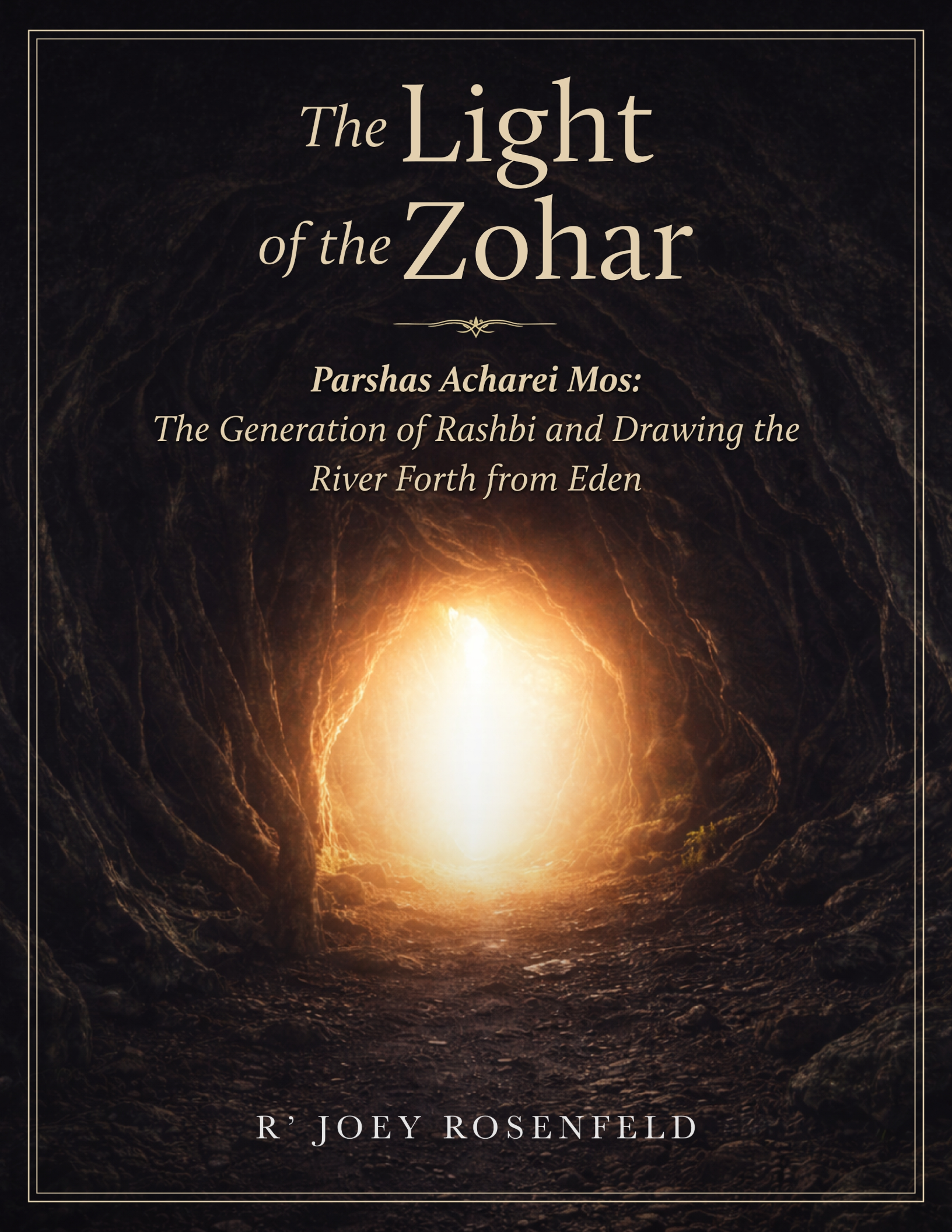


The background of the entire cover is a photograph of a dark, cavernous tunnel. The walls are rugged and textured, with some small plants visible on the right side. A bright, glowing light emanates from the end of the tunnel, creating a strong contrast with the dark surroundings. The light is circular and has a warm, golden-yellow hue.

The Light *of the* Zohar



*Parshas Acharei Mos:
The Generation of Rashbi and Drawing the
River Forth from Eden*

R' JOEY ROSENFELD

— *The Light of the Zohar* —

Parshas Acharei Mos:
**The Generation of Rashbi and Drawing
the River Forth from Eden**



R' JOEY ROSENFELD

Returning to the Light: Entering the Zohar in the Days of Sefirah

B'ezras Hashem, we return once again to the unfolding light of the Zohar. The preparation for Lag BaOmer (ל"ג בעומר) demands this return, for it is specifically through the Zohar that the harshness of the Omer becomes sweetened. The illumination of Pesach, especially the light of Leil HaSeder, is a profound revelation, yet it remains concealed, hidden within potential rather than fully actualized. That light was not earned, and therefore it rests within us in a latent form, awaiting activation. The descent from that expansive illumination into the particularity of Sefirat HaOmer is a movement into laborious work, into measurement, into counting each day with precision. This fragmentation reflects an inner disquiet, a breaking apart of wholeness into competing parts. It mirrors the failure of the students of Rebbe Akiva, who did not show honor to one another (לא נהגו). Yet this descent is only survivable if one's gaze is fixed on Lag BaOmer. Only by seeing with the eyes of

Rebbe Shimon can one endure the disintegration of the journey.

