only works according to the view that the physical **form** of the חיות is not at all rooted in אצילות of מלכות. But there is another view, which says that the roots of how the חסד will be manifest is present in אצילות. Therefore, according to that view, the form that the חסד is supposed to take is also decided on ראש השנה, even if it isn't actually manifest yet. So how can there be a judgment that takes place every day?
- השתלשלות indicates a natural progression from one

level to another. This is how spiritual beings like נשמות are created; they can naturally and organically emerge from the loftier spiritual levels above them. בריאה יש means creating something entirely new that didn't exist before. Physical and material things come into being this way; there is no way that they can naturally evolve and emerge from a spiritual source.

- The חכמים and רבי יוסי aren't actually disagreeing; they are simply talking about different aspects of the חסד. The spiritual life-force (like the "נשמה" of the חסד) flows down naturally from ראש השנה. But the physical "גוף" that allow this חסד to be expressed in tangible form must be newly created each day through בריאה יש מאין.

מאמר כ"ג

- If ה' is the source of all ברכה, why does the פסוק specify "בכל אשר תעשה" - suggesting we need to work to receive blessings? This seems to contradict the idea that all מזלות comes directly from ה'. Additionally, if our מזלות are already allocated from ראש השנה, why do we need to engage in work or business at all?
- The word צו numerically equals א-ל-אד-ני, the names of ה' which describe how ה' runs natural forces within this world, like the מזלות. People mistakenly worship the מזלות because they see that food comes through them - crops grow from the sun, cycles are affected by the moon.
- Just as an axe cannot build anything by itself but requires a craftsman to wield it, so too all the מזלות are merely like tools through which ה' directs his השפעה. The מזלות and forces of nature have no independent power to help or harm, and therefore shouldn't be considered at all - just as no one would praise an axe for building a magnificent structure.
- The two opinions from עץ חיים apply as follows: According to the first opinion, the חסד allocated in מלכות פשוט is still יום כפורים and ראש השנה דאצילות (simple/pure), and doesn't yet have any physical form or characteristics of material השפעות. According to the second opinion, the חסד of אצילות does include within it the spiritual aspect of עשיה and all

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related dimensions, but this is still only the spiritual אור וחיות, not the actual physical matter itself.

According to both opinions, the חסד needs to be further concealed because in order for specific physical things to exist, 'ה's light must be concealed.

5. In order for physical things to exist, 'ה's light must be concealed. If 'ה were to be fully revealed, it would be impossible for any creation to exist and feel independent from 'ה.

This is also a matter of degree: the more concealment of 'ה there is, the more specific, defined, and tangible creations can be. In order to create concrete physical items, the חיות must be enfolded in the מזלות, which are לבושים that completely conceal and hide 'ה. Only through this maximum concealment can concrete physical things come into being.

מאמר כ"ד

1. The משל is:

At the end of a business season, the merchant reminds his customers to pay up their debts, giving them three weeks to do so. The merchant is in a good mood because of the completion of a successful season; this encourages and motivates the customers to pay their debts. At the end of the three week period, when the merchant sees that the customers have tried their best, he generously grants an extension to those who still need more time.

The נמשל is:

During the month of אלול, we are reminded by 'ה to take stock of what we've done over the past year and ensure our 'עבודת ה' is in order. During this time, the י"ג shine, which makes it easier for us to reconnect to 'ה. At the end of the month of אלול, we are generously forgiven by 'ה and given a bit more time to do תשובה before the new year – that is the time of סליחות.

2. 'ה hides His אור through nature for our benefit. If אלקות shone openly, the השפעה would be too intense, and created beings wouldn't be able to handle it.
3. The מאמר gives a משל of a father playing with his

young son - the father has to צמצם himself to play with nuts and shells because the child can't appreciate the real fruit inside. Similarly, 'ה's חסד gets צמצם through מזלות so we can receive השפעה according to our level.

