# שער היחוד

# The Gate of Unity

Rabbi Dov Ber of Lubavitch
the Mitteler Rebbe

## Chapter One
## פרק א

FULL ELUCIDATED EDITION

*Interwoven elucidation, sidebars, and section summaries · English left, Hebrew right*

SECTION 1

מהות ההתבוננות

# The Question This Book Opens With

BEFORE WE READ

The previous work — *Kuntres HaHispaalus* — settled that emotional arousal toward G-d comes only through contemplation. It never said what contemplation *is*. The Mitteler Rebbe opens here by naming the gap and splitting it into two questions: what is the act, and what is the material. Chapters 1–9 answer the first. The remaining forty-five chapters answer the second.

**We have already explained at length in a special pamphlet** — *the reference is to Kuntres HaHispaalus, the tract on ecstasy, by the same author* — **concerning the particular manners in which one may be aroused in mind and in heart**, *that is, the full taxonomy of what genuine arousal is and what counterfeits it,* **and the thought which is born of contemplation (*hisbonenus*), according to the order of the five levels of the soul, NaRaN"ChaY.** *Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah, Chayah, Yechidah — each is aroused differently, and each yields a different order of feeling.*

הנה כבר מבואר באריכות בקונטרס מיוחד בפרטי אופני ההתפעלות במוח ולב, ומחשבה שנולד מן ההתבוננות לפי סדר ה' מדריגות נרנח"י כו'.

**And now we must explain well the essential body of the matter of contemplation itself** — *the earlier work described the effects; it did not describe the act that produces them* — **what it essentially is, and upon what one is to contemplate.** *Two distinct questions, not one: the method, and the material. The method is the business of the opening chapters; the material — the seder hishtalshelus itself — occupies the rest of the book.*

ומעתה יש לבאר היטב במהות גוף ענין ההתבוננות, מה היא בעצם ובמה יתבונן.

**Now, the essence of contemplation is the matter of gazing strongly into the depth of the subject** — *not looking at it, but bearing down on it; the word is chazakah, forceful* — **and standing upon it at length**, *refusing to move on* **until he understands it in its full clarity, in all its parts, in the finest particulars.** *Note what is absent from this definition: no emptying of the mind, no single point of focus, no suspension of analysis. Contemplation here is more cognitive work, not less.*

והנה מהות ההתבוננות בעצם הוא ענין ההסתכלות החזקה בעמקות הענין ולעמוד עליו הרבה עד שיבין אותו על בוריו בכל חלקיו בפרטי פרטיות

והוא בחי' פנימיות בינה הנק' בלשון הגמרא בשם עיון,
כמו שאמר במס' סוכה הא למגרס והא לעיוני

**And this is the aspect of the inner dimension of Binah** — *not Binah as the bare capacity to comprehend, but Binah turned inward upon its own object* — **which in the language of the Gemara is called by the name *Iyun*,** *analysis, study in depth,* **as it says in tractate Sukkah: this one is for *girsa*, and this one is for *iyun*.** *The distinction is borrowed from the study hall, not invented for mysticism. That borrowing is the chapter's method in miniature: the structure of contemplation is the structure of learning well.*

SIDEBAR

### Girsa and Iyun

**Girsa** is coverage. You move through the material at speed, acquiring breadth, and you do not stop. It is a legitimate and necessary mode — much of Talmudic training depends on it.

**Iyun** is arrest. You stop on one thing and stay there under pressure until it opens. The two are not better and worse; they are different instruments, and the Gemara assigns different study sessions to each.

What the Mitteler Rebbe does here is claim that *hisbonenus* is not a third thing alongside these. It is *iyun* — the same faculty, the same discipline, pointed at a different object.

IN SUM

Contemplation is defined before it is prescribed. It is sustained, forceful, analytic attention to a subject until the subject is understood in its particulars — the inner face of Binah, which the Talmud already named *iyun*.

SECTION 2

גירסא — העברת עין

# What Surface Study Cannot Do

BEFORE WE READ

Before describing depth, he describes its absence. Three parallel cases: the eye passing over an object, the memory that cannot hold it, and the mind's eye passing over an argument. All three fail the same way, and the failure is diagnostic.

**The meaning of *girsa* is that one understands the thing only at first glance,** *the understanding that arrives with the sentence and leaves with it,* **flowing on quickly, without restraint and without stopping at all, as is known.** *The two Hebrew words for the missing element — ikuv and ha'amadah, holding back and standing still — will govern the whole chapter.*

פי' הגירסא הוא רק הבנת הדבר בהשקפה ראשונה, שהולכת ונובעת במהירות בלתי עכוב והעמדה כלל כידוע

**By way of analogy: one who looks with his eye at some object and does not contemplate the thing at all — neither its quality nor its essence, nor any of its inner and outer parts — but only in a merely passing way.** *The Hebrew is derech ma'avir, the glance in transit. Nothing is wrong with the eye; the failure is in the duration.*

עד"מ המביט בעינו על דבר מה ואינו מתבונן כלל על הדבר באיכותו ומהותו בכל חלקיו הפנימים וחיצונים, רק דרך מעביר בעלמא

**For with the passage of time he will certainly forget it entirely,** *which is the first test*, **and also he will be unable to relate it to another except in the most general terms** — *the second test, and the harder one: he cannot reproduce it, because he never held it* — **since he saw the thing with a passing eye and not with a fixed eye at all.** *Tevias ayin is the legal term for the recognition that suffices to identify a lost object in court. It is not a stronger glance; it is a different kind of seeing.*

שבמשך זמן ודאי ישכח עליו לגמרי וגם לא יוכל לספר לזולתו רק כלליות ענין אותו הדבר שראה בהעברת העין ולא בטביעת עין כלל

**And so too when the eye of the intellect passes over some line of reasoning at first glance, without restraint and without stopping to analyze it properly — he will not know that reasoning to its end at all.** *The move from the physical eye to the intellectual eye is exact, not decorative: the same defect of duration produces the same defect of retention and the same inability to transmit.*

וכן העברת עין השכל באיזה סברא בהשקפה ראשונה בלתי עכוב והעמדה לעיין בו היטב, ולא ידע בסברא זו לתכליתה כלל

SIDEBAR

## Why the failure is invisible from inside

The person who has only glanced does not experience himself as having failed. At first glance he *did* understand — that is what makes *girsa* a real mode of knowing and not mere inattention.