The Eyes of the Tzaddik: Seeing Through Redemption

To live with the eyes of Rebbe Shimon is to access a radically different form of vision. As Rebbe Nachman teaches, when Rebbe Shimon gazed upon a person and they became a pile of bones (גל של עצמות), this was not destruction but revelation. The tzaddik grants us his vision, enabling us to see ourselves as we are seen from above. This vision exposes both the destructive tendencies within us and the hidden potential for redemption. It strips away illusion and reveals essence (עצם). The transformation into a "pile of bones" is a stripping down to core identity. Through this lens, Sefirah becomes a process of rectifying vision. It is a movement away from narrow sight (צרות עין) toward expansive perception. We learn to see ourselves not as we previously did, but through the light of the Zohar. As the mitzvah states, "one must see oneself as if he left Egypt" (חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו יצא ממצרים). Reality

shapes vision, and in turn vision reshapes reality. This cycle continues until the ultimate revelation of seeing “eye to eye” (עין בעין).

The Simplicity that Contains Everything: The Secret of the Aleph-Beis

The Zohar introduces us to a foundational truth: the deepest secrets are hidden within the simplest forms. The first teaching given to a child is the Aleph-Beis, yet this simplicity contains infinite depth. Even angels cannot fully grasp it, for it is bound to the Name of Hashem. The Baal Shem Tov reveals this when, stripped of all higher awareness, he rebuilds his reality through the basic letters themselves. Saying “Aleph”, “Beis”, “Gimmel”, he reconnects to the Source of all creation. The letters are not mere symbols; they are the building blocks of existence. The Aleph itself contains the entirety of Divine unity, the upper and lower connected by way of the middle. The infinite complexity of Torah unfolds from this simplicity and refolds back into it. Only after returning to the depth of the Aleph can one proceed again to the Beis. All innovation

in Torah is ultimately a reconfiguration of these very same letters, revealing new configurations and light.

Hidden and Revealed: The Paradox of Torah

The Torah exists simultaneously as concealed and revealed. Every revelation leads to deeper concealment, and every concealment contains within it the potential for revelation. What we think we understand only reveals how much remains beyond us. This is the principle of “revealing a handbreadth and concealing two” (מגלה טפח ומכסה טפחיים). The Name of Hashem itself is both known and unknowable. The Torah, being His Name, shares this duality. Each passuk and parsha holds infinite layers of meaning. Even the greatest understanding barely scratches the surface. The deeper one goes, the more one realizes the impossibility of full comprehension. Yet this does not negate the pursuit of knowledge. Rather, it transforms it into faith. The tzaddik lives through faith (צדיק באמונתו יהיה), knowing that true knowing lies in recognizing what cannot be known, the infinite light of Hashem.

The Opening of the Eyes: Tamar and the Birth of Redemption

The Zohar reveals that the story of Tamar embodies the secret of “the opening of the eyes” (פֶּתַח עֵינַיִם). This place is not geographical but existential. It is the threshold where revelation emerges from concealment. Tamar, through her courage, brings forth redemption. She understands the ways of Hashem, perceiving how Divine speech operates within the world. Her actions are not impulsive but deeply aligned with the hidden structure of reality. This moment was destined from the beginning of creation. Like Bat Sheva, her role was preordained. The opening where she sits is the same opening as Avraham Avinu at the entrance of his tent (פֶּתַח הָאוֹהֶל). It is Malchus, the realm of manifestation. Through this opening, Divine presence enters the world.

Malchus: The Threshold of Becoming

Malchus is the space of embodiment, the place where potential becomes actuality. It is the lowest level, yet it contains the highest possibility. It is

expressed through action, mitzvot, prayer and faith. It is the realm of “a dwelling below” (דִּירָה בַּתַּחְתּוֹנִים). Here, the infinite light descends into finite expression. The opening of Malchus is always a beginning. Even after reaching perfection, one returns to the entrance of a new higher level. As Avraham, after achieving completion, sits once again at the opening of the tent. This teaches that every level attained reveals a new beginning. The fiftieth gate remains beyond reach, ensuring perpetual ascent. Each completion becomes the starting point of a deeper journey. Thus, Malchus is not an end but an eternal opening.

