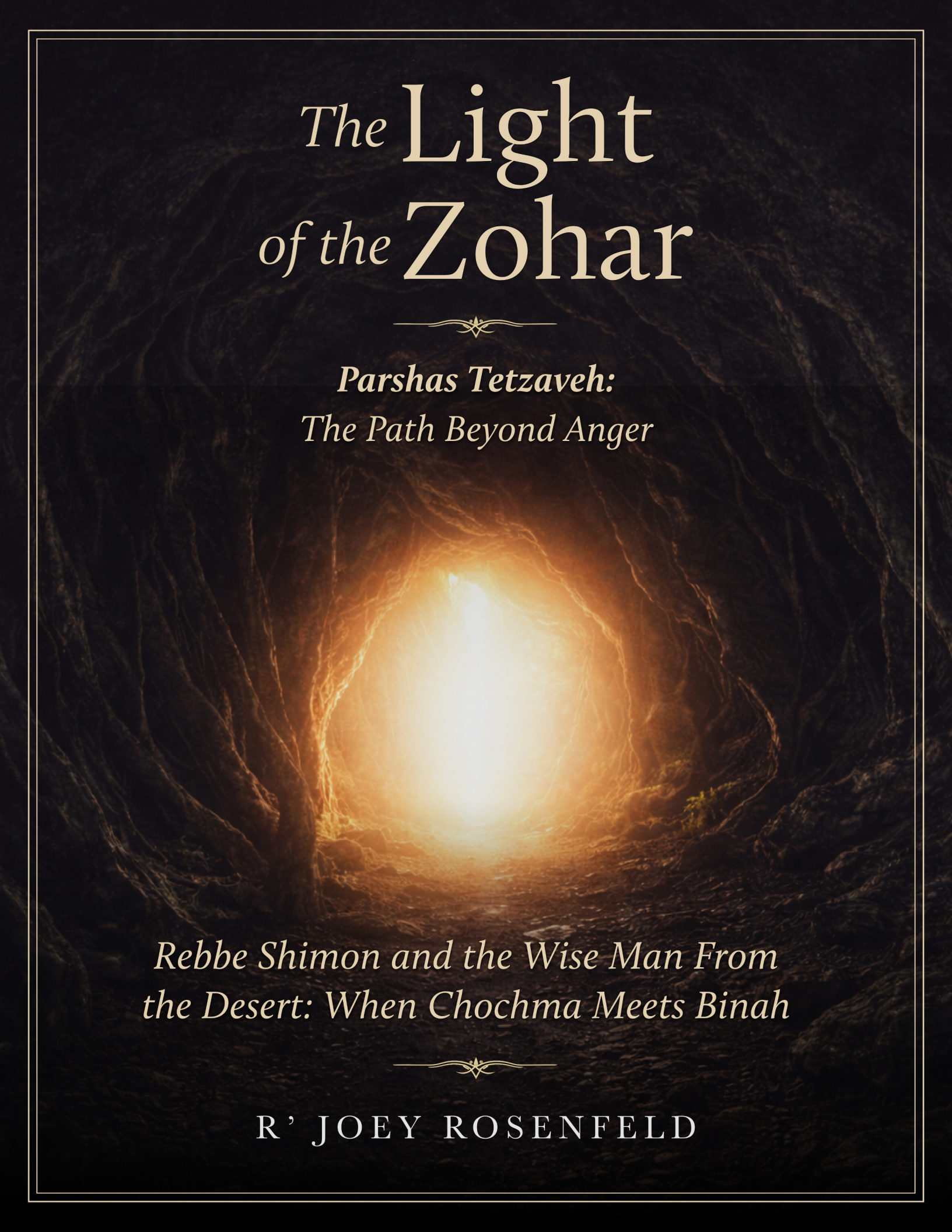




The Light *of the* Zohar

*Parshas Tetzaveh:
The Path Beyond Anger*

*Rebbe Shimon and the Wise Man From
the Desert: When Chochma Meets Binah*

R' JOEY ROSENFELD

— *The Light of the Zohar* —

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—

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R' JOEY ROSENFELD

את חג המצות משמר, רפי יהודה פתח, (ישעיהו ב':כ"ב) חדלו לכם מן האדם אשר נשמה באפו כי במה נחשב הוא. האי קרא אוקמוה. אבל מאי חדלו לכם מן האדם, וכי אזהר ליה לבר נש לאתמנע משאר בני נשא. אוף אינון נמי לגביה, ישתכחון בני נשא דלא יקרבו אליו באליו לעלמין. אלא הא אוקמוה במאן דאשכים לפתחא דחבריה למיהב ליה שלם.

ואנא אוקימנא ליה בקרא אחרא, דכתיב, (משלי כ"ז:י"ד) מברך רעהו בקול (רכ"ו ע"ב) גדול בפקר השכם קללה תחשב לו. ואף על גב דכלא שפיר. אבל מאי חדלו לכם מן האדם אשר נשמה באפו. הכא פקיד קודשא בריך הוא לבר נש, ואזהיר ליה לאסתמרא מאינון בני נשא, דסטו ארתיהו מארח טב לארח ביש, ומסאבי נפשיהו בההוא מסאבו אחרא.

דקא כד ברא קודשא בריך הוא לבר נש, עבד ליה בדיקנא עלאה, ונפח ביה רוחא (ג"א נשמתא) קדישא, דכליל בתלת כמה דאוקימנא, דאית ביה נפש רוח ונשמה, ועילא מפלא נשמה, דאיתי חילא עלאה למנדע, ולמטר פקודי דקודשא בריך הוא. ואי ההיא נשמתא קדישא אעיל לה בפולחנא אחרא, האי איהו מסאיב לה, ונפיק מפולחנא דמאריה. בגין דתלת חילין אליו, פלהו חד, נפש רוח ונשמה משתתפי פחדא, וקוו חד, וכלא כגוונא דרנא עלאה. (על דא נאמר (שם י"ג) הולך את חכמים וגו')

“You shall keep the Festival of Matzot.”

Rebbe Yehudah opened: *“Withdraw yourselves from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for in what is he to be accounted?”* (Isaiah 2:22).

This verse has already been established (explained).

But what is the meaning of *“withdraw yourselves from man”*?

Is a person really being warned to separate from other human beings?

If so, then likewise from his side as well, people would be found who never approach one another at all forever!

Rather, this was explained regarding one who rises early to the doorway of his friend in order to greet him with peace.

And I have established it through another verse, as it is written:

“He who blesses his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning—it will be considered a curse to him.” (Proverbs 27:14).

Even though everything (his intention) is good.

But again: what is *“withdraw yourselves from man whose breath is in his nostrils”*?

Here the Holy One, blessed be He, commands a person and warns him to guard himself from those people who have turned their paths away from the good path to an evil path, and who defile their souls with that other impurity.

For when the Holy One, blessed be He, created the human being, He made him in the supernal image, and He breathed into him a holy spirit (another reading: a holy soul) that is composed of three, as has been established: for he possesses *nefesh, ruach, and neshamah*.

And above all is the neshamah, which is the higher power through which to know and to guard the commandments of the Holy One, blessed be He.

But if that holy neshamah is drawn into another service (alien worship), this is what defiles it, and he departs from the service of his Master.

For these three powers—all are one: nefesh, ruach, and neshamah join together as one and become one, all corresponding to the pattern of the supernal mystery.

רבי שמעון ורבי אלעזר בריה, הוו אזלי בארְחא, והוו אזלין עמהון, רבי אבא ורבי יוסי, עד דהוו אזלי
אערעו בחד סבא, והוה אחיד בידיה חד ינוקא, זקף עינוי רבי שמעון וחמא ליה, אמר ליה לרבי אבא
ודאי מלין חדתין אית גבן בהאי סבא.

כד מטו לגביה, אמר רבי שמעון, במטול דקופטרך בגבך קא אתית, מאן אנת. אמר ליה, יודאי אנא.
אמר, מלין חדתין ודאי יומא דא לגבך, אמר ליה לאן הוא ארעך. אמר ליה, דיורי הנה באינן פרישי
מדברא, דהוינא, משתדל באורייתא, והשתא אתינא לישובא, למיתב בצלא דקודשא בריך הוא, באלין
יומי דירחא שביעאה דא.

חדי רבי שמעון, אמר, נתיב, דודאי קודשא בריך הוא שדרך לגבן. אמר ליה, חייך דנשמע מלה
מפומך, מאינן מלין חדתין עתיקין, דנטעתון תמן במדברא, מהאי ירחא שביעאה. ואמאי אתפרשתון
השתא ממדברא, למיתי לישובא. אמר ליה ההוא סבא, בשאלתא דא, ידענא דחכמתא גבך, ומילך
מטו לרקיעי דחכמתא.

Rebbe Shimon and his son Rebbe Elazar were walking along the road, and Rebbe Abba and Rebbe Yosi were walking with them. As they were going, they encountered a certain elder who was holding a small child in his hand. Rebbe Shimon lifted his eyes and saw him. He said to Rebbe Abba, “Certainly, new words are with us in this elder.”

When they reached him, Rebbe Shimon said: “Because your bundle is upon your back, you are coming — who are you?”

He said to him: “I am a Jew.”

He said: “Surely, new words are with you today.”

He said to him: “Where is your dwelling place?”

He said to him: “My dwelling was among those separated ones of the wilderness, where I was engaged in Torah. And now I have come to the settled world, to sit in the shade of the Holy One, blessed be He, in these days of this seventh month.”

Rebbe Shimon rejoiced and said: “Let us sit, for surely the Holy One, blessed be He, has sent you to us.”

He said to him: “By your life, let us hear a word from your mouth — from those ancient new words that you planted there in the wilderness, from this seventh month. And why have you now separated from the wilderness to come to the settled world?”

That elder said to him: “By this question, I know that wisdom is with you, and that your words reach the firmaments of wisdom.”

The Pillar at the Center of All Voices

B'ezrat Hashem, we are continuing with our weekly shiur on the Zohar HaKadosh. In Parshas Tetzaveh we encounter a foundational teaching about a human emotion and condition, one that reveals the very pillar of the Zohar itself, the secret of the *tzaddik yesod olam*, and the mystery of *amech kulam tzaddikim*. At the center stands Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai, the *butzina kadisha*, the luminous flame around whom the entire *chevraya* gathers. He binds disparate souls into a single orientation until at the end of his life he can honestly declare: *be'chad katira itkatarna*, with one singular bond I have bound myself to You, HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

This declaration is not about Rebbe Shimon alone. It is the condition of the entire Zoharic universe, the companions, the wanderers, the donkey drivers, the birds, the trees. Every element is illuminated through the central connectivity of Rebbe Shimon to the *Shechinah*. This is the secret of *Kudsha Brich Hu u'Shechinteh* and of *tzaddik yesod olam*: that there exists a pillar upon which all worlds stand.

The Tzaddik as the Axis of Return

Ki mitziyon tetzei Torah, from that place of the *butzina kadisha* at the center is where the Torah flows forth from. Rebbe Shimon is not better than others; he is different. The tzaddik descends from Heaven, as the Baal HaTanya and the R' Yitzchak Meir Morgenstern explains in *Ohr Zarua LaTzaddik*. The Tzaddik is the *shliach tzibbur* of existence, receiving and gathering the voices below and returning them upward to their singular root.

Through the refinement of Rebbe Shimon's Torah, and the infusion of Moshe's mind within him, the words of the *chevraya* cease being meaningless worlds (*almin d'shav*) and become worlds of significance (*rakiyin b'shamayim*). Their speech builds realities because they are all rooted in Toras Moshe, the spark of Rebbe Shimon. Attachment to the tzaddik clarifies the imagination, as Rebbe Nachman teaches, a *berur ha-medameh*. Rebbe Nosson embodies this secret: his writings move across countless threads while never losing the single flame at their core.

Many Voices, One Orientation

The Zohar reveals a paradox: countless distinct voices unified through a center greater than any individual. This is the role of the tzaddik, the power that gathers multiplicity and returns it to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. It is the secret of Moshe Rabbeinu bringing Torah down, and of the Kohen Gadol entering *lifnai v'lifnim* into a point of pure unity. Moshe on Sinai is Torah sh'b'ksav; the Kohen Gadol in the Kodosh HaKodashim is Torah sh'baal peh. Both are revelations of the tzaddik.

Thus Moshe and Aharon, Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel, *chasadim* and *gevurot*, two expressions of one axis. Rebbe Shimon contains both within the heart of the Zohar.

The Zohar as the Map of a Human Life

The Zohar mirrors the inner life of every person. We contain disparate moments, emotions, fears, desires, perceptions, each seeming separate, even conflicting. Without a center, life appears fragmented. With the light of the tzaddik, Moshe, Rebbe Shimon, the *yechidei hadoros*, a point emerges toward which all separation orients itself.

Unity does not erase difference; it gives difference a center. The Tikkunei Zohar teaches that *yesod* is *rakia*, separation and specification, yet rearranged it spells *ikar*, essentiality. Multiplicity becomes the expression of an underlying point. The many colors of experience resolve into a single image.

Resting the Soul in Something Greater

Reliance on the tzaddik is the comfort described in *Al HaTzaddikim: mishan u'mivtach la'tzaddikim*. The soul rests in something greater than itself. One relinquishes the illusion of being the center and aligns with the daas of Moshe. Then words begin to illuminate.

This is the secret of the Zohar: infinite interpretation, yet one essential presence, Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai. Every teaching begins and ends with connection to him. The *Idra Zuta* concludes with him transmitting life, *chai l'olamim*. The tzaddik is an empty vessel, translucent, a conduit for the light of the Shechinah. Not fixed identity, but self nullification creates the place where Shechinah rests.

Parshas Tetzaveh and the Work of Sweetening Anger

To connect to the light of the Kohen Gadol of Tetzaveh, is to connect to the Ketores, the air of the Kodesh HaKodashim. Before doing so, one must enter the work of sweetening anger. The tzaddik brings all separation upward to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, removing wrath which is rooted in perceived separation. The Rambam describes Ketores as removing foul odor; Rav Tzadok explains this as ruach hakodesh aligning the Rambam with the kabbalistic secret, the fragrance that dispels resentment and inner poison. When anger is sweetened, a person becomes aligned with the light of *tzaddik yesod olam* within themselves, and from there we connect to Hashem, to the “*Tzaddiko shel Olam*”.

Anger and the Nature of the Tzaddik

Anger is the opposite of the tzaddik. The tzaddik's quality is *yishuv ha'daas*, *menuchas ha'nefesh* rooted in *shivisi Hashem l'negdi tamid*. The Baal Shem Tov reads *shivisi* as *hishtavus*, equanimity. Whether elevated or fallen, all is equal before the singular bond with HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Anger arises from the illusion of control. When reality contradicts that illusion,

the self expands in rage to reassert dominance. This self-inflation eclipses the Divine. The tzaddik, knowing all comes from HaKadosh Baruch Hu, is freed from anger. Yitzchak Avinu embodies this, passive not from weakness but from recognition that nothing exists outside the Divine. His laughter is the laughter of future redemption.

Emunah as the Refinement of Anger

The tzaddik refines selfhood until it reveals only HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Thus attachment to the tzaddik is achieved through relinquishing anger and control. This is not passivity but conquest of the self, *kivush hayetzer*, entering *shivisi*, the state of “*lo ichpat li klal*”, a place beyond care. One still feels, yet chooses alignment with emunah above reaction. To become more of a tzaddik is to release anger. HaKadosh Baruch Hu alone governs reality.

The Zohar's Criterion: The Test of Anger

The Zohar now teaches: how does one know whom to approach or avoid in this world? Rebbe Yehuda opens with *chidlu lachem min ha-adam asher neshamah b'apo*. The pnimiyus is

revealed, the one to distance from is the person ruled by anger.

HaKadosh Baruch Hu created each human with *nefesh, ruach, neshama*, body, heart, mind unified. When anger dislodges this unity, the *neshama* becomes polluted and displaced. Thus the Zohar declares: specifically through anger one discerns a person's essence. A holy soul remains steady in anger's moment, *natar b'sha'asa d'rugza delo yakar lei me'asrei*. They do not abandon their place. Anger does not uproot them. Such is a person one should cleave to.

Displacement and the Foreign God

Anger removes a person from themselves. It is as if idolatry, the self overtaken by another force. The Zohar calls this *tofeir nafsho b'apo*, one devours one's own soul through anger, allowing a foreign god to dwell within them. Thus *chidlu lachem min ha'adam asher neshamah b'apo*, distance from one whose soul departs in anger. Without the tzaddik's inner point, multiplicity fragments. With it, separation orients toward unity.

Sweetening the Moment of Contraction

The tzaddik sweetens the instant of Divine contraction, the *rega* of anger. By remaining steady, he reveals that all is for ultimate good. The deepest *hamtakah* of *tzimtzum* is calming oneself as anger rises, pausing, breathing, remembering *Ohr Ein Sof* within contraction. One who does this is a true servant, *gavar shlim*. Wholeness lies in relinquishing control.

Chametz and Matzah of the Mind

Anger is chametz, fermentation of ego hardened over time. To sweeten it, the closed *ches* opens into *hei*, becoming *matzah*. The difference is humility: recognizing brokenness rather than imagined perfection. Only HaKadosh Baruch Hu is perfect. The tzaddik expects nothing and therefore has no grounds for anger. Thus Dovid HaMelech transforms redness of rage into *emunah*, control surrendered to Divine governance. The more one trusts HaKadosh Baruch Hu's control, the more it is revealed.

The Inner Connection of Tetzaveh

This is the connection to Parshas Tetzaveh, the *tzav* binding *tzadi* to *vav*, the human to the Divine axis. Through sweetening anger, letting go of resentment toward self and other, entering *shivisi*, one remains rooted even within contraction, aware of *Ohr Ein Sof* just as it is, exactly as it was before the *tzimtzum*. This capacity lives in every person, the inheritance of *amech kulam tzaddikim*. Through it we cleave to the Kodesh HaKodashim within and to the eternal life flowing from the tzaddik.

Drawing the Light of Moshe into the Vessels of Rashbi

We usually begin by describing the essential movement that underlies all engagement with the Zohar: the drawing down of the light of Moshe Rabbeinu into the vessels of Rebbe Shimon. Moshe is the light of Chochmah. Rashbi is the light of Binah. And the *avodah* is to take the clear, unified water of Chochmah and draw it into the differentiated, fiery vessels of Binah so that unity can illuminate multiplicity from within.

This is the fundamental pattern through which Torah is revealed: the whole expressing itself through the

part. Moshe represents the undivided clarity of Chochmah, while Rebbe Shimon represents the expansion, articulation, and containment of that clarity within Binah. The Zohar, therefore, is not merely teachings spoken by Rashbi; it is Moshe's light speaking through Rashbi's vessels. Every encounter with the Zohar reenacts Sinai, where Chochmah descended into Binah so that the infinite could be received within form.

Eimatai Ka'ati Mar- The Secret of Bitterness and Unity

The unification of Moshe and Rashbi is the secret of Kesser, and this is what we have described through the phrase "*eimatai ka'ati mar*", the question the Baal Shem Tov asks Mashiach: "When will the Master arrive?" Yet the word *mar* also means bitterness. The same letters that name Mashiach's arrival also name the experience of separation.

All bitterness emerges from the split between Chochmah and Binah. It is the fracture between Moshe and Rashbi, between mind and heart, between the unified ideal and the fractured real. Whenever the whole and the part are experienced as disconnected, *merirus* appears. The world feels divided, and

the divine presence seems concealed within multiplicity.

The repair of bitterness is therefore not emotional consolation but ontological reunification. Moshe and Rashbi together spell *mar*, and *mar* has the gematria of Amalek. Amalek is the force that insists on separation, the perception that reality is fragmented and accidental. When Chochmah and Binah are unified, Amalek dissolves, because multiplicity is seen as the articulation of unity rather than its contradiction.

When the Vessel Becomes the Light

Yet the Zohar we are entering now introduces a different relationship altogether. We usually describe Rashbi as Binah receiving Moshe's Chochmah. But there is another axis in which Rashbi does not merely receive Moshe, he becomes Moshe's very expression. The vessel becomes indistinguishable from the light it contains.

As the Ramchal teaches, every authentic *chiddush* in Torah reenacts Sinai: Moshe descending into Sinai. Har Sinai is Binah, Moshe is Chochmah. But when Binah is perfectly aligned with its role, when it exists solely to reveal Chochmah, the distinction collapses. The container becomes transparent to

the content. This is why the Zohar repeatedly identifies Moshe and Rebbe Shimon. Moshe ascends up to the heavens and draws down Rashbi's soul; *Alisa l'marom v'shivisa shevi, shevi* is *roshei teivos* Shimon bar Yochai. Rashbi becomes Moshe extended into history.

From this perspective, Rashbi is no longer Binah relative to Moshe's Chochmah. Rashbi himself stands in the place of Chochmah. And when Rashbi stands as Chochmah, the figures he encounters take on the role of Binah.

Visitors from the Worlds of Concealment

The Zohar is filled with visitors. Travelers emerge from sea, desert, heaven, and earth, each carrying a fragment of concealed wisdom. Sometimes Rashbi is the host and Binah receives Chochmah from these visitors. This was the structure in Saba de'Mishpatim: Rashbi as dry land and Rav Hamnuna Saba emerging from the sea of Chochmah to reveal light within him.

But in our sugya the polarity reverses. Now Rashbi stands as Chochmah itself, and the visitor embodies Binah in its most intense form, the desert, concealment, severity, and existential

burden. Moshe's light is now fully enclothed in Rashbi, and Binah appears externally as the wandering sage who approaches him.

The encounter will therefore not be Chochmah entering Binah, but Binah coming to be reinterpreted within Chochmah.

Chochmah as the Awareness of Absolute Goodness

In this context, Rebbe Shimon represents Chochmah in its purest sense: the simple awareness that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is the source of all goodness and that everything He bestows is fundamentally good at its root. This is not a conclusion reached after analysis, nor a consolation discovered after suffering. It is the immediate perception that existence itself flows from divine beneficence.

Chochmah is bittul, the consciousness of *Ayin* in which reality is experienced as emerging from above rather than constructed below. The solidity and resistance encountered in life are understood as downstream condensations of an upper unity. To live from Chochmah is to recognize that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is always already present, more real than

anything else, and that an underlying alrightness permeates all being.

From this vantage, darkness is already sweetened in its source. Concealment is not denied but relativized, revealed as surface differentiation within an underlying field of goodness. This is the consciousness Rebbe Shimon received from Rebbe Akiva, who traversed the deepest concealments to reveal the light of the Zohar. But in Rebbe Shimon the path is no longer suffering but disclosure: *leis smola behai Atika* — in that level there is no left side at all.

The Encounter with the Fierceness of Binah

It is precisely from this position of Chochmah that Rebbe Shimon encounters the visitor from the desert. The desert represents Binah in its fiercest mode: differentiation hardened into severity, multiplicity experienced as weight, concealment felt as existential burden. The wanderer carries this intensity within himself.

Rebbe Shimon does not negate this Binah. Instead, he contextualizes it. He shows that even its harshness belongs to Chochmah and can be reabsorbed within it. Binah is not rejected but illuminated from above, revealing that

its very turbulence exists to deepen the revelation of unity.

The conversation that unfolds between them will therefore map the entire movement from Chochmah into Binah and back into the interiority of Chochmah, the descent into concealment for the sake of a deeper ascent into unity. And it is within this framework that the Zohar now opens its discussion of matzah and chametz, Rosh Hashanah and the seventh month, the desert and the yishuv, all expressions of the same dynamic between infinite clarity and finite articulation.

Matzah and Chametz: Chochmah and Binah

The Zohar frames this entire encounter within the deeper symbolism of matzah and chametz. Matzah represents Chochmah: simplicity, flatness, the absence of inflation, the quiet clarity of bittul. Chametz represents Binah when it expands beyond its source: fermentation, swelling, intensity, the density of differentiation and reaction. The opposition is not between good and bad, but between undifferentiated unity and articulated multiplicity.

Rebbe Nachman reveals that chametz is rooted in anger — the tendency of

consciousness to hold onto impressions, to thicken around expectation and disappointment. Anger is Binah experienced without its anchoring in Chochmah. It is multiplicity felt as opposition rather than expression. Matzah, by contrast, is the calm awareness that everything flows from one source. It is Chochmah tasted directly.

This is why the Zohar describes matzah as medicine. When we left Egypt, we were spiritually ill; our consciousness was saturated with the density of Binah without the clarity of Chochmah. The only healing possible was exclusive nourishment from matzah, from undivided unity. One cannot mix medicine with fermentation. The soul must first relearn simplicity before it can reengage complexity.

The Return of Chametz

Yet chametz is not rejected forever. Once Chochmah is stabilized, Binah can be reintegrated. This is the secret of Shavuot, when chametz reappears in the *shte'i halechem*. After the healing of matzah, differentiation itself becomes holy. The expansiveness of Binah can now express Chochmah rather than obscure it. Anger itself can be transmuted into intensity of Torah, as Rav Tzadok and the Mei HaShiloach

teach: the very heat that once distorted perception becomes fuel for revelation.

The movement is therefore cyclical. One begins with Chochmah alone, descends into Binah, and then reunites them in Kesser. Chametz returns not as inflation but as articulated unity, multiplicity illuminated from within by its source. This is the deeper grammar of all spiritual maturation: simplicity, complexity, integration.

Rosh Hashanah — The Awakening of Binah

The Zohar now turns to Rosh Hashanah, the beginningness of all things. Rosh Hashanah corresponds to Binah, the letter beis of Bereishit, the emergence of articulated reality from undifferentiated origin. Yet within the beis rests the concealed aleph of Anochi, the Chochmah that precedes and animates creation. Every beginning therefore contains both: the expansion of Binah and the hidden point of Chochmah within it.

On Rosh Hashanah the world is renewed through this dual movement. The external dimension of malchut is rectified through Binah, through structure, differentiation, and judgment. The inner dimension of malchut is rectified through

Chochmah, through the silent awareness of divine unity. Both are necessary, but their relationship determines whether renewal appears as severity or illumination.

The entire cycle of the seventh month unfolds this process. From Elul through Rosh Hashanah, the Ten Days of Teshuvah, Yom Kippur, and onward to Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret, consciousness descends into the density of Binah and gradually reascends into Chochmah and Kesser. The month itself is Binah intensified, the seventh level, and therefore carries both danger and potential: concealment at its peak and integration at its threshold.

The Supremacy of Chochmah

The Zohar insists that throughout this descent Chochmah must remain primary. Binah serves Chochmah; differentiation serves unity. Severity exists only to deepen revelation. When Binah forgets its source, multiplicity appears autonomous and fear emerges. When Binah remembers Chochmah, concealment becomes a pathway rather than obstruction.

This is why the sages say that the ultimate knowledge is knowing that we do not know. Chochmah always

surpasses grasp. *Tzimtzum eino kipshuto*— contraction never severs unity. All that can truly be known is that HaKadosh Baruch Hu exceeds every articulation. Binah unfolds forms, but Chochmah reveals that no form contains the source.

The work of the seventh month is therefore the sweetening of Binah by Chochmah, the return of multiplicity to unity. This is the *hamtakah* toward which the entire narrative of the Zohar now moves: the encounter between Rebbe Shimon as Chochmah and the desert sage as Binah seeking reintegration.

Entering the Zoharic Narrative

With this framework established, the Zohar shifts from metaphysical teaching into narrative embodiment. Rebbe Shimon and Rebbe Elazar walk along the path with Rebbe Abba and Rebbe Yose. The arrangement itself mirrors the structure already described: Rebbe Shimon as Chochmah, Rebbe Elazar as Binah receiving from him; Rebbe Abba as Chochmah, Rebbe Yose — gematria eighty-six — as the gevurot of Binah. Even the composition of the group reflects the same polarity.

The Zohar never records incidental details. Every pairing, every gesture, every reaction encodes structure. The fractal repeats at every scale: Chochmah and Binah interwoven in persons, relationships, and encounters. As the companions walk, the pattern awaits embodiment in lived experience.

It is then that they meet the figure who carries Binah in its rawest form: an elderly wanderer leading a child by the hand, emerging from the desert itself. The meeting between them will unfold the entire dynamic already articulated, the burden of Binah seeking the light of Chochmah, and Chochmah revealing Binah's place within unity.

The Raising of the Eyes

As they walk along the path, the Zohar tells us that they encounter an elderly sage holding a young child by the hand. Immediately, Rebbe Shimon lifts his eyes and looks at him. That gesture is not incidental. The eyes correspond to Chochmah. Hearing corresponds to Binah, but sight belongs to the primordial yud of Chochmah. By raising his eyes, Rebbe Shimon is actively situating himself in the consciousness of Chochmah before engaging what he senses is approaching.

He intuits that this encounter carries new ancient words. There is a weight to this wanderer. He comes burdened, heavy with something gathered in the desert — the realm of Binah intensified. Rebbe Shimon turns to Rebbe Abba and says that surely new teachings will emerge from this sage. The language of “new ancient words” already hints to the union of chadash and atik, of Binah’s novelty and Chochmah’s antiquity.

Rav Hamnuna and the Reversal of Polarity

This inversion of roles becomes clearer when we recall the earlier encounters in the Zohar, particularly with Rav Hamnuna Saba. There, the relationship followed the more familiar axis: Rebbe Shimon stood as Binah, the settled land, the articulated vessel, and Rav Hamnuna emerged from the great sea, from the concealed waters of Chochmah, to reveal light within him. Chochmah visited Binah. The sea entered the shore.

That configuration established Rashbi as host and receiver, the place where Moshe’s light could unfold into language and structure. Rav Hamnuna, rising from the depths, represented the influx of undifferentiated wisdom

entering the differentiated field. The polarity was stable: sea to land, Chochmah to Binah.

But in the sugya before us, the direction reverses. Now Rebbe Shimon stands not as land receiving sea, but as the very sea itself, Chochmah revealed in person. And the visitor does not emerge from water but from desert. Not concealed unity entering articulation, but articulated severity seeking reintegration into unity. Binah now approaches Chochmah.

This is why the wanderer from the desert carries weight. He embodies Binah intensified, differentiation hardened into burden. The meeting between him and Rebbe Shimon mirrors the earlier meeting with Rav Hamnuna, but in inverted form. Previously, Chochmah descended into Binah; here, Binah ascends toward Chochmah.

The Zohar thus presents two complementary movements. Rav Hamnuna teaches how Chochmah reveals itself within Binah. The desert sage teaches how Binah must return to Chochmah. Together they map the full circulation between unity and differentiation, sea and desert, Moshe and Rashbi in both directions.

The Burden of the Desert

When Rebbe Shimon addresses the sage, he remarks upon the heaviness he carries. The Zohar describes the wanderer as weighed down. This is the existential gravity of Binah when it is experienced without the full illumination of Chochmah. Binah differentiates, analyzes, intensifies. It can become dense, even oppressive. The desert represents precisely this condition, expansiveness without settlement, multiplicity without integration.

The sage identifies himself simply as a Jew. The burden he carries is not personal but collective. It is the weight of history, of exile, of having lived deeply within the structures of Binah. To function in the world requires Binah; to endure exile requires Binah. But Binah without Chochmah becomes heaviness.

Rebbe Shimon does not reject him. Instead, he invites him to sit. Walking ceases. Sitting begins. The movement from path to rest reflects the movement from Binah's dynamism into Chochmah's stillness. The *yishuv*, settled calmness, becomes the space in which the desert can be reinterpreted.

The Desert and the Seventh Month

The sage explains that he comes from those who dwell in the desert, secluded and immersed in Torah. They live in the harsh terrain of concealment, wrestling with the intensity of differentiation. Now, however, he has come to the settled place during the days of the seventh month. The seventh month corresponds to Binah, the level of completion, the fullness of structure, the mother principle of articulation.

The seventh month is the axis of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and the entire arc of renewal. It is Binah in its most powerful expression. Yet it is precisely during this intensification that the sage seeks the shade of Rebbe Shimon. When Binah is most forceful, Chochmah must be consciously reawakened. Otherwise severity becomes autonomous and fear prevails.

Rebbe Shimon rejoices. Binah has come voluntarily to Chochmah. The desert seeks settlement. Concealment seeks interpretation. He senses that this meeting is divinely arranged, that the polarity of Chochmah and Binah is about to unfold in living form.

What Was Seen in the Desert

The sage begins with a verse describing how HaKadosh Baruch Hu carried Israel through the desert like a father carrying his son. He emphasizes the word “I saw.” What was seen? Not merely suffering, but the hidden Chochmah within the suffering. The desert was not abandonment; it was an arena for revelation.

Bnei Yisrael were taken into the harshest desert, the most intense concealment, so that the forces of separation could be confronted and refined. After the illumination of Yetziat Mitzrayim, Chochmah shone fully. But such illumination cannot remain abstract. It must descend into Binah, into terrain where resistance exists, so that unity can be integrated rather than merely glimpsed.

The forty years in the desert represent the full measure of Binah, the *mem* of maturation and severity. When Chochmah is forgotten within that process, the serpent dominates. When Chochmah is remembered, the serpent becomes the site of transformation. The struggle between Bnei Yisrael and the serpent is the struggle between Chochmah and Binah severed from its root.

Descent for the Sake of Illumination

The sage explains that he and his companions deliberately dwell in the desert in order to subdue severity from within. Torah studied in the place of resistance penetrates more deeply. “There is no light except that which emerges from darkness.” Binah provides the friction through which Chochmah becomes experiential rather than theoretical.

Yet even those who descend must periodically return to *yishuv*—to Chochmah stabilized. Without that recalibration, the descent risks becoming entrapment. The desert sharpens; settlement clarifies. Both are necessary, but hierarchy must be maintained. Chochmah remains primary.

This is why, during the seventh month when severity intensifies, the sage comes to Rebbe Shimon. Rosh Hashanah awakens din; concealment becomes more pronounced. The serpent seeks accusation. The moon appears covered. Precisely then the voice of the shofar pierces through Binah’s density and ascends to Chochmah, transforming judgment into compassion.

The Shofar and the Confusion of Severity

The shofar embodies this ascent. Its raw, simple sound bypasses complexity. It is Chochmah breaking through Binah. The voice ascends and confuses the sitra achra because it reveals unity within the very space that concealment thought was its domain. When Chochmah appears inside Binah, severity loses its footing.

The awakening below elicits the awakening above. Compassion descends because unity has been asserted from within differentiation. The world is judged not to punish but to determine how best to distribute blessings. Din exists to refine vessels so that Chochmah can be received.

Joy below draws joy above. If the lower world meets existence with illumination of face, the higher responds in kind. Thus even Rosh Hashanah, though framed in awe, carries the secret of simchah. Binah sweetened by Chochmah becomes the channel for expanded light.

Yom Kippur and the Hidden Feast

The Zohar deepens this through the parable of the king and his son. The king summons the punisher, yet the

son goes directly to the father. They reconcile privately. A feast is prepared for them alone. The punisher must be distracted, given a portion so that he believes himself included, but the true celebration remains concealed from him.

This is the mystery of the two goats on Yom Kippur. One is offered to HaKadosh Baruch Hu; one is sent to the wilderness. The external drama addresses Binah's intensity, but internally a reunion unfolds between Chochmah and malchut. The other side is appeased so that unity can be experienced undisturbed.

Yom Kippur reveals that concealment itself is subordinate. The *sa'ir la'azazel* acknowledges the presence of severity without granting it ultimate authority. In truth, the day culminates in "Hashem Hu HaElokim," the declaration that Chochmah and Binah, mercy and judgment, are one at their root.

From Yom Kippur to Purim

The Zohar concludes by pointing toward Purim. The pattern repeats: Haman believes himself central to the feast, unaware that his inclusion heralds his undoing. Esther HaMalka approaches the king directly, bypassing

the machinery of accusation. Concealment becomes the vehicle of revelation.

Purim discloses the laughter hidden within Yom Kippur. What appeared as severity is revealed as choreography. The serpent, Amalek, Haman, all forces of separation, are drawn into the house of unity and dissolved. The bitterness of *mar* transforms into the sweetness of Mashiah.

Thus the entire narrative returns to its beginning. Chochmah descends into Binah. Binah intensifies and conceals. Chochmah reemerges within Binah and sweetens it. And from their union Kesser shines forth. This is the secret Rebbe Shimon embodies: the unwavering primacy of Chochmah that allows descent without fear and ascent without fragmentation.

And in that place, truly, *leis smola behai Atika* — there is no left side at all.