4. ישראל use their material שפע to refine the world which returns the sparks back to their Source. That's why תורה ומצוות are invested and enfolded in גשמיות - they need to be done in this world.

מאמר כ"ה

1. In גלות, we receive sustenance through our actions - "וברכך ה' אלקיך בכל אשר תעשה." This world requires action to create a כלי for פרנסה. 'ה's ברכה needs to come through natural means of us going to work and earning a living. In ימות המשיח however, שפע will flow directly from 'ה without any need for our involvement or creating a כלי.
2. The two levels are אלקות למעלה מטבע and אלקות בטבע. אלקות למעלה מטבע is the level of אלקות which is clearly 'ה, which is evident without contemplation. התבוננות בטבע can only be experienced through אלקות. At first glance, the forces of nature seem independent; it takes thought and contemplation to realize that things which are natural are actually due to 'ה's power. The משל used is that of something that has sunk in the sea. When an object is covered by water, the water conceals it so you can't see there's anything there besides the water. But the covering doesn't change the object's existence - it's still entirely there, just hidden from observers. Similarly, לבושי הטבע cover אלקות but don't change its essence.
3. Rushing תפילה בצבור and skipping set times of learning because their minds are occupied with business. Treating שבת as a time of mere physical rest instead of a time of connection with 'ה and תורה and תפילה. This becomes like עבודה זרה - treating business as the main point of life instead of recognizing 'ה as our true Provider.
4. If additional work doesn't bring more שפע from above, excessive effort is pointless. If there is already שפע designated, whatever work you do will suffice since it's

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just the כלי. Like a fool acts irrationally, someone consumed by "more work = more פרנסה" becomes a שוטה who loses sight that ה' is the ultimate Provider.

5. The person will be shown clearly how natural means of work are useless, and no matter how much work they do, it won't be successful.

מאמר כ"ז

1. Before the חטא אדם had ידיעת המושכלות which is objective, G-dly, intellectual knowledge.
After the חטא: He lost this דעת and gained ידיעת המפורסמות - which is subjective, based on what feels attractive or good.
2. נביאים reach a state of "insanity" where they no longer experience reality through their physical senses. This recreates the level of אדם הראשון before the חטא, when he had no sense of self-consciousness, and didn't feel shame about being naked. This is a state of שטות דקדושה - acting in a way which contradicts reasonable, normal behavior in service of ה'.
3. (a) שטות דלעומת זה (impure שטות): Acting below reason, being misled by the יצר הרע to believe falsehood due to strong physical temptations that cloud awareness of ה'.
(b) שטות דקדושה: Acting above reason and calculation, not following conventional wisdom or reason, but acting in line with what our נשמה essentially wants.

מאמר כ"ח

1. Don't get caught up in the יצר הרע's arguments. Fight the יצר הרע's foolishness with a craziness of קדושה.
When the יצר הרע says yes we say no and when it says no we say yes, without any justifications or negotiations.
2. The מאמר explains that stubbornness is tremendously powerful. While רצון weakens שכל by limiting it, רצון that operates without שכל is unlimited and much stronger. When directed to a positive purpose, therefore, stubbornness is an asset.
3. The מעין represents the ספירה of חכמה. The בית

represents the ספירה of כתר. The נחל שיטים represents our vulnerability to the שטות of the יצר הרע.

Together, this פסוק is telling us that if we tap into חכמה as it is connected to כתר – meaning, the part which is beyond reason – we can transform our tendency for שטות דקדושה into שטות דקליפה.

מאמר כ"ח

1. (a) Convincing us that indulging in physical pleasure is desirable, and that sinning will not separate us from ה'.
(b) Drawing us into business dealings with so many distractions and complications that we have no time for תפלה or תורה.
2. Someone who has fallen prey to the tricks of the יצר הרע and needs to fight back in kind.
3. To subdue the יצר הרע entirely, and allow the light of the נשמה to shine. This allows us to live a life of דעת דקדושה. Rather than stubbornly fighting against the pressures of the world around us, we can reveal ה' within our everyday lives.

