בלע המות לנצח — Shiur Leader Guide

A teaching companion to the elucidated Hebrew–English edition

Maamar	בלע המות לנצח — "He will swallow up death forever" (Isaiah 25:8)
Speaker	The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson
Delivered	יום ג' פ' דברים, ה' מנחם-אב ה'תשכ"ה — Tuesday, Parshas Devarim, 5 Menachem-Av 5725 (August 3, 1965)
Genre	Maamar chassidus (farbrengen discourse) — not a sicha. Built as a five-part halachic-style shakla v'tarya (give-and-take), not a linear lecture.
Length / pace	5 sections, ~2 pages of Hebrew in the original kuntres. Comfortably a 45–60 minute shiur; can compress to 30 by trimming Section C's Tanya excursus.
Audience fit	Assumes basic familiarity with Tanya's beinoni/tzaddik ladder and the concept of tzimtzum-era tikkun. Not a beginner maamar — best for a chaburah with some Chassidus background.

1. The One-Sentence Thesis

> Core claim: Death is not a decree bolted onto human existence — it is the direct structural consequence of one specific event (the mingling of good and evil at the Eitz HaDaas), and it will end only when that mingling is fully undone. Because that undoing depends on our avodah of hating evil totally, the end of death is, quite literally, in our hands.

2. Why This Maamar, Why Now

The kuntres was originally published for the sheloshim of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, and reprinted here in that same context — a moment when a community sits with loss and wants more than comfort: it wants to understand what death *is*, structurally, in a way that makes the promise of techiyas hameisim feel like an argument, not a slogan. Opening with that context (without turning the shiur into a eulogy) can orient the room before you open the sefer.

3. Section-by-Section Map

Opening / Section א — The Tree, the Mixture, the Mechanism

- [A] Move: Two verses (Isaiah 25:8, Zechariah 13:2) are read as one event. Then: why did the Eitz HaDaas sin cause death at all?
- [A] Key chiddush: Before the sin, evil existed but was *segregated* — its own layer, below the worlds of holiness. The sin's damage wasn't introducing evil, it was the *mixing*.

[A]The Tree of Life puzzle: Why couldn't Adam eat from the Tree of Life after sinning and just live forever anyway? Answer: because now evil was mixed into him, and eternal life would have made *that* eternal too. Death is instituted specifically to cap evil's shelf life.

[A]Landing point: Real chiyus (life-force) exists only in kedushah; evil *is*, spiritually, death. So the sin imports spiritual death, and physical death is just that same thing playing out concretely.

Section ב — Shlomo HaMelech as a Preview, and Its Limit

[A]Move: If total nullification of evil is what's needed, hasn't that already happened? Answer: yes, partially — in Shlomo's day.

[A]Key term: קיימא סיהרא באשלמותא — "the moon in its fullness."

[A]The catch: Even total geopolitical nullification (no wars, universal submission) still left the kelipos a "hindmost" foothold. The Queen of Sheba illustration is doing real work here — she was overwhelmed, but never stopped being a queen.

Section ג — The Real Axis: Sur Meira vs. Mo'eis Bara

[A]Move: Reframes the historical question (what happened in Shlomo's day vs. what will happen at the End) as a psychological/avodah question (what does it mean to fully reject evil vs. merely suppress it).

[A]This is the maamar's hinge. Everything before this point was description; everything after this point is instruction.

Section ד — It's Not Only For Tzaddikim

[A]Move: Concern: if "swallowing death forever" requires the mo'eis bara level, and that level is rare — doesn't this leave most people out?

[A]Resolution: Total self-transcendence doesn't require permanent tzaddik-status; it can happen in flashes — davening, learning, an inspired mitzvah, even a mundane act done l'shem Shamayim. This is the maamar's most democratizing, most actionable move.

Section ה — Why Even Tzaddikim's Bodies Still Return to Dust, and What Finally Changes

[A]Move: Ties off the historical thread from Section ב: even in Shlomo's day, even for the most elevated bodies, death persisted — because the world-wide admixture wasn't yet resolved. The "one hour before techiyas hameisim" teaching is the proof-text.

[A]Closing move: When the mixture is fully resolved, the body itself becomes nourished by ruchniyus like the neshamah — not just spared death, but reconstituted on a different basis entirely.

4. Glossary — Terms Worth Pre-Teaching

Term	Meaning in this maamar
חטא עץ הדעת	The sin of the Tree of Knowledge — treated here not as a moral failure but as a structural event that mixed good and evil throughout creation.
תערובות טוב ורע	The post-sin mixture of good and evil; the condition birurim (sifting) exists to undo.

קיימא סיהרא באשלמותא	"The moon in its fullness" — Zoharic description of Shlomo's reign as history's closest approach to the Messianic light, useful precisely because it still fell short.
סור מרע	"Turning from evil" — suppressing/rejecting evil in practice while a residual attraction may remain (Tanya's beinoni / tzaddik she'eino gamur).
מואס ברע (בתכלית)	"Utterly detesting evil" — the tzaddik gamur's total revulsion, leaving evil no foothold at all. The maamar's operative goal for our avodah.
בחי' אחוריים	The "hindmost"/external aspect of holiness — the only place the kelipos can still draw from even under a very high revelation.
דברים של רשות לשם שמים	Mundane, permitted activities done consciously for the sake of Heaven — the maamar's answer for how ordinary people access mo'eis bara-level self-transcendence.
שעה אחת קודם תחיית המתים	The teaching that even the perfectly righteous return to dust for one hour immediately before techiyas hameisim — used here as proof that death is tied to the world's unfinished state, not individual merit.

5. Suggested Teaching Flow (55 minutes)

Open — Read Isaiah 25:8 aloud in Hebrew and English. Ask the room: *if you had to guess, why would eliminating impurity (Zechariah 13:2) be the same event as ending death?* Don't answer — let it sit as the maamar's actual question. *5 min*

Section א — Walk the Tree of Life puzzle as a live question before revealing the Alter Rebbe's answer. This is the section most likely to actually surprise people; don't rush it. *10 min*

Sections ג–ב — Present Shlomo's reign as a "yes, and..." rather than jumping straight to the limitation. Let the Queen of Sheba story land as a real example before naming the abstract point (she never stopped being a queen). *10 min*

The hinge (Section ג cont'd) — This is where to slow down most. Have the room name their own examples of sur mei'ra vs. mo'eis bara from ordinary life (a bad habit you've suppressed vs. one you've genuinely stopped wanting) before mapping it back onto the historical material. *12 min*

Section ד — This is the practical payoff. Ask each person to name one recurring moment in their own week that could function as their "dvarim shel reshus l'shem Shamayim" — a mundane moment they could reclaim as total self-transcendence. *10 min*

Section ה and close — Read the "one hour before techiyas hameisim" teaching, then close by returning to the opening verse. Ask: what changed in how you hear "He will swallow up death forever" now versus at the start? *8 min*

6. Discussion Questions

1. The maamar treats death as caused by the sin, not merely decreed as its punishment. Does that distinction change anything practically — or is it a technical point?
2. Why does the maamar need the Queen of Sheba story at all? What would be lost if it just stated the sur-mei'ra/mo'eis-bara distinction abstractly?
3. Section ד says total self-transcendence is available in flashes, not just as a permanent tzaddik-level achievement. Where does this both raise the bar and lower it at the same time?
4. If even the bodies of tzaddikim — preserved for centuries, untouched by decay — still return to dust for one hour before techiyas hameisim, what does that teach about the difference between personal merit and the world's collective condition?
5. The maamar was said, and later republished, in the context of a loss. What do you make of a mourning community turning specifically toward a text about the metaphysics of death's *elimination*, rather than a text about comfort or acceptance?

7. Common Pitfalls in Presenting This Maamar

> Pitfall — flattening Section ב into "Shlomo wasn't good enough." The maamar's move is subtler: Shlomo's reign is presented as a genuine, historically real down-payment on the Redemption, not a failure. The whole rhetorical force of Section ג depends on the room respecting how high a bar Shlomo's era actually cleared before learning what still remained.

> Pitfall — treating "mo'eis bara" as an emotional technique. It is tempting to teach this as "just hate the bad habit more." The maamar's Tanya-based ladder is about a real, structural change in the soul's relationship to evil (no residual "opening"), not intensity of feeling. Keep the sur-mei'ra/mo'eis-bara line categorical, not gradual.

> Pitfall — skipping the footnote apparatus entirely. Even summarized, the marginal citations (Tanya, Zohar, Midrash) show the room this isn't a devar Torah built on vibes — it's answering a real halachic-style question with sources. Naming even two or three citations aloud (Tanya on tzaddik she'eino gamur; the Zohar on kiy'ma sihara b'ashlemusa) does real credibility work.

Companion document to: *Bila HaMoves Lanetzach — Full Hebrew–English Elucidated Edition* (OpenChassidus). Source kuntres: קובץ שלשלת האור, אוצר החסידים, היכל תשיעי, שער ראשון, third printing, כ"א אדר תשמ"ח. This guide is original pedagogical material; Hebrew terms are quoted only as short glosses, not as extended verbatim reproduction.

METHOD

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How sources are treated

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COLOPHON

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