Seeing the Unseeable: The Secret of Imagination

The Torah speaks of the ability to “behold the image of Hashem” (וַתִּמּוֹנֶת הִיא), despite the impossibility of imagining the infinite. This paradox defines spiritual vision. One must imagine without concretizing, see without grasping. The imagination (כַּחַד) becomes a vessel for approaching the ungraspable. It refines perception without limiting it. Through this

process, one learns to engage with the infinite without reducing it. This is the work of inner Torah. It requires constant awareness that no image is literal, yet the act of envisioning remains essential. The goal is not to define Hashem but to orient oneself toward Him. This refined seeing transforms the inner world. It allows one to perceive holiness within concealment. It bridges the gap between finite understanding and infinite truth.

The Endless Beginning: Returning to the Aleph

Ultimately, all of Torah returns to the Aleph, the beginning that contains all endings. Every moment requires renewal, a rebuilding of the alphabet of existence. The Baal Shem Tov teaches that even after losing everything, one can begin again with the simplest letters. This is the essence of redemption. It is not found in complexity but in returning to the root of simplicity. Each step forward requires a new iteration of the Aleph-Beis. Each ascent shatters the previous structure, demanding reconstruction. This cycle is an endless process of ascension. The

infinite is approached through continual beginning. Thus, the path forward is always the same: say Aleph, say Beis, say Gimmel. Through these letters, we rebuild worlds. Through them, we prepare for the ultimate revelation. And through them, we learn that everything, absolutely everything, begins again.

The Awakening of Lack and the Path of Light

The work of the Zohar is to draw down the light of Moshe Rabbeinu, the Raya Mehemna (רעיא מהימנא), into the vessels of Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai, the Botzina Kadisha (בוצינא קדישא). This is the movement of drawing the waters of wisdom into the fire of understanding, allowing the whole to become revealed specifically through the particulars. It is not that unity is lost in fragmentation, but that unity is deepened through fragmentation itself. Moshe Rabbeinu, who represents pure simplicity and undifferentiated wisdom (חכמה), ascends in order to draw down the soul of Rebbe Shimon. Because only through the descent into understanding (בינה), into multiplicity and separation, can the full light of Moshe Rabbeinu be revealed.

This is the secret of the unification of wisdom and understanding, which gives rise to the crown (כתר). And this is not theoretical- it is the very structure of how light enters the midst of life.

Breaking as Beginning: Yasher Koach and the Secret of Strength

At the end of the Torah, Moshe Rabbeinu breaks the tablets, and the Torah itself seals this act with the phrase “well done for breaking them” (יִישֶׁר כַּחךְ אֲשֶׁר שִׁבַּרְתָּ). This is not approval of destruction, it is a revelation of a deeper structure. The breaking is the beginning of vessels (כלים), hinted to in “before the eyes of all Israel” (לְעֵינֵי כָל) (יִשְׂרָאֵל), whose initials form the word *kli*. Unity alone cannot be received in a world of differentiation. Therefore, the light must be broken so that it can be held. The broken tablets (שְׁבָרֵי לוחות) are not a fall from perfection, rather they are the beginning of human participation within the unfolding light of perfection. They allow Torah to move from heaven into human experience. And in that descent, a deeper strength emerges, one that could never exist in pure unity. This is the strength of

remaining connected even within the breaking. A strength not dependent on clarity. A strength rooted in faith beyond reason. And this is the strength that defines the entire path of Rebbe Shimon.

From Suffering to Sweetness: Rebbe Akiva and Rebbe Shimon

This same pattern unfolds in the relationship between Rebbe Akiva and Rebbe Shimon. Rebbe Akiva represents the path of suffering, the intensity of effort, judgment, and struggle. Rebbe Shimon represents the path of rest, the revelation of great compassion and inner illumination. But these are not two separate paths, rather they are one unfolding. The fire of Rebbe Akiva becomes the radiance of Rebbe Shimon. The suffering is not erased, it is transformed. It becomes the sweetness of effort in Torah, the joy of learning (חדוותא דשמעתא). The path of Rebbe Shimon reveals that even the path of suffering was always rooted in compassion. And when Rebbe Shimon emerges from the cave, he no longer burns the world, he now begins to heal it. Everything becomes beautiful.

Everything becomes for the honor of Shabbos. This is not a shift in reality, it is a shift in vision through which we receive it. .

The Awakening of Lack: Where Everything Begins

Rebbe Shimon opens with a cry: “they have no eyes to see and no heart to understand” (לית להו עינין למחמי וליבא) (לאשגחא). At first glance, this sounds like criticism. But in truth, it is the beginning of awakening. The realization that I do not see is already the beginning of seeing. The awareness that I lack understanding is already the beginning of understanding. The recognition of deficiency (חסרון) is not a failure, it is the first movement of spiritual life. This is the secret of awakening from below (אתערוותא דלתתא). Without an awareness of lack, nothing begins. Without emptiness, nothing can be filled. And therefore, Rebbe Shimon does not remove the lack, he reveals it. Because only when a person can face the absence without collapsing into judgment does the process begin. The lack becomes the vessel itself. The emptiness becomes the opening.

