

בֵּיאור תַּנְיָא

לְקוּטