

Rebbe Nachman's Chanukah Vision and What it can Teach Us About Holy Destabilization

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A visitor entered a house and asked the head of the house: "From what do you make a living?" "I don't have a fixed livelihood at home," his host replied, "but the world provides me with what I need to live." The guest asked him, "What do you study?" The host answered, and they continued talking together until they spoke in real earnest, heart to heart. The host began to feel a tremendous yearning to know how to reach a certain level of holiness. "I will study with you," said the guest.

The host was surprised and began to think, "Perhaps this isn't a human being at all." But he looked again and saw that he was talking to him normally like a human being. Directly after this he felt a strengthening of his faith and resolved to believe in the guest and began calling him "my teacher".

He said to the guest, "First of all, I would like you to teach me how to show the proper respect for beings like yourself. Not, I need scarcely add, that I could really detract from your true glory, God forbid! Even so, it is hard for humans to be as meticulous as they ought to be in these matters. That is why I want you to teach me how to behave with due respect."

"I haven't time at the moment," he answered, "but I will teach you this another time. Right now I must leave."

"Well, I also need to learn something else from you," said the host. "How far do I have to go when I accompany you on your way, as the host is bound to do when his guests depart?"

"Till outside the entrance," he replied.

The host thought to himself, "How can I go out with him. At the moment I am with him among ordinary beings, but if I go out with him alone - who knows who he is?" The host said to the visitor, "I am afraid to go out with you."

"If I can learn with you just like this," he replied, "then who is going to stop me doing anything I want to you ? The host escorted him outside . All of a sudden he seized him and started to fly with him. The host was cold , so the other gave him a garment. "Take this garment," he said, "and it will be good for you. You will have food and drink and everything will be good and you will live in your house."

He continued flying with him. Meanwhile the host suddenly noticed that he was in his house. He couldn't believe that he was actually in his own house. But he looked carefully, and sure enough he was speaking with ordinary human beings and eating and drinking normally. But then he again noticed that he was flying like before. Then he looked again, and lo and behold! He was in his house! Again he noticed that he was flying... and so it went on for quite some time.

After a time he was set down in a valley between two mountains. There the man found a book in which there were various combinations of letters: aleph , zayin , chet , dalet . Inside the book were drawings of various vessels containing letters. Also within the vessels were the letters related to the vessels: through these letters it was possible to make the vessels themselves.

The man had a tremendous desire to study the book. But then he noticed that he was back in his house. He took another look and he was back in the valley. He decided to ascend the mountain to see if he could find some kind of habitation there. When he came to the mountain, he saw a tree of gold standing there with golden branches. Hanging from the branches were vessels like those drawn in the book, and inside the vessels were other vessels through which these first vessels could be made. He wanted to take the vessels from there, but he was unable to do so because they were entangled in the branches.

Meanwhile he noticed that he was in his house. It was extraordinary. How was it that one moment he could be here and the next moment there? He wanted to speak about it to other human beings, but how can one explain something incredible like this to other people - they would find it hard to believe.

At this moment he looked through the window and saw the same visitor. He started begging him to come in, but the visitor said, "I don't have time because I'm on my way to you." "This in itself is something amazing to me," said the man. "I'm right here. What do you mean that you are on your way to me?" He answered: "As soon as you showed yourself willing to accompany me beyond the entrance, I took the neshamah -soul, from you and gave it a garment from the lower Garden of Eden. The nefesh - ruach -spirit remains with you. This is why when you attach your thought to that place you are there and you draw the radiance of that place over yourself. Then when you return here, you are here."

I do not know from which world he is. But this much is certain: he is from a world of good. So far it is not finished. It is not completed.

Chanukah: Oreach Nichnas — A Guest Enters

Okay, be'ezrat Hashem, lichtige Chanukah. Today we're going to dive into one of Rabbeinu Nachman's later tales, a vision of sorts that Rabbeinu had a year before his passing in 1809, called Oreach Nichnas, *a guest enters*. We've spoken about this story elsewhere at other times, and be'ezrat Hashem we'll continue teaching this story every Chanukah, ad bias go'el tzedek. And this story, like any of the stories that Rabbeinu brought down, or any of the tales or the visions, requires that first and foremost we ensure that we keep one thing in mind: we don't know what it means.

We don't know beyond that which is explicitly written. And yet these stories were offered to us in order to be darshened, in order to find hisorerus, in order to find a reorientation, a path toward teshuvah. All of the stories are meant to wake us up; the visions are meant to wake us up. That's the

reason that tzaddikim bring down their visions and malbish their visions in ideas and concepts, in letters—that they engarb them within meshalim and metaphors.

Why the Vision Must Be Clothed

Now this is not to say that the external casing of the metaphor is insignificant and that all that matters is the inner content, because ultimately all we have is the metaphor. But in understanding the preciousness of the metaphors that the tzaddikim gave us—the stories, the visions, the tales, the dimyon, the mar'eh dekdusha, the holy vision that these tzaddikim beheld in the place that they beheld it—we're dealing with the da'as of the tzaddikim amitim, the yechidei hadoros, the rosh bayis of the generation. These are tzaddikim who receive the loftiest levels of makifin, and when they bring that down and clothe it in accordance with what the generation can receive, then Bnei Yisrael are capable of drawing strength from those teachings.

And so we read the words. We attach ourselves to the words. We understand what we understand, and we don't understand what we don't understand. There is also a way of trying to understand what it means for us—trying to translate it—an act of translation that is not attempting to claim that this is the essential meaning of the vision. Rather, it is a possible expression of one form of the shine of this vision, as it is understood now.

Haneros Halalu: Sanctity and Distance

And so, with that proper orientation, we can say: haneros halalu kodesh heim. These visions—these illuminations of the tzaddik yesod olam, of Nachal Novea Mekor Chochma, Rabbeinu Nachman ben Feiga, zechuso yagen aleinu—the visions that this tzaddik gave us, the Toros, the tefilos, the revelations, the points of hope and the drops of light that the tzaddik provided for the generations—haneros halalu kodesh heim. They are holy. There is a sanctity to them. They are removed from us. We do not understand—especially when it comes to the sipurim, especially when it comes to the visions.

Ve'e efshar lehishtamesh bahem ela lirosan bilvad. We don't have the right to manipulate them or to use them; rather, we are meant only to gaze at them. To read

them. To look. To be illuminated without trying to extract, control, or instrumentalize them. These are not tools; they are lights.

But once we truly accept that our role is not to use them, but only to gaze at them, then—for the sake of medicine—we are allowed to ask what this might mean for us. How this could potentially touch our lives as they are actually lived. Not as a claim to meaning, but as an opening toward healing.

A Vision by the Candles

And so this is a tale that Rabbeinu beheld on the first night of Chanukah, after lighting the first night's light, in the year 1809. It is a vision that took place by the candles. And the very fact that it was written down tells us that hashgacha pratis wants us to have access to it, that there is benefit here. Kisvu zos l'dor acharon—there is something here meant for us, and it is important for us to believe in the potency of these ideas.

And so we are going to read this haunting, beautiful, destabilizing tale together, and hopefully allow it to spark light—light in our faces, light in the world. We are going to try to gaze through darkness, through the painful, painful reality of darkness, and to gaze so deeply into it that we begin to

perceive the dream, the laughter of the future—the laughter that will be revealed at the end of this difficult vision.

There is a seeing beyond what reality presents, a squinting of the eyes that allows one to see farther than what is immediately visible, a glance beyond the light itself. From there comes *nechamah*—real comfort—the kind that comes when Klal Yisrael is capable of changing its mind, of reorienting, of seeing Hashem where, just a moment earlier, it did not think Hashem was present at all.

Waiting for the True Guest

And we daven—daven that Hakadosh Baruch Hu ultimately send the true Guest, the one we are all waiting for: Mashiach tzidkeinu. The light of Mashiach ben Yosef, Mashiach ben David, Moshe Rabbeinu—the true light of redemption. Anything else is secondary to that demand, secondary to the *chanukas habayis* of Mashiach tzidkeinu, Mashiach ben David. That is what every *ayin* awaits, what every breath is holding for, what every ounce of pain is searching for.

And in the meantime, until that *hesek hadaas* takes shape and Hakadosh Baruch Hu reveals the true Guest—the *oreach nichnas*, the true light of Mashiach

tzidkeinu—what we are able to do is dig deeply into the words of the *tzaddikim* and extract medicine.

Nechezeh: The Vision Begins

This story was seen—*nechezeh*—on the first night of Chanukah, *alef Chanukah shnas taf kuf tzadi tes*, 1809. It was beheld. It was shown. And the story begins in the most understated, almost deceptively simple way:

Oreach nichnas b'leilah l'baal habayis.

A guest enters the home of a man at night.

The guest encounters the *baal habayis* and asks him a question: *mei'ayin parnasasecha?* From where do you draw your *parnasah*? From where do you draw your vitality, your sustenance, your life-force? And the *baal habayis* answers him plainly: *ein li parnasa kavua b'beisi*—I don't have any fixed, established way within my home of drawing my *parnasah*. *Rak chayai si min ha'olam*—I draw my vitality from the world.

The guest then asks him another question: *ma ata lomed?* What are you learning? What are you studying? And the *baal habayis* answers him. And they continue speaking together. The conversation unfolds. It deepens. It moves from the

surface inward, until the words are no longer merely exchanged between mouths, but begin to flow *min ha'lev*, from the heart itself.

Hishtokkus and the Birth of the Question

At that point, something awakens within the baal habayis. A stirring. A hishtokkus. A *ga'aguim me'od*—a deep yearning, an unsettled longing that he himself cannot yet fully name. Something in him wants more. Something in him is no longer satisfied with the way things have been.

And out of that place, the essential question emerges: *eich magi'im u'masigim eizeh davar she'b'kedushah*? How does one actually reach something holy? How does one grasp kedushah? Not how does one touch it momentarily, not how does one feel inspired for a fleeting instant, but how does one *arrive* there, and how does one *hold* it?

And the guest answers him simply, without explanation, without elaboration, without condition:

Ani elmod imcha.

I will learn with you.

The Shock of Being Seen

And the baal habayis is stunned—*v'teima ha'baal habayis*—because he had not said this question aloud. He had not articulated it. He had not framed it externally. And yet the guest responds directly to the inner stirring, to the unspoken yearning itself.

And so the baal habayis begins to think: *ulai eino ben adam klal*—perhaps this guest is not a human being at all. Perhaps this is something else entirely. Something that does not operate according to the ordinary rules of speech, of disclosure, of self-presentation.

But then—*achar chazar v'ra'ah*—he returns and looks again. He sees that the guest speaks with him *k'derech bnei adam*, in the way of human beings. The guest does not force himself. He does not overwhelm. He speaks plainly. He remains present. And so the baal habayis does not think much of it.

And the story pauses here, right at the edge of something beginning.

The Baal Habayis: Being at Home in the Known

The baal habayis is the one who lives inside a pre-existing setting. When I am a host in my own home, I know where things are. I know how things work. There is a sense of

domestication to reality. A familiarity. A structure. A comfort. Each and every person wants to be at home. There is something deeply human about that desire—to be inside rather than outside, protected rather than exposed.

Our earliest memory is of being inside. Being in the womb. Being held. Being enclosed. That sense of enclosure, of safety, of being sheltered from threat, is the first experience of bayis. And that bayis is already a remez to the Beis HaMikdash. There was a time when we were entirely at home, when existence itself felt held. And so much of what we do later in life is an attempt—often unconscious—to recreate that feeling, to domesticate reality so that it does not overwhelm or destabilize us.

And therefore, much of our desire throughout life, throughout the waking days of the year, is to become a baal habayis. To know what's what. To know where things are. To know when something will happen and how it will happen. To feel that reality is, if not controllable, then at least familiar. The baal habayis is the one who believes that he knows how things function, or at least believes that he knows enough to get by.

Unheimlich: When the Outside Breaks In

And then suddenly—suddenly—within that fragile and carefully cultivated space of comfort and structure that a person builds for themselves, something unknown appears. Something foreign. Something from the outside. Something that does not fit neatly into the existing order of the mind. Something other.

That is what a guest is. An oreach is not just another person entering the house. An oreach is a disruption. A guest enters and unsettles the pre-existing order that the baal habayis thought he had secured. There is a strangeness to it, an *unheimlichkeit*—a sense that what was once familiar is no longer fully settled.

And this is not only true in the physical sense of a house. It is true internally as well. When something new enters the inner world—something that has not yet been categorized, named, or domesticated—it brings with it a shift. It interrupts the habitual functioning of the system. It forces a reorientation. There is surprise. There is destabilization. There is a moment in which the self no longer knows exactly where it stands.

The Guest as Inner Disruption

This is what happens when a guest enters a life. A new person enters. A new reality appears. Something unexpected arrives. And suddenly the structures that had been holding everything in place have to reorganize themselves around this new presence.

And this is equally true of the way we function inwardly. The guest here is not only a literal person. The guest is an experience. A perception. A level of awareness. A new possibility of being. And the moment that possibility enters, the baal habayis—the familiar self—can no longer remain fully in charge.

The oreach does not ask permission to exist. He arrives. And by arriving, he quietly calls into question the assumption that the home was complete without him.

Nefesh, Ruach, Neshama: Who Actually Lives in the House

And this is true not only in the structure of a house, but in the structure of the self. When we speak about how a person functions, we often speak about it in three layers. There is the nefesh, which is the body. There is the ruach, which is the heart—the emotional life, the felt frequencies, the way meaning translates

itself into feeling. And there is the neshama, which is the mind, the sechel, the place of thought, awareness, and orientation.

While the nefesh, ruach, and neshama all occupy the self, more often than not we live almost entirely within the nefesh and the ruach. We walk around as bodies that feel things. We know what it means to experience sensation physically, and we know the viscosity of emotion when it expresses itself through the body. That is the nefesh and the ruach. That is the active state of the self most of the time.

Ner Hashem nishmas adam. The candle of Hashem is the human being. The **ner** is the nefesh and the ruach—the body and the heart. And when that candle is set, when it exists as a vessel, then the neshama can be revealed. The neshama is always present, but it is not always activated. The nefesh and the ruach are always there. I always have a body. I always have emotions. I always have reactions. But the neshama—the illumination that lights the candle—is not always shining.

The candle is not always lit. It always has the *potential* to be lit, but it is not always lit. And so too with the neshama. The neshama she'b'mochi, the neshama that resides in the mind, is internal like the nefesh and the ruach. It is not something

outside of us, like the chayah or the yechidah. It is not a transcendental ideal floating beyond reach. It is the real place of thinking, of meaning-making, of da'as. It is the place where a thought can form that actually influences the heart, and through the heart, the body.

And yet, that neshama is not always activated. It is present, but dormant. The nefesh and the ruach dominate the house.

Why the Neshama Feels Like a Guest

And this is why, when the neshama awakens, it appears as a guest. It does not feel like the baal habayis. It does not feel familiar. It does not feel like “me as I know myself.” It arrives from somewhere else, even though it is internal. It comes with a different logic, a different pacing, a different sense of what matters.

The nature of these awakenings—the nature of ha'aros, of illumination, of moments of clarity, of deep breath and settledness of mind—is that more often than not they come and go quickly. They illuminate, and then they dissipate. They come to shine light on the nefesh and the ruach, and then suddenly they depart. And the baal habayis—the familiar self—is often not fundamentally changed by them.

Why? Because the baal habayis has not relinquished control. He has not handed over the narrative. He has allowed the guest to visit, but he has not allowed the guest to rearrange the furniture.

The nefesh and the ruach—the body and the emotional heart—remain the owners of the house. They remain the default orientation. And so the neshama appears, shines, and leaves.

Awakening Without Integration

This is the experience so many people know. A moment of inspiration. A moment of clarity. A feeling of closeness. A sense that things could be different. And then—back to normal. Back to the old patterns. Back to the familiar emotional loops and bodily reactions. The guest visited, but did not stay.

And so the question becomes unavoidable: what allows a visitation from the neshama to become lasting? What ensures that the illumination does not merely pass through, but actually leaves a mark? What allows the guest not only to enter, but to become part of the household?

That question is already embedded in the story itself. Because the baal habayis does not ask, “How do I feel inspired?” He asks, “Eich magi'im u'masigim eizeh davar

she'b'kedushah?" How do I reach holiness—and how do I *grasp* it?

And Chanukah is precisely the time when that question becomes unavoidable.

Chanukah as the Guest: Welcoming the Or HaGanuz

Chanukah is uniquely ripe for this question, because Chanukah itself is a guest. Chanukah is the welcoming of the Or HaGanuz, the hidden light. It is not a light that announces itself loudly. It is not a light that overwhelms. It is a concealed light that must be invited in. It is the light of chesed, the light of Binah—bnei binah yemei shmona, eight days, children of understanding. It is the light of eim habanim smeicha, the source of the neshama, the place from which illumination drips continuously into the mind.

When we light the ner, we are lighting the nefesh and the ruach. We are acknowledging that we are bodies with emotional hearts. But Chanukah is not only about lighting the candle; it is about whether the neshama will be allowed to shine through that candle. Whether the light of Binah will be allowed to leave an impression. Whether this guest will be welcomed in the right way.

And this is why, in the story, the usual order is reversed.

When the Guest Questions the Host

A guest does not normally interrogate the host. A guest comes in, is offered food, is shown where to sit, and answers questions politely. But here, the oreach enters and immediately asks the baal habayis: mei'ayin parnasasecha? From where do you draw your vitality? From where do you live?

This is not a neutral question. It is a destabilizing one. When the neshama is meant to have a real impact, the baal habayis must allow himself to be questioned. He must allow his assumptions about himself to be unsettled. He must permit the familiar narrative of who he is to be interrupted.

This is Chanukah itself. Mai Chanukah? What is this? Where am I standing? What am I living from? That question—*mai*—is the opening of Binah. It destabilizes what is already known in order to reopen the possibility of faith.

"I Draw My Life from the World"

And the baal habayis answers honestly: *ein li parnasa kavua b'beisi*. I do not have a

fixed, established source of vitality within my house. There is no steady channel inside of me for drawing down life. *Rak mechayai si min ha'olam*—I draw my vitality from the world.

In other words, there is no active, stable relationship with the neshama. Sometimes there is illumination, sometimes not. Mostly, life is drawn from the olam, from he'elem, from concealment—from the nefesh and the ruach, from the natural order, from the seven days of creation. That is how the world works. That is how most people live.

And the guest does not argue. He simply continues questioning.

The Second Question: Limud

Ma ata lomed? What are you learning? What are you studying?

Because learning—limud Torah, especially lishmah—has the capacity to draw down illumination even when a person does not feel inspired. It can create a channel that is steady, even in the absence of emotional arousal.

And the baal habayis answers. But whatever he is learning, it is not yet doing this work. It is not yet awakening him. The learning

exists, but it has not yet become a living source of vitality.

The Birth of Hishtokkus

And then, almost imperceptibly, something changes. When a person stops identifying so fully with the basic operating system of nefesh and ruach—when the familiar circuitry loosens even slightly—something awakens immediately. A *hishtokkus*. A ga'aguim me'od. A yearning that has not yet taken form.

At first, this yearning is anonymous. It does not yet know where it wants to go. The neshama does not begin by giving answers. It begins by igniting longing. It reveals that there is more, before it reveals what that more is.

And this is a dangerous moment. Because if that moreness does not turn upward, it can turn downward. It can attach itself to the body. It can seek fulfillment in intensity rather than holiness. But here, the yearning turns toward kedushah.

And the baal habayis asks the question that contains everything: *eich magi'im u'masigim eizeh davar she'b'kedushah?* How do I reach holiness—and how do I grasp it?

Ani Elmod Imcha

And the guest answers, simply and decisively: *ani elmod imcha*. I will learn with you.

The neshama does not offer a technique. It does not offer a program. It does not give instructions. It offers relationship. It offers presence. It offers to stay.

And that is the moment where fear enters.

Fear at the Edge of Real Change

And this is the point at which fear enters. Not dramatic fear, not panic, but the quiet, destabilizing fear that always accompanies real spiritual change. Because when the guest answers *ani elmod imcha*, something irreversible has been set in motion. The neshama is no longer just illuminating from afar. It is offering to step into the house, to remain, to teach. And that is far more threatening than a momentary flash of inspiration.

And so the baal habayis is stunned—*v'teima ha'baal habayis*. He hadn't said this question aloud. He hadn't articulated it clearly, not even to himself. And yet the guest responds directly to the inner stirring, to the yearning that had not yet found words. And that is the moment

where the familiar self begins to feel exposed.

Because when someone—or something—knows what I am thinking before I say it, the sense of control collapses. The nefesh and the ruach are used to being in charge of disclosure. They decide what is spoken, what is hidden, what is shown and what remains private. But here, that boundary has been crossed without permission.

“Perhaps He Is Not Human at All”

And so the baal habayis begins to think: *ulai eino ben adam klal*. Perhaps this guest is not a human being at all. Perhaps this is something other. Something that does not operate within the usual rules of communication, consent, or pacing.

This thought is not incidental. It is the first defense mechanism against transformation. When something threatens to change us at the root, the mind looks for a way to disqualify it. Maybe this isn't real. Maybe this is dangerous. Maybe this is not meant for me. Maybe I don't actually have to take this seriously.

And very often, this is where spiritual opportunities collapse. A person encounters something that could genuinely alter the trajectory of their life, and at the

first sign of destabilization they retreat. They tell themselves a story that allows them to preserve the familiar identity. They send the guest away.

This is the moment where so many awakenings fail to integrate—where the baal habayis insists on remaining the sole authority in the house.

Chazar V’Ra’ah: Looking Again

But Rabbeinu tells us something precise here. *Achar chazar v’ra’ah*. He returns. He looks again.

This is not a small movement. It is the first real act of courage in the story. Instead of dismissing the experience, instead of labeling it as too strange or too threatening, the baal habayis allows himself to look again. He stays with the discomfort long enough to see more clearly.

And what does he see? He sees that the guest speaks with him *k’derech bnei adam*. In the way of human beings. The guest does not overwhelm him. He does not dominate. He does not force conclusions. He remains present, responsive, grounded. There is nothing alien or coercive in the encounter.

And so the baal habayis does not think much of it. Not because the moment is

insignificant, but because he has allowed himself to normalize the presence of the neshama. He does not dramatize it. He does not reject it. He lets it be.

And that is already a shift. Because the neshama does not demand hysteria. It demands presence.

The Quiet Crossing Point

This is the quiet crossing point in the story. Nothing external has changed yet. No miracles. No revelations. No ascents. But internally, the baal habayis has allowed the possibility that there is more to him than he previously believed. He has allowed the guest to remain without either idolizing or expelling him.

And that is often the most difficult work of all—to stay open without grasping, to remain present without fleeing.

The story could have ended here. Many stories do. But Rabbeinu is showing us what happens when a person does not immediately close the door.

Because once the neshama is allowed to stay, even quietly, the house is no longer the same.

Emunah After the Second Look

And immediately after that second look—teikef—something else takes place. *Nischazek emunah etzlo*. Faith strengthens itself within him. Not belief as an abstract idea, but trust. Trust in what he is encountering. Trust that this illumination is not accidental. Trust that this presence is not here to deceive him.

And this strengthening of emunah is critical. Because without emunah, insight remains informational. Without emunah, illumination becomes threatening. Emunah allows a person to lean into what they do not yet understand without demanding proof.

And with that emunah, the baal habayis does something decisive: *v'hischil teikef l'koro Rebbe*. He immediately begins to call him *Rebbe*. My teacher. My master. Not as a formality, but as an act of submission. As an acknowledgment that the authority in the room has shifted.

This is the first explicit relinquishing of ownership. The baal habayis, who had been the unquestioned authority in his home, now acknowledges that there is a deeper authority present. He does not yet know what that authority will demand, but he recognizes it as real.

The First Question of the Disciple

And the very first thing he asks is telling. He does not ask for secrets. He does not ask for visions. He does not ask for enlightenment. He asks something far more vulnerable and far more human: teach me how to treat you properly.

He is afraid of doing something wrong. Afraid of offending. Afraid of losing this presence. He says, in effect: I want this to stay, and I am afraid that my humanness—my limits, my mistakes, my unrefined tendencies—will drive it away. Teach me how to give you proper kavod. Teach me how not to ruin this.

This is the all-too-human response to genuine spiritual opening. When something good finally arrives, something that feels like truth, like calm, like alignment, the immediate reaction is fear of loss. The mind jumps ahead and asks: how do I make sure this never leaves?

And that question feels sincere. It feels holy. But it is already tinged with anxiety.

The Fear Beneath the Desire for Permanence

Because the desire to make spiritual illumination permanent, at its beginning, is often rooted less in love and more in fear.

Fear of returning to the old way. Fear of losing the light. Fear that this goodness is fragile, conditional, and easily destroyed.

And when fear enters, the relationship subtly shifts. The neshama is no longer being welcomed as a teacher, but as something that must be managed. Preserved. Secured. Held onto.

And that is precisely what the neshama does not allow.

“Ein Li P’nai”

The guest answers simply: *ke’eis eini p’nai*. I do not have time now. Another time I will come and teach you this. But now, *ani tzarich l’leilech mikahn*. I need to leave.

This answer is devastating if misunderstood. It feels like abandonment. It feels like withdrawal. It feels like confirmation of the fear that spiritual light is fleeting.

But Rabbeinu is being exact. The neshama is refusing to answer the wrong question.

The question of “how do I make sure you never leave” cannot be answered at the beginning. Because it is built on anxiety. It is built on the assumption that the nefesh and the ruach are still in charge, and that

they must figure out how to hold the neshama in place.

But the relationship between neshama and nefesh is not conditional. It is essential. And anything essential cannot be secured through techniques.

Why the Answer Must Wait

The tools, the kavod, the disciplines, the vessels—those will come later. *B’eis acher avo etzlecha v’elamedcha zos*. I will come back and teach you this. But only once the relationship is grounded not in fear, but in trust.

Because if the baal habayis learns how to “do it right” before he learns how to let go, the neshama becomes an object of control rather than a source of life.

And so the guest prepares to leave.

And now, the real test begins.

Learning How to Escort a Guest

And when the baal habayis hears that the guest is leaving, he asks one more thing. If I cannot yet learn how to ensure that you stay, then at least teach me how to let you go properly. How do I escort you? How do I accompany you out of my home in the right way?

This question is already different. It is no longer about possession. It is about relationship. It acknowledges that the illumination may depart, but it asks whether there is a way to part that preserves connection rather than collapsing into loss.

And the guest answers: *ad achar ha'pesach*. Just a little past the threshold.

The Threshold as Liminal Space

The threshold is not inside, and it is not outside. It is the narrow place in between. It is the point where the baal habayis begins to lose his footing. Inside the house, everything is familiar. Outside the house, nothing is. The threshold is the place where identity begins to loosen.

And immediately, fear returns.

The baal habayis begins to think: should I go out with him or not? Inside the house there are other people. There is safety. There is recognition. Outside, there is solitude. Exposure. Uncertainty. If I step out, I will be alone. Who knows what will happen to me?

This is the precise fear that arises whenever a person is asked to step beyond their familiar identity. As long as I remain inside the known structures of my body, my emotions, my habits, my explanations, I am

protected. The moment I step outside—even a little—I risk destabilization.

Naming the Fear

And the baal habayis does not hide this fear. He says it aloud: *yesh li pachad latzeis imcha*. I am afraid to go out with you.

This honesty matters. The fear is not a failure. It is part of the process. Spiritual growth does not require fearlessness. It requires truthfulness. And here, the baal habayis admits exactly where he is holding back.

The Guest's Answer

And the guest responds with a sentence that cuts through illusion: if I am able to teach you what your own mind has not spoken aloud, am I not able to do whatever I wish with you?

In other words: the illusion of control has already fallen. You are afraid of stepping outside, but you are already exposed. You already know too much. You have already encountered the neshama. There is no return to the previous innocence.

This is not a threat. It is a statement of fact.

Crossing the Threshold

And at that moment, the baal habayis steps out. *Vayetzei imo min ha'pesach*. He leaves the threshold with him.

This is the first true relinquishing of ownership. The baal habayis no longer insists on being the center of authority. He allows himself to be led. He enters the unknown willingly.

And that is when the story accelerates.

Taken Beyond Himself

The moment he steps beyond the threshold, everything changes. *Teikef chatfo*—immediately the guest seizes him. Not violently, not coercively, but decisively. And the guest begins to fly with him. The baal habayis is no longer walking. He is no longer grounded. He is lifted out of the structures that had held him until now.

And immediately he feels it: *v'haya kar lo*. He becomes cold.

This coldness is not incidental. It is the coldness of transcendence. It is the coldness of being lifted into a place where there is no familiarity, no warmth of habit, no heimlichkeit. The neshama ascends naturally, but the human being—still bound to nefesh and ruach—feels exposed.

There is no shelter in pure ascent. There is no warmth in total abstraction. There is awe, there is light, but there is also distance.

The Garment

And so the guest does something precise and merciful. *V'lakach malbush v'nasan lo*. He takes a garment and gives it to him. And he says: *kach zeh ha'malbush v'yitav lach*. Take this garment. It will be good for you.

This garment is not an accessory. It is the condition for survival. It is the levush, the interface between transcendence and life. Spiritual illumination without garments freezes the human being. It depersonalizes. It dissolves the warmth of existence.

The neshama does not want the human being to disappear. It wants him to live.

And so the garment allows him to eat and drink. To return home. To remain human. Spirituality is not meant to abolish the house. It is meant to illuminate it.

The First Oscillation

And then something strange begins to happen. The baal habayis looks—and suddenly he is back in his house. Eating. Drinking. Speaking with his family. Fully present. Fully embodied.

V'lo haya ma'amin. He does not believe it.
How can this be? He was just flying.

And then he looks again—and he is back in
the air.

And then again—back in the house.

And again—back in the air.

Back and forth. Back and forth.

Learning to Live Between Worlds

This oscillation is not confusion. It is
training. This is *ratzo v'shov*. Ascent and
return. *Shamayim* and *aretz*. Above and
below. *Ani* and *ayin* at once.

This is what it feels like when the *neshama*
begins to integrate. A person discovers that
spiritual life is not a straight line upward. It
is movement. It is rhythm. It is the ability
to be present to God and present to life at
the same time.

One moment, the mind is flooded with
awareness—*ein od milvado*. The next
moment, a child cries. A meal must be
prepared. Life calls.

And the goal is not to choose one over the
other. The goal is to learn how to move
between them without panic.

Why the Coldness Matters

The coldness returns whenever ascent
dominates. The warmth returns whenever
the garment is worn. The garment is the
secret of integration. Without it,
spirituality becomes alienating. With it,
holiness becomes livable.

And this back-and-forth continues, not as a
flaw, but as the form of growth itself.

The *baal habayis* is no longer only a *baal*
habayis. He is becoming a traveler between
worlds.

Descent Into the Valley

After this prolonged oscillation—being
above and below, in the air and in the
house—the movement shifts again. He
descends. And he finds himself sitting
between two mountains, in a valley. This
descent is not a fall. It is a placement. It is
the positioning of the self in the place
where integration can begin.

The two mountains stand on either side of
him. These are not geographical features.
These are *Chochmah* and *Binah*. The
harim are the *horim*—*Abba* and *Imma*.
Chochmah on one side, *Binah* on the
other. *Esa einai el beharim, me'ayin yavo*
ezri. From where does help come? Help
comes from standing between them.

The valley is *Da'as*. The narrow bridge. The place where illumination must be drawn down into lived reality. True spiritual experience does not remain on the mountain. It descends into the valley, into the narrowness where thought must become orientation, and orientation must become life.

The Book

And there, in the valley, he finds a book. Not a metaphorical book, but a real book—filled with engravings, with letters, with forms. And the letters he sees are strange and precise: *alef, zayin, ches, hu, dalet, v'chulei*.

This is not a book of ideas. It is a book of *osiyos*. And not only that—it is a book of vessels. Drawings of *keilim*. Forms. Structures. And inside each vessel are letters. And inside each vessel are the very letters from which that vessel itself is made.

This is a radical revelation. It means that vessels are not the opposite of light. Vessels are crystallized letters. Congealed illumination. What appears to be concealment is, in truth, another mode of revelation.

Alef, Zayin, Ches

The *zayin* is the seven lower middos—chesed through malchus. Nefesh and ruach. Body and emotion. The seven days of natural order. The system of life that functions, repeats, falls, rises, and falls again.

The *alef* is Binah. Ima Ila'ah. The neshama descending into that system. When the alef enters the zayin, it does not merely add something. It transforms it. *Alef plus zayin becomes ches*—unity. Expansion. Integration.

And *hu dalet v'chulei*—all of this is moving toward the revelation of the four-letter Name. The *osiyos* are not random. They are all pointing back to the Shem Havayah. The vessels are not obstacles. They are pathways.

Why This Matters

This is the secret Rabbeinu is revealing here: the world itself is a book. As Rav Tzadok teaches, HaKadosh Baruch Hu wrote the world, and then wrote a commentary on that book—the Torah. The world is letters. The Torah is letters explaining letters.

What looks like thickness, resistance, mundanity, and limitation is not

anti-spiritual. It is compressed divinity. The body. The home. The schedule. The obligations. These are not the enemies of holiness. They are its vessels.

And this is why the baal habayis finds this book in the valley. Not on the mountain. Not in ascent. The work of integration happens below. It happens where life is narrow, pressured, ordinary, and demanding.

Building Vessels

And here begins the slow work. Not how to ascend. Not how to feel inspired. But how to build keilim. How to take illumination and allow it to settle. How to live with it. How to let the letters form structures without suffocating the light.

This is the beginning of real avodah.

The Golden Tree on the Mountain

After sitting in the valley, after encountering the book of letters and vessels, the baal habayis gathers himself again. *V'hityashev atzmo la'alos el bahar*. He settles himself and decides to ascend the mountain, perhaps to find some clarity, some *yishuv*, some way forward.

And when he reaches the mountain, he sees something astonishing: an *ilan shel*

zahav—a golden tree, with golden branches. Gold, *zahav*, is not incidental. *Zahav* is the color and quality of Binah, of *gevurah*, of constriction that gives form. *Kesef* belongs to *Chochmah*, flowing outward; *zahav* belongs to Binah, shaping inward. This is the mountain of Binah.

And on every branch of this golden tree are vessels—the very vessels he had seen in the book. And within those vessels are other vessels, through which the larger vessels themselves are formed. Layers upon layers of containment. Structure within structure. Form giving rise to form.

Desire Without Grasping

And he desires them deeply. *V'haya cheshek gadol me'od litol mehem*. He wants to take these vessels. He wants to use them. He wants to bring them into his life.

But he cannot. They are entangled, bound together in a thicket. This is not punishment. This is instruction. The vessels of Binah cannot be seized. They require patience. Time. Process. Binah is not revelation by lightning strike. Binah is development.

This is one of the deepest frustrations of spiritual life. Once a person sees what integration looks like, once they glimpse what it would mean to live with

illumination, the desire to take it immediately is overwhelming. But Binah teaches that vessels must grow organically. They cannot be ripped free.

Why Time Is Essential

This entanglement is the nature of Binah itself. Binah works through unfolding. Through mevin davar mitoch davar. Through repetition. Through waiting. Through returning again and again to the same place until it opens.

This is why the vessels are gold and not silver. Silver flows. Gold weighs. Gold takes time to refine.

And suddenly—without warning—he finds himself back in his house again.

Returning Home With New Eyes

This return is not a regression. It is the point. The true vessels are not waiting on the mountain. They are waiting in the house. The home is where the light must settle. The family. The ordinary rhythms. The embodied life.

Chanukas ha'bayis is the essence of Chanukah. Each person, in their own home, is the Kohen Gadol. Each person is responsible for lighting the menorah where they actually live.

And now, the baal habayis knows something he did not know before: the house itself is part of the revelation. The home is not an obstacle to holiness. It is the site of holiness.

Living With the Wonder

And this fills him with wonder. He moves back and forth—house, valley, mountain—aware now that these are not separate worlds. They are one movement. One rhythm. One unfolding.

He wants to tell the people in his house what is happening to him. He wants to explain it. To share it. But how do you explain such a thing? How do you speak about an inner oscillation between worlds without reducing it to something false?

And then he sees the guest again.

Wanting to Tell, Not Knowing How

And now the baal habayis sits in his home, filled with wonder. He has been above and below. He has stood in the valley, climbed the mountain, seen the book, touched the edge of vessel-building, and returned. And he wants—desperately—to tell the people in his house what has happened to him. He wants to speak it. To explain it. To share the light that has been revealed to him.

But how does one speak about something that only exists through movement? How does one explain an experience whose very essence is oscillation—being here and there, above and below, inside and outside, at once? Anything he might say would already be a distortion. The words would flatten it. They would betray it.

This is one of the deepest pains of spiritual awakening: the incommunicability of what is most real.

The Guest at the Window

And then he looks—and he sees the guest standing outside the window. The oreach is there. Waiting. Present, but not inside.

And the baal habayis yearns intensely that the guest should come back in. Now he has proof. Now he has context. Now he could show the others. Now it would make sense. *Come in*, he pleads. *Be here. Let them see you.*

But the guest answers: *ein li p'nai*. I don't have time. I am leaving—to come to you.

This sounds paradoxical. Leaving... to come to you?

"I Am Already Coming to You"

And this is the turning point. The guest is saying: I am no longer an external presence.

I am no longer something that needs to enter the house from the outside. I am already integrated. I am already walking toward you from within.

The neshama does not need to be proven. It does not need witnesses. It does not need validation. Once it has left its trace, it remains—not as spectacle, but as *menuchas ha'nefesh*, as *yishuv ha'daas*.

The baal habayis is confused. *Zeh nifla b'einai*. This is wondrous to me. I am here. You are here. What does it mean that you are coming to me?

And the guest reveals the secret.

What Actually Happened at the Threshold

He tells him: when you agreed to walk with me beyond the threshold, something irreversible occurred. At that moment, *I took your neshama from you*—the one that had grown accustomed to forgetfulness—and in its place I clothed you with a *levush from Gan Eden ba'tachton*. I gave you a garment from the true place of the neshama.

Your nefesh and ruach—the body and the emotional life—remained at home. That is the ner. That did not leave. But your

orientation shifted. Your identification shifted.

That is why you could be in the house and in the air. That is why you could return and ascend. Because a person is always in the place where their thoughts are. When your thoughts were with the neshama, you were above. When your thoughts returned to the vessels, you were home.

Nothing magical happened. Something essential happened.

Knowing Too Much to Go Back

And the baal habayis realizes something profound: he does not know where this illumination came from, but he knows that it is from a good world. *Chok ha'tov l'heiteiv*. It is good. And it is not finished. It is not complete. It is still unfolding. And that is enough.

Once a person has encountered the neshama in this way, there is no going back to ignorance. One can forget. One can distract. One can build thicker walls. But the knowledge remains. The struggle from now on is not whether there is a neshama—but how to live with it.

The Work That Remains

This is the secret of the first night of Chanukah. Not completion. Not mastery. But **beginning**. Lighting the candle so that the light can slowly enter the vessels. Allowing the nefesh and the ruach to become places where the neshama can dwell.

The guest has entered. And now, the work belongs to the baal habayis.

The Light Is Good

And this is where the vision rests—not with resolution, not with certainty, but with goodness. *Chok ha'tov l'heiteiv*. The baal habayis does not know from which world the guest came. He does not know how it all works. He does not yet know how it will be completed. But he knows this much: it is good.

Ohr ki tov. The light is good. That is the defining quality of the Or HaGanuz. Not where it comes from, not how it descends, not how long it stays—but that it carries goodness into existence. The neshama secretes goodness into life. And that goodness demands vessels.

This is the secret of the first night of Chanukah. Not triumph. Not arrival. But the beginning of illumination within the

vessels themselves. The nefesh and the ruach—the body and the emotionally lived experience—are not obstacles to holiness. They are the places where holiness must be revealed. The candle itself is holy. *Haneros balalu kodesh heim.*

The neshama must become a guest in the body. And the body must remember that it is the baal habayis only because this is where HaKadosh Baruch Hu desires to dwell—*dira b'tachtonim*. The home becomes a Mikdash. The ordinary becomes the site of revelation.

This Is the Vision

This is the vision of Oreach Nichnas. This is how the story reads this year. A guest enters—not to overpower, not to remain aloof, not to rescue us from life—but to teach us how to live within life with illumination. How to move between ascent and return. How to build vessels without fearing darkness. How to discover that even the keilim themselves are letters, and that the letters are nothing other than condensed light.

The work is not finished. The matter is not completed. But it is good.

Tefillah

And so we daven.

That we should be zocheh—to comfort, to yeshuos, to nechamos. That every person should be illuminated with a light of consolation. That the true guest should arrive—the one we are all waiting for: Mashiaich tzidkeinu. That all judgments should be sweetened. That all darkness should be overturned into light. That we should merit to see how every vessel is truly made of letters, and how the letters are at the center of everything.

That we should draw down the lights of sustenance from all the shivah ha'ro'im and all the tzaddikei yesod olam, who are the candles of the menorah. That we should merit ruach hakodesh, a taste of nevuah, the light of tov ha'amiti.

And that we should be zocheh to turn all darkness into light, to let the guest enter fully, and to live with the quiet, enduring goodness of the neshama—
Baruch she'amar v'haya ha'olam.