The two diagnostics the Mitteler Rebbe supplies are therefore external, not introspective: **can you still hold it later**, and **can you hand it to someone else**. Both are checks a person can run on himself without needing to trust his own sense of comprehension — which is precisely the sense that is unreliable here.

IN SUM

Surface study fails not for lack of intelligence but for lack of duration. Its two signatures are decay over time and the inability to transmit anything but generalities.

SECTION 3

עומק, אורך, רוחב

# Three Dimensions in Every Concept

BEFORE WE READ

The chapter now supplies the geometry it will use for the rest of its argument. Every intelligible thing has depth, length and width — and the three are not co-equal. The ordering that follows is the load-bearing claim.

**For there are three things in every intelligible matter: depth, length and width. The *width* is the explanation of the concept from every side, with many particulars** — *the number of angles from which you can come at it* — **like the width of a river; and not merely the matters as they are, which is like a narrow river.** *A person who can state a thing correctly but only one way has understood it narrowly — not wrongly, narrowly.*

כי הנה ג' דברים הוא שיש בכל דבר מושכל. עומק ואורך ורוחב. הרוחב הוא בחי' הסבר המושכל לכל צד בפרטים הרבה כרוחב הנהר, ולא דברים כהווייתן לבד כנהר קצר.

**And the *length* is the immense descent of the concept, to clothe the intelligible in various analogies** — *each garment lower than the last* — **until it can be brought within the grasp of a small child, like a river that runs and draws itself out lengthwise.** *Length is measured downward, toward a lesser mind, and it is a measure of the teacher's grasp rather than the student's.* **(As is explained at length in the writings regarding the matter of the length of the curtains.)**

ואורך הוא עוצם ירידות ההשכלה להלביש את המושכל במשלים שונים עד להביאו בהשגות התינוק קטן כו', כנהר שהולך ומתמשך לאורך (וכמ"ש באריכות בכתבים בענין אורך היריעה כו')

SIDEBAR

## The length of the curtains

The reference is to the coverings of the Mishkan. The point drawn from them is that a thing may pass through many stages of descent and remain, essentially, the same thing.

This is the whole logic of teaching by analogy. When a physicist explains an atom to a child as a tiny solar system, the analogy is not a lie and not the thing — it is the same concept at a lower point on its length. The test of a teacher is how far down the length he can carry the concept without it becoming something else.

IN SUM

Width is how many angles you can explain from. Length is how far down you can carry it. Both are visible, measurable, and — as the next section argues — derivative.

SECTION 4

עומק המושג

# Depth Is the Undercurrent

BEFORE WE READ

Here the geometry becomes an argument. Depth is not the third dimension alongside the other two; it is their source. The river analogy is doing real work — the depth of a river is not a region of the river but the force of its flow.

**And the *depth* is like the depth of a river, from which it widens** — *the width is downstream of the depth, not beside it* — **while in itself it is not wide at all; rather it is the principal essence of the river (which is called the undercurrent), for it is the main force of its running from its source.** *The author's own gloss is in Yiddish — der ikker shtrom, the main current. Depth here is a quantity of force, not a measurement of distance.*

והעומק הוא כעומק הנהר שמשם מתרחב ובעצמו אינו רחב כלל, אבל הוא עיקר עצם הנהר (הנרקא שטרוים) שהוא עיקר מרוצת הילוכו ממקורו

**And the waters above it in height, and to the sides of the depth, are secondary to it** — *teifelim, subordinate: they exist because of it and derive their character from it* — **for they are nothing but the aspect of the intensification of its spreading forth, to the sides in width, and in height, and in the length of its running.**

ומים שעל גביו בגובה ולצדדי העומק טפלים אליו, שאינן רק בחי' התגברות התפשטותו בלבד, לצדדים ברוחב ובגובה ובאורך ההילוך כו'

**So too the depth of the intelligible is the aspect of the essence of its point as it is** — *the concept before it has been explained to anyone, including to oneself* — **and it is called *omek ha'musag*, the depth of that which is comprehended.**

כך עומק המושכל הוא בחי' עצם נקודתו כמו שהוא, ונק' עומק המושג

**For everything that spreads forth in the explanation of the comprehension to every side — in great width with many particulars, and likewise in length with the immense descent, and also the aspect of height above, to derive from it further insights far above it** — *height is the fourth term, and it is the one that lets a grasped concept become a tool for grasping harder ones* — **all of it is drawn from the essential depth of its point, as it wells up from Chochmah, which is called *ayin* — nothing, as it is written, *and a river goes out from Eden.***

שכל מה שנתפשט בהסבר ההשגה לכל צד, ברוחב גדול בכמה פרטים, וכן לאורך בעוצם הירידה, וגם בחי' הגובה למעלה, להשכיל ממנו עוד למעלה ממנו הרבה, הכל נמשך מעצם עומק נקודתו כמו שהוא נובע מן החכמה הנקרא אין, וכמ"ש ונהר יוצא מעדן כו'

**For Binah is called a river, and Chochmah is called a spring, as is known.** *The difference is not size. A spring has no course and no banks; it is pure emergence. A river has direction, extent and shape — everything a spring lacks, and everything comprehension requires.*

שהבינה נק' נהר והחכמה נק' מעיין, כידוע

SIDEBAR

## Spring and river: Chochmah and Binah

**Chochmah** is the flash — the seminal point, arriving whole and undifferentiated, prior to any account of itself. It is called *ayin*, nothing, not because it is empty but because it has no graspable contour.