The Inner Work: Navigating Deficiency Without Collapse

But this awakening introduces a danger. When a person encounters lack, the instinct is to fall into judgment, shame, or despair. To say: something is wrong with me. But Rebbe Shimon’s teaching removes that possibility entirely. There is no place for judgment in the process of return. The work is not to eliminate the lack, but to relate to it properly. To distinguish between what can be filled and what cannot. To recognize that the lack itself is given by Hashem. And therefore, the work is not self-rejection, but presence. To say: if this is where I am, then this is where I am meant to be. And from here, I begin. This transforms the entire psychological experience of avodah. Instead of collapsing under lack, a person climbs with it. The lack becomes the ladder. The emptiness becomes the site of encounter.

Feminine Waters and Masculine Waters: The Secret of One Movement

We tend to think that awakening from below (אתערוחא דלתתא) and drawing down from above (אתערוחא דלעילא) are two stages. First I do something, then Hashem responds. But the Zohar reveals something much deeper. They are not two movements, they are one. The very act of confronting lack is already the presence of Hashem. The awakening is the response. The process is the result. And when the light is eventually revealed, it does not introduce something new, it reveals what was always there. A person looks back and realizes: You were with me all along. Even in the confusion, even in the struggle, even in the lack. And this creates a recursive process, ad infinitum. The end reveals the beginning. The beginning contains the end.

The Voice Within: The Kruza That Never Stops

Rebbe Shimon teaches that there is a constant voice (כרוז) that calls out every day. "A proclamation stands each day" (כרוזא כל יומא קאי). This is not a voice of

fear, rather it is a voice of longing. It is the voice of return. Every person has felt it. A quiet pull toward something more real. More peaceful. More true. This is the soul testifying to its light. Even when covered, the voice is never gone. It calls from within the silence. From within the forest. From within the heart. And Rebbe Shimon says: we cannot claim we never heard it. Only that we did not listen.

The Breaking Point: When the Work Feels Impossible

Then comes the deeper crisis. Rebbe Shimon says not only are we not doing the work, it may be impossible to do it even if we wanted to.. There will be generations where Torah appears forgotten. This introduces a deeper deficiency. A lack of capacity itself. It creates a feeling that the path is closed. But precisely here, the opening appears. "Through this book they will leave exile with compassion" (בהאי ספרא יפקון מן גלותא) (ברחמים). The Zohar itself becomes the doorway. Entering it is entering redemption. The impossibility becomes the mechanism. The sense of despair

becomes the opening, and the lock itself is revealed to be the key. .

The River Yuval and Chayim: Two Ways of Drawing the Light

Now the Zohar reveals how the light is drawn down: “a river flows from Eden” (ונהר יוצא מעדן). Rebbe Shimon calls this river Yuval (יובל), the path of effort, strength, and “the heart becoming elevated” (ו'יגבה ל'בו ב'דרכי ה'). This is the path of understanding (בינה), requiring effort, courage, and persistence. But Rav Hamnuna Saba reveals another path: life (חיים). From the perspective of wisdom (חכמה), there is no need to force anything. One simply lives. One trusts. One allows. These are not two options, they are two worlds. Two inner orientations. One pushes. One rests. One burns. One flows. And both are true. Both are necessary. Together, they create the fullness of integrated *daas* rooted in Kesser.

From Light to Life: The Descent into Experience

The light then descends into lived experience. Into emotions (מידות). Into love, awe, connection. Into the life of the Malchus (חיי דמלכא). The Divine light is no longer abstract, it is lived. Felt. Embodied. The person becomes a vessel. The Torah becomes life. And life becomes Torah. This is the purpose of everything, to bring the infinite into the finite.

The Endless Return: The Secret of Never Being Finished

Even when everything flows into the sea, it is not complete. “All rivers flow to the sea, yet the sea is not full” (כל הנהלים אל הים והים איננו מלא). Because each completion reveals a deeper level of deficiency. And therefore, the waters return. Again and again. The process never ends. It is the river that never stops (נהרא דלא פסיק). This is not failure. It is life. Endless movement, endless revelation, endless connection.

The Final Unity: Drawing Everything Together

And through this entire process, everything moves toward one goal: the unification of *Kudsha Brich Hu* and His *Shechinah* (קודשא בריך הוא ושכינתיה). Through the tzaddik, through Moshe, through Rebbe Shimon, the light is drawn down and lifted back up. And in that movement, the world is filled with blessing, joy, and peace. And this is the labor of life. To draw down. To return. To reveal. Again and again. Until the final revelation of Mashiach.