

— *The Light of the* —
Baal Shem Tov



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The Baal Shem Tov HaKadosh brought a revolution of healing. He revealed a hidden light that had been kindled for generations in concealment. He illuminated a world that had begun to feel dark. But the light of the Baal Shem Tov is a light that must be believed in to be experienced. Just like emunah itself. What he gave us was not something new; it was a repackaging of emunah. He returned to us the aleph of Anochi.

He taught us what it means to truly believe in the presence of Hakadosh Baruch Hu,

"leis asar panui minei", that there is no place devoid of His light. "Memale kol almin u'sovev kol almin, u'mibaladecha ein shum metzius klal." You fill all worlds and surround all worlds, and without You there is no existence at all. "Kula kamei k'lo chashiva", all is as nothing before You. In truth, "kula kamei lo chashiva", it is literally not in existence.

The light of the Baal Shem Tov is the revelation of the light of the Aluf shel Olam, the revelation of Hakadosh Baruch Hu within every layer of concealment imaginable. It was specifically at the border of darkness and despondency that the Ohr HaGanuz was sent down, revealed through the neshamah of the Heilige Baal Shem Tov.

Every year, when RIM"m Shlita introduces the Yam HaChochma yearbook, he reminds us that each year has its own potency, its own recipe for redemption. Not chashivei hakitzin — not calculating the end, chalilah

- but awakening the redemptive potential hidden within time itself.

And the avodah of Tav Shin Pei Vav, 5786, as the Rebbe described, is to reconnect to the light of the Baal Shem Tov HaKadosh - to reconnect to his foundational revelation: that godliness is everywhere.

Not only in the oros of spirituality. Not only in rarefied dveikus where we

transcend this world. But specifically within the keilim of this world. If we dig deeply enough into the vessels themselves - into the structures of concealment - we discover that they are rooted in the irreducible trace of infinite light that remained after the tzimtzum.

Human experience itself emerges only because the infinite light is concealed.

Without that concealment, we would be overwhelmed. The vessels appear to oppose the light, but in truth, the potency of concealment is rooted even deeper than expression. The strength to withhold is greater than the strength to reveal.

The more we awaken ourselves to this light, the more we sweeten the bitterness of the world. The bitterness that emerges from Malchus descending into concealment.

From galus haShechinah. From the sense that the world has lost its grace and fallen into filth, distraction, fear. But this is only concealment. The Baal Shem Tov came to redeem the Shechinah. To teach us to smell not the pollution of this world, but the scent of Gan Eden. The scent of Moshiach. A deep inner certainty: Hakadosh Baruch Hu, You are here. This sweetens bitterness. This brings redemption

Everything the Baal Shem Tov accomplished, he attributed to his father. His father, Reb Eliezer — the hidden tzaddik who was zoche to such a neshamah through hachnasas orchim. Hachnasas orchim means making space for what unsettles us.

Making space for difficult emotions.

Welcoming Hashem into the places we would rather close off.

On his deathbed, Reb Eliezer took his young son Yisrael in his arms and told him: "Never fear anyone or anything except Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Contemplate this always. Hide your ways. But do not fear.!"

This is the beginning of avodah. To not be afraid. To not judge reality by its surface. To connect to the hidden fount, the nachal nove'a mekor chochmah flowing from Gan Eden into our minds.

The world appears strong on the outside.

Fear feels reasonable. But the essential voice of the Baal Shem Tov's father was: do not be afraid. Be in the world. Transform the world. But do not fear it.

The Baal Shem Tov's first nisayon reflects this. As a child, walking alone in the woods at night, he encountered what appeared to be a big house whose inner chamber was filled with demons. They mocked him:

"Don't you know God has abandoned the earth?" And he cried out: "Yispardu kol poalei aven!" Let all forces of darkness scatter.

And they vanished.

The darkness did not need to be destroyed.

It disappeared, as if it had never been.

This is the avodah. The darkness says,

"Ayeh mekom kevodo?" But we answer: Ein od milvado. Tzaddik be'emunato yichyeh.

The Baal Shem Tov revealed that the Ohr HaGanuz is accessible. That the light of seven days of creation can illuminate from malchus to binah and back again. That we can raise our heads - leharim es rosho - not in arrogance but in confidence. The Torah of Chassidus is not a secondary fix to a broken system. It is the perfect light for our time.

The medicinal salve of the Baal Shem Tov, the Gra, the Rashash, the Ramchal, the Arizal, Rashbi, Moshe Rabbeinu, the Ohr Ein Sof saturating existence, is available whenever we turn inward and attach our daas to Hashem's presence, whether we feel it or not.

May we merit to do this under the easiest circumstances. May no one be tested beyond what they can bear. May it be pleasant and warm. May Hakadosh Baruch Hu reveal a wondrous light, above and below, within history and within our minds.

May we taste from the sweet waters of the tzaddikim amittim, and truly live with yichud Hashem — to truly begin performing unifications like the Baal Shem Tov.