**Binah** is the river — the same content given extension, sequence and articulation. It is called *yesh*, something, because it now has parts you can point at.

The practical consequence, which the chapter will insist on: you cannot manufacture a spring. You can only dig toward one. Everything the chapter prescribes is digging.

DEEP DIVE

## Why width and length are diagnostics, not achievements

If width and length are drawn from depth, then they are readouts of it. This is why a person who has truly grasped arithmetic can add any two numbers he was never taught, and can explain it with apples to a child — while a person who has memorized sums can do neither.

The inference runs one way only. Depth produces width and length; accumulating width and length does not produce depth. This is the difference between a learner who has understood and a learner who has collected.

IN SUM

Depth is not a dimension among three but the source of the other two. It is the point of the concept as it stands before explanation — the undercurrent, drawn from Chochmah, which is called *ayin*.

# Iyun Is a Vessel, Not the Depth

BEFORE WE READ

Now the correction that gives the chapter its polemical edge. Everything described so far could be mistaken for a technique that produces insight. It does not. It produces a vessel capable of holding insight — which is a different and more modest claim.

והוא הנק' עיון, שעומד על דבר המושכל ומעיין בו הרבה מאד, שהוא העיכוב היפך המהירות

**And this is what is called *iyun* — that he stands upon the intelligible matter and analyzes it very greatly, which is the restraint that is the opposite of speed.** *Defined by its negation of girsa: whatever speed does to a subject, iyun undoes.*

דהיינו כדי לבא לעומקו של המושכל כמו שהוא בעצם פנימיותו ותוך תוכו דווקא

**That is, in order to arrive at the depth of the intelligible as it is in its essential innerness and in its innermost core specifically.** *Tocho tocho — the inside of the inside. The word davka at the end forecloses substitutes: nothing else reaches there.*

כמו המסתכל על דבר מה בעינו ולא בהעברה בעלמא, אלא בפקוח וטביעת עינו בעיכוב גדול, עד שיודע אותו היטב בכל חלקיו הפנימים ותוך תוכו כו'

**Like one who gazes at some object with his eye, not in a merely passing way, but with an opened and fixed eye, with great restraint, until he knows it well in all its inner parts and its innermost core.** *The analogy from §2 returns, now inverted — the same eye, the same object, only held.*

והוא הנקרא התבוננות בנו"ן הכפול דוקא, דהיינו שמתבונן ומעיין בו הרבה וכמו שפרש"י: בעיוני, לעמוד על הדבר להבינו על בוריו כו'.

**And this is what is called *hisbonenus* — specifically with the doubled *nun* —** *the word could have been formed with one; the second is doing semantic work* **— meaning that he contemplates and analyzes it many times over, as Rashi explains on *l'iyunei*: to stand upon the matter, to understand it in its clarity.**

ונמצא בחי' העיון הזה הוא רק בחי' כלי לבחי' ההעמקה דבינה עצמה, כי לכאורה בחי' העיון הזה נק' העמקת הדעת בל' בעולם, ואינו כן, דהעמקת הדעת היינו בחי' כלי לבד לבוא לעומק של הענין ממש

**It emerges that this aspect of *iyun* is only the aspect of a vessel for the delving of Binah itself.** *Only a vessel — the chapter's central deflation.* **For at first glance this aspect of *iyun* is what is commonly called *ha'amakas hada'as*, the delving of concentration — and it is not so; for *ha'amakas hada'as* is a vessel alone, in order to come to the actual depth of the matter.** *Popular usage collapses the vessel with what it holds. The Mitteler Rebbe is prying them apart, and he will not put them back together for the rest of the chapter.*

SIDEBAR

## The doubled nun

הִתְבּוֹנְנְנוּת could as easily have been *hisbonus*, with a single *nun*. The reduplication is read as iterative: not one act of understanding but understanding returned to, and returned to again.

This is grammatically modest and substantively large. It means *hisbonenus* is not a state you enter. It is a thing you do repeatedly to one object.

DEEP DIVE

## What this chapter rules out

Many contemplative systems instruct the practitioner to fix attention on a single point or word while suppressing analysis, on the theory that shutting down the discursive mind gives access to something the discursive mind occludes.

The position here is the reverse. Concentration is a container. A container with nothing in it stays empty however hard it is held. One may meditate on the word *medicine* for ten years and not become a physician — and if he believes otherwise, the strength of his concentration is not evidence in his favor.

Concentration is necessary. It is not sufficient, and it is not the point. The analytic work of Binah on real material is the point.

IN SUM

*Iyun* is the vessel; the depth of Binah is what fills it. Popular usage calls the vessel by the name of its contents, and that confusion is what the chapter exists to correct.

SECTION 6

מעמיק

# Ma'amik — Delving Above Chochmah Itself

BEFORE WE READ

A second and higher level is introduced. It is available only to someone who has already exhausted the known body of a subject and grasped its depth — and it reaches past the flash of insight to the source of the flash.

**And higher than this is what is called *ma'amik* — delving, which reaches higher even than Chochmah itself.** *The claim is deliberately steep: not merely to the insight, but above it.* **For although Chochmah is literally the aspect of the *ayin* of the intelligible, prior to its entering the category of the depth of the point of comprehension in Binah — as the spring is to the river, as above —**

ולמעלה מזה הוא נק' מעמיק, שמגיע למעלה גם מן החכמה עצמה, שהגם שהחכמה היא בחי' האין ממש של המושכל, קודם שבא לכלל עומק נקודת המושג שבבינה, כמעיין לגבי נהר כנ"ל

**nevertheless, the aspect of delving into the root of the intelligible — its root reaches into the root that draws forth the welling of the spring of Chochmah** — *not the spring, but what feeds the spring* — **and this is called the depths of Chochmah, or the hiddennesses of Chochmah. For just as there are depth, length and width in Binah, which is called *yesh*, so too there are depth, length and width in the spring of Chochmah, which is called *ayin*.** *The geometry established for the graspable is now asserted of the ungraspable. Ayin has internal structure — it is not a blank.*

אבל בחי' העמקה בשרש של המושכל, שרשה מגיע בשרש הממשיך לנביעת מעיין דחכמה כו', ונק' עמקי החכמה או תעלומות חכמה, כי כמו שיש עומק ואורך ורוחב בבינה שנק' יש כנ"ל, כך יש עומק ואורך ורוחב במעיין דחכמה שנק' אין

SIDEBAR

## Two things both called delving

**Ha'amakas hada'as** — the delving of concentration. Available before you know anything. It builds the receptacle that lets explanations land.

**Ma'amik** — delving proper. Available only *after* you have learned the whole known body of a subject and grasped its depth. From there one delves further and brings out what was never explained.

They share a root and share nothing else. The first is a precondition of learning; the second is what a mature learner does at the edge of a field.

IN SUM

Above *iyun* stands *ma'amik*, which reaches past Chochmah to the root that feeds it. And *ayin*, it turns out, has its own depth, length and width.

SECTION 7

עומק המעיין

# The Aquifer and the Lightning

BEFORE WE READ

The river analogy is pushed to its floor. Beneath the spring is the aquifer — the water table that is nowhere visible and everywhere the source. Against that, Chochmah is redefined not as depth but as suddenness.

**And the depth of the spring is the beginning of the root of its quarrying, at its depth, from where its welling spreads upward until it bursts and emerges drop by drop, in revelation out of its concealment.** *Drop by drop — even at the moment of emergence the yield is small relative to the reservoir.* **And the ultimate of its concealment is the ultimate of its depth below, as in, *the wellsprings of the abyss burst forth*; for the earth is honeycombed through and through with veins that have a primary depth. And of this it is said, *and wisdom — from where?* —** *the verse is read as an answer rather than a question: wisdom is from ayin* **— from the concealment of Chochmah, which is called the depth of Chochmah.**

ועומק המעיין היינו תחילת שרש מחצבו בעומקו, שמשם מתפשט נביעתו למעלה עד שבוקע ויוצא טיפין טיפין בגילוי מהעלמו, ותכלית העלמו הוא תכלית עמקו למטה, כמו מעיינות תהום נבקעו, דארעא חלחולי מחלחלא כו' בגידין שיש להם עומק ראשון, ובזה נאמר והחכמה מאין, מהעלם החכמה הנק' עומק החכמה

**And Chochmah is the finding of new intellect which emerges like a bolt of lightning, as is known —** *defined by its manner of arrival, not by its content: unbidden, instantaneous, and gone* **— which is not merely the depth of the comprehension of Binah that is felt in the aspect of *yesh*, in the understanding of some matter through a revealed line of reasoning. For the depth of the explanation of comprehension is only the aspect of the *ayin* of the *yesh* of comprehension —** *the intangible source of a tangible concept, which is still on the tangible side of the ledger* **— and it bears no comparison to the *ayin* of Chochmah before it enters the category of comprehension at all, not even in the aspect of the depth within it, which is its distillate.**

והחכמה הוא המצאת שכל החדש שיוצא כברק כו' כידוע, שאינו רק העומק של ההשגה דבינה המורגש בבחי' יש בהבנת דבר מה בסברא נגלית, שעומק של הסבר ההשגה הוא בחי' אין של היש דהשגה בלבד, ואין לו ערך לגבי אין דחכמה טרם שבא לכלל השגה כלל, גם לא בבחי' העומק שבה, שהוא תמציתה

DEEP DIVE

## The four rungs from nothing to something

The chapter is operating with a ladder that is easy to lose. Named plainly:

**1. The nothing of the nothing** — the depth and source of Chochmah itself. Wholly nondescript. The aquifer.

**2. The something of the nothing** — still intangible, but now bearing a determinate form. The spring below ground.

**3. The nothing of the something** — *omek ha'musag*. The intangible point of a concept that now belongs to a particular field. The spring at the surface.

**4. The something of the something** — the explanations themselves, with their length and width. The river.

The warning in this section is against confusing rung 3 with rung 1. Both get called *ayin*. They are not the same nothing, and the gap between them is described here as *ein lo erech* — not merely large, but without ratio.

IN SUM

Beneath the spring lies the aquifer — total concealment as the measure of ultimate depth. Chochmah is the lightning that breaks the surface, and the *ayin* of Chochmah stands in no ratio to the *ayin* within comprehension.

SECTION 8

שער הנו"ן

# The Fiftieth Gate and the Active Verb

BEFORE WE READ

The two halves are now joined. The depth of comprehension belongs to Binah and is drawn downward into it — and yet its root is up in Chochmah. That double location is what makes the whole practice possible.

**And indeed the depth of comprehension is called the fiftieth gate of Binah; although it is drawn from the *ayin* of Chochmah into *yesh*, its root reaches into the depth of Chochmah mentioned above. And it is evident to the senses that whoever delves solely into the depth of comprehension** — *rak, solely: he works on the graspable, not on the ungraspable* — **arrives at the source and root of the intelligible, so as to bring forth new aspects of the light of Chochmah into Binah. And this is what is called *ma'amik*, in the causative form** — *the grammar is the argument: not one who is deep but one who makes deep* — **for he activates the depth of Chochmah and Binah.**

ואמנם עומק המושג נק' שער הנו"ן דבינה, גם שנמשך מאין דחכמה ליש, שרשו מגיע בעומק דחכמה הנ"ל, וכנראה בחוש שכל מעמיק רק בעומק המושג, הוא ממציא למקור ושרש המושכל, להמציא בחי' חדשות דאור החכמה בבינה, והוא הנק' מעמיק ל' מפעיל, שמפעיל לעומק דחו"ב

SIDEBAR

## The fiftieth gate

Binah is spoken of as having fifty gates, of which forty-nine are attainable. The fiftieth is the one that is not entered by ascent through the other forty-nine — it is the point at which Binah touches what is above it.

Calling *omek ha'musag* the fiftieth gate places it precisely on the seam. It is the highest thing in Binah and the lowest thing in Chochmah, and it is the only place a person can work.

DEEP DIVE

## Working on what you can reach

This is the practical hinge of the chapter, and it is easy to miss because it is stated in one clause.

A person cannot operate on Chochmah. It is *ayin*; there is nothing there to take hold of. What he can operate on is *omek ha'musag* — the point of a concept he already comprehends. And because that point's root is in Chochmah, work done at the accessible end propagates to the inaccessible one.

Hence the causative verb. He does not receive the flash and he does not generate it. He activates the conditions under which it comes.

IN SUM

The depth of comprehension sits on the seam between Binah and Chochmah. Work it — and only it can be worked — and new light of Chochmah is drawn into Binah. *Ma'amik* is causative: one who makes deep.

SECTION 9

הבן בחכמה וחכם בבינה

# Understand with Wisdom, Be Wise in Understanding

BEFORE WE READ

A parenthetical excursus — the Mitteler Rebbe marks it as such — applying everything established so far to a line in Sefer Yetzirah, and to the difference between two kinds of gifted mind.

(ולפ"ז מ"ש הבן בחכ' וחכם בבינה שמבואר בכתבים, דהיינו ע"ב דס"ג חכם בבינה, שהוא רק להבין דבר חידוש אחר מתוך המושג דבינה, שזה אינו אלא ע"י בחי' העיון הנ"ל, שהוא המברר כל חלקיו על בוריו, ונק' בינה שבבינה

**(And according to this, what is stated — *understand with wisdom and be wise in understanding* — as explained in the writings: *be wise in understanding* is *A"b* of *Sa"g* — *Chochmah as it operates inside Binah* — which is only to understand one further novel matter out of what is already comprehended in Binah. And this comes about only through the aspect of *iyun* mentioned above, which clarifies all its parts until they are clear; and it is called Binah of Binah.**

ואח"כ יוכל להוליד ולהתחכם להמציא הבנה והשגה חדשה, אבל רק בהשגה זו עצמה שנק' חכמה שבבינה, אבל כתר דבינה הוא עומק המושג הנ"ל, המגיע שרשו בעומק החכמה כנ"ל.

**And afterward he is able to generate and to grow wise, to bring forth new understanding and comprehension — but only within this same comprehension, *inside the field, never across fields* — and that is called Chochmah of Binah. But *Keser* of Binah is the aforementioned depth of comprehension, whose root reaches into the depth of Chochmah.**

והבן בחכמה היינו ס"ג דע"ב, שהוא כח ההסבר בחכמה עצמ', שיוכל להביאו בפנים מסבירות הרבה, והוא למעלה מן ההשגה דבינה עדיין

**And *understand with wisdom* is *Sa"g* of *A"b* — *Binah as it operates inside Chochmah* — which is the power of explanation within Chochmah itself, that he can bring it into many welcoming faces of explanation; and this is still higher than the comprehension of Binah.**

ומה שאמרו נבונים לא אשתכחו, שהוא המבין דבר מתוך דבר דוקא

**And that which they said, *men of understanding were not found* — which refers specifically to one who understands one thing from within another.**

היינו מצד שרש כח זה דהבן בחכמה שמגיע בעומק דחכמה הנ"ל, ע"כ יוכל להבין דבר חכמה אחרת לגמרי מתוך דבר חכמה זאת

**That is by virtue of the root of this power of *understand with wisdom*, which reaches into the depth of Chochmah mentioned above. Therefore he is able to understand an entirely different wisdom out of this wisdom.** *Not analogy between fields — derivation of one from another, because he has reached the level at which they were never separate.*

**And this is higher in rank than the *chacham*, whose insight is from the body of the finding of this particular wisdom out of *ayin* — from which he does not understand any other wisdom or intellect.** *The chacham is not lesser in brilliance. He is bounded by his field; the navon is not.*

שזהו למעלה במדריגה מן החכם, דהיינו מגופה של המצאות החכמה זו מאין, שאינו מבין ממנה חכמה ושכל אחר

**(And nevertheless, that which within the comprehension of Binah he understands a new comprehension out of this comprehension — its root too is in *understand with wisdom*, in understanding one thing from within another; only that in this case it remains concealed in the source of the intellect. And this will suffice for the understanding.)** *Even the field-bound thinker is drawing on the cross-field power. He simply cannot see that he is.*

(ומ"מ מה שבהשגה דבינה מבין השגה חדשה מתוך ההשגה זו, שרשה בהבן דחכמה, שמבין דבר מתוך דבר, רק שזה בהעלם מקור השכל כו' וד"ל).

DEEP DIVE

## A"b and Sa"g

The four-letter Name is expanded by spelling out each letter, and the expansions have different numerical values. Spelled with *yud*s throughout, the total is 72 — **A"b** (ע״ב), which corresponds to Chochmah. Spelled with an *alef* in the *vav*, the total is 63 — **Sa"g** (ס״ג), which corresponds to Binah.

So *A"b of Sa"g* is Chochmah-within-Binah, and *Sa"g of A"b* is Binah-within-Chochmah. The nomenclature is compressed, but it is only naming which faculty is operating inside which.

SIDEBAR

## Chacham and Navon

The **chacham** has insight from *ayin* into his own subject. He generates genuinely new understanding — inside one field. This is *be wise in understanding*.

The **navon** understands one thing from within another. He reaches the level at which two wisdoms are not yet distinct, and so can move between them. This is *understand with wisdom*, and it is the rarer thing — the Gemara's remark is that such men were not found.

The deeper reading offered on this: the one who truly possesses this power perceives G-dliness from within the physical. Which, the annotation notes, is the actual purpose of *hisbonenus*.

IN SUM

*Be wise in understanding* generates novelty inside a field. *Understand with wisdom* derives one field from another, because its root is where the fields are not yet two. The second is higher, and rarer.

SECTION 10

סדר המדרגות

# The Order of the Levels

BEFORE WE READ

The excursus closes with a summary of sequence — and then a final ranking that inverts what a reader might have assumed.

ונמצא סדר המדרגות כך הם, בחי' עיון הנ"ל לעמוד על בורי' כו' נק' בינה שבבינה, להבחין תכלית ההבחנה בפנימיות וחיצוניות

**It emerges that the order of the levels is thus: the aspect of *iyun* mentioned above, to stand upon it until it is clear, is called Binah of Binah — to discriminate with ultimate discrimination between the inner and the outer.**

וגם מזה יוכל להיות בחי' האורך, להוריד ההשגה בלבושים רבים עד שתתגשם להשגות התינוק כנ"ל, אבל לא בחי' הרוחב בהסברים שונים לכל צד כו'

**And from this too there can be the aspect of length, to lower the comprehension through many garments until it is made tangible to a child's grasp, as above — but not yet the aspect of width, with varied explanations from every side.** *Analysis alone buys downward reach. It does not buy lateral reach.*

ואח"כ מבחי' חכמה שבבינה, להמציא חדשות בהשגה א' כנ"ל, הוא הנק' רוחב, וממנו כח דבינה שבבינה העושה בחי' אורך

**And afterward, from the aspect of Chochmah of Binah — to bring forth novelties within one comprehension, as above — this is what is called width; and from it comes the power of Binah of Binah which makes the aspect of length.** *Each new angle of insight opens a fresh descent. Two angles, two lengths — and the space between them is width.*

אבל שיעור האורך והרוחב דחו"ב שבבינה, הוא תלוי בבחי' עומק המושג שנק' כתר דבינה, וכנרא' בחוש שלפי ערך העומק כך יהי' ערך הרוחב והאורך בכל השגת דבר מה וד"ל).

**But the measure of the length and the width of Chochmah and Binah within Binah depends on the aspect of the depth of comprehension, which is called *Keser* of Binah. And it is evident to the senses that according to the measure of the depth, so will be the measure of the width and the length, in the comprehension of anything at all. And this will suffice for the understanding.)** *Stated as an observation rather than a doctrine — anyone who has taught can check it.*

SIDEBAR

### Keser of Binah

*Keser* is the crown — what sits above a faculty rather than inside it. To call *omek ha'musag* the *Keser* of Binah is to say it is not one of Binah's operations but the thing that sets the ceiling on all of them.

Which is why the ranking here is not a hierarchy of prestige but a chain of dependency. Depth sets the ceiling; width and length fill the room beneath it.

IN SUM

Analysis yields length. Insight-in-field yields width, and fresh lengths beneath it. Both are capped by depth — *Keser* of Binah — and the cap is observable in any subject one has ever taught.

# What Da'at Actually Is

BEFORE WE READ

Having borrowed the phrase *ha'amakas hada'as* from common speech and denied that it names what people think it names, he now says what Da'at is. The definition is not cognitive.

**And according to this, what the world calls *ha'amakas hada'as* is not the body of delving itself, such as the depth of comprehension of Binah — for to that, Da'as has no relation.** *Flat and unhedged: the faculty everyone credits with producing depth does not produce it.*

ולפ"ז מה שקוראים העולם העמקת הדעת, אין זה גופה של העמקה, כמו עומק המושג דבינה, שלזה לא יש שייכות לדעת

**Rather, Da'as is the aspect of the binding of one's feeling to the concept, to the utmost** — *hiskashrus hargashaso: attachment, not attention. Da'as is how much of you is in it* — **and it is this that brings one to the aspect of delving into the concept, after the aspect of *iyun* mentioned above, which is only like a vessel for the depth of comprehension.**

אך הדעת הוא בחי' התקשרות הרגשתו במושג ביותר, והוא שמביא לידי בחי' העמקה במושג, אחר בחי' העיון הנ"ל, שהוא רק כמו בחי' כלי לעומק ההשגה כנ"ל.

**And in Da'as too there are length, width and depth. There is one whose Da'as is short and one whose Da'as is long; there is one whose Da'as is wide but not long** — *able to hold many particulars at once, but not for long* — **and Da'as that is strong or Da'as that is light; and where the depth of Da'as is lacking, its shortness follows of itself.** *The same geometry again, and the same dependency: depth first, extent after.*

וגם בדעת יש אורך ורוחב ועומק, כמו יש מי שדעתו קצרה ויש שדעתו ארוכה ויש שדעתו רחבה ולא ארוכה ודעת חזק או דעת קל כנשים שדעתן קלות, הוא בלתי עומק הדעת וממילא דעתו קצרה כו'

**And this difference between the light of Da'as and the deep of Da'as is known from the difference between an adult and a child. The child whose Da'as is light — meaning that he has in him no power of feeling and no binding at all to the thing he understands or wants, but only very externally.**

והפרש זה בין קלי הדעת לעומקי הדעת, בין גדול לקטן ידוע, שהתינוק שדעתו קל היינו שאין בו כח המרגיש והתקשרות כלל לדבר זה שמבין או רוצה בו, רק בחיצוניות מאד

**Therefore he can be enticed to its very opposite.** *This is the test, and it is a behavioral one. A child's wanting can be redirected by an offer — which shows the wanting was never bound to its object.* **Not so the adult, whose Da'as is deep in that same thing he understands or wants — and this is what is called *ha'amakas hada'as*; from which length of Da'as and width of Da'as are drawn of themselves, as above regarding Binah.**

ע"כ יתפתה להיפוכו, משא"כ הגדול שדעתו עמוקה באותו דבר שמבין או רוצה בו, הוא הנק' העמקת הדעת, שממילא נמשך אורך הדעת ורוחב הדעת כנ"ל בבינה.

DEEP DIVE

### Da'at is not attention

English gives us *concentration*, which points at effort and duration. The definition here points somewhere else: *hiskashrus hargashaso*, the binding of one's feeling to the object.

The child's failure is not a short attention span. It is that nothing of him is invested in the object, which is why a better offer moves him instantly. Depth of Da'as shows up as immovability — not as endurance.

This is what makes Da'as the bridge between intellect and emotion, and it is why the whole book, which is about arousing feeling toward G-d, must pass through a chapter on how to study.

NOTE

### On the comparison to women

The phrase *nashim da'atan kalos* is quoted from the Talmud (Shabbos 33b) as a received example of light Da'as. The annotator to the base translation reads it as descriptive of a difference in faculty rather than a judgment of worth, noting a correspondingly greater portion of Binah — a greater capacity to register particulars.

Recorded here as it stands in the source, without emendation.

IN SUM

Da'as is not attention but attachment — how much of a person is bound to the object. Its test is not duration but immovability, and its depth governs its own length and width exactly as depth governs them in Binah.

SECTION 12

דעת עליון

# Contraction, Expansion, and the Upper Da'at

BEFORE WE READ

The chapter ends by putting its two instruments side by side and showing that they move in opposite directions — and that this opposition is the point, not a problem. Then, in a closing parenthesis, it names what the whole procedure is for.

**And the sign of *ha'amakas hada'as* is that it appears as a contraction and a constriction of the vessel of the brain — *visible on a person's face: the drawn brow, the shut-out room* — from the sheer depth of his binding to the intelligible; and it is from this specifically that the essential depth of comprehension comes, by way of the *iyun* of Binah.**

וסימן להעמקת הדעת הוא אשר נראה כענין צמצום וכיווץ כלי המוח, לעוצם עומק התקשרותו במושכל, שמזה דוקא בא עצם עומק השגה ע"י העיון דבינה

**Which is the opposite of contraction and constriction. For the *iyun* of Binah, although at its outset it stands and is held in contraction and constriction, immediately spreads out to great width across all its particular parts, in the discrimination of many details, as is known.**

שהוא היפך הצמצום והכיווץ, שהרי העיון דבינה, גם שעומד ומעוכב בצמצום וכיווץ בתחלתו, אבל מיד מתפשת לרוחב הרבה בכל פרטי חלקיו, בהבחנת פרטיות הרבה כידוע

**Not so the contraction and constriction of *ha'amakas hada'as*: on the contrary, it is only contraction — *it never releases* — which is the gathering and ingathering of all the power of his intellect, to bind itself to this intelligible alone.**

משא"כ הצמצום והכיווץ דהעמקת הדעת, אדרבה, הוא רק הצמצום, שהוא הקיבוץ והאסיפה מכל כח שכלו להתקשר רק במושכל זה

**Which is the opposite of the spreading forth of *iyun* in the broadening of the subject. And indeed, it is by way of *ha'amakas hada'as* that one comes to the depth of the intelligible, up to its root in the depths of Chochmah and Binah.** *The two movements are not rivals. Contraction supplies the pressure; expansion supplies the articulation. Remove either and nothing reaches the depth.*

שזה היפך בחי' התפשטות העיון בהרחבת ענין המושכל, ואמנם ע"י העמקת הדעת בא לידי עמקות המושכל עד שרשו בעמקי החו"ב

**(Up to the aspect of the upper Da'as, which couples Chochmah to Binah, as stated above regarding the depth of comprehension of Binah; and this is the meaning of *Da'as is hidden in the mouth of Imma*.)** *Imma — mother — is Binah. Da'as is not a third faculty standing between the two; it is concealed inside Binah's own capacity to speak.*

(עד בחי' דעת עליון דמזווג חכמה לבינה כמ"ש למעלה בענין עומק המושג דבינה, והיינו דדעת גנוז בפומא דאימא כו'

**And as they said: Moshe, who is Da′as, merited Binah — which is the fiftieth gate; for the one depends upon the other,** *ha b′ha talya — reciprocally, each conditioning the other* **as is written in the writings in many places. And this will suffice for the understanding.**

וכמו שאמרו, משה שהוא הדעת, זכה לבינה שהוא שער הנון, כי הא בהא תליא, וכמה שכתוב בכתבים בכמה דוכתי וד"ל.

DEEP DIVE

## Two motions, one procedure

**Ha′amakas hada′as** contracts. It gathers every faculty onto one object and does not let go. Its whole character is narrowing.

**Iyun** begins contracted and then expands — spreading across every particular, distinguishing part from part. Its whole character is opening out.

A method that were only contraction would be the empty vessel of §5. A method that were only expansion would be *girsa* with extra steps. The chapter's prescription is the pair, held together: sustained binding that supplies the force, and analytic expansion that supplies the shape.

SIDEBAR

## Moshe and the fiftieth gate

Moshe is identified with Da′as, and is said to have been given the fiftieth gate of Binah. The chapter reads the two facts as one fact: *ha b′ha talya*.

The dependency runs both ways. Without Da′as there is no Binah — nothing binds the learner to the material long enough for analysis to bite. Without Binah there is no Da′as — there is nothing of substance to be bound to.

Which closes the chapter where it opened. The question was what contemplation is. The answer is that it is a discipline of attachment and analysis working against each other, on real material, until the material opens.

IN SUM

Contraction and expansion pull opposite ways, and the practice is their pairing. Held together on real material they reach the upper Da′at, where Chochmah and Binah couple — Moshe's Da′at and Moshe's fiftieth gate, each conditioning the other.

# Back Matter

## Editorial notes

**Source.** Chapter One of Shaar HaYichud in the English translation of Shimon Markel, edited by Rabbi A. Markel, © 2004. The Hebrew of the chapter was transcribed line by line from page images of that source, not reconstructed.

**The English.** The base rendering is Markel's. It has been re-set here as an interwoven elucidation: bold carries the translation of the Hebrew words, and the lighter italic is editorial elucidation added for this edition. No Hebrew has been altered, added or silently repaired.

**Transliteration.** Ashkenazic forms are used in the running text (hisbonenus, ha'amakas hada'as, omek ha'musag, Da'as) except where a quoted annotation from the base translation uses Sephardic forms, which are left as they stand.

**Apparatus.** Citations appear in back matter only. Every citation carried over from the base translation is listed there with its verification status. Nothing in this edition asserts a locator that was not either confirmed or marked.

## Citation apparatus

*Every citation carried over from the base translation is listed with its verification status. **VERIFIED** — confirmed. **AS CITED** — the source is real and the reference is reproduced as given, but the locator was not independently confirmed. **UNVERIFIED** — an element could not be confirmed and should be checked against the text before the citation is relied upon.*

> **Sukkah 28b** UNVERIFIED
>
> Girsa and iyun
>
> *Folio as given in the base translation. The nearby sugya at Sukkah 28a does treat girsa (so Rashi, בלא גירסא) and the distinction of משנה / סברא as גמרא. The specific formulation הא למגרס והא לעיוני was not confirmed against the Talmud text; check the daf directly.*

> **Rashi, Sukkah 28b, s.v. l'iyunei** UNVERIFIED
>
> "To stand upon the matter, to understand it clearly"
>
> *Cited in the base translation at the same folio; the comment was not confirmed against a printed or digital Rashi. Verify before relying on the wording.*

> **Biurei HaZohar (Mitteler Rebbe), Pekudei and Noach** AS CITED
>
> The length of the curtains
>
> *Given in the base translation's annotation. Author and work are correct; the two parshiyos locators were not independently checked.*

> **Kuntres HaHispaalus** VERIFIED
>
> The companion tract on ecstasy
>
> *A known work of the Mitteler Rebbe; Shaar HaYichud is its continuation, as the opening line states.*

> **Iyov 28:12** VERIFIED
>
> והחכמה מאין תמצא
>
> *Canonical verse; the reading of מאין as an answer rather than a question is the standard Chassidic construal, not a claim about peshat.*

**Bereishis 7:11** VERIFIED

מעינות תהום נבקעו

*Canonical verse, quoted in the chapter without locator.*

**Bereishis 2:10** VERIFIED

ונהר יוצא מעדן

*Canonical verse, quoted in the chapter without locator.*

**Chagigah 22a** AS CITED

דארעא חלחולי מחלחלא

*Folio as given in the base translation's annotation; not independently confirmed.*

**Sefer Yetzirah 1:4** AS CITED

הבן בחכמה וחכם בבינה

*Locator as given in the base translation. Sefer Yetzirah exists in variant recensions with differing section numbers; name the recension before citing the locator as settled.*

**Eruvin 100b** UNVERIFIED

נבונים לא אשתכחו

*Folio as given in the base translation's annotation. Not confirmed; the phrase circulates with more than one attribution. Check before printing.*

**Chagigah 14a** AS CITED

Navon — המבין דבר מתוך דבר

*Folio as given in the base translation. The definition itself is standard and widely quoted; the specific folio was not independently confirmed.*

**Shabbos 33b** AS CITED

נשים דעתן קלות

*Folio as given in the base translation's annotation.*

**Zohar, Idra d'Mishkena, Mishpatim 123a** AS CITED

דעת גנוז בפומא דאימא

*Locator as given in the base translation's annotation; not independently confirmed.*

**Yoma 77b** AS CITED

A spring flowing from the Holy of Holies

*Cited in a footnote of the Rebbe as reproduced in the base translation. Note that the imagery also appears in Yechezkel 47; the Talmudic locator was not confirmed.*

**Tikkunei Zohar (רמ"ב); Maamarei Admor HaEmtzai, Bereishis p. 2** AS CITED

Chochmah called ayin

*As given in the base translation's annotation. Tikkunei Zohar pagination varies by edition; name the edition before treating the folio as fixed.*

**Tanya ch. 1** VERIFIED

Referenced in the annotation on water, fire and Eden

*Canonical and stable; the annotation's use of it is interpretive rather than a quotation.*

*Prepared for OpenChassidus. Hebrew transcribed from page images of the source; textual problems are marked rather than repaired. Citation locators are reported at the confidence at which they were established, not at the confidence at which they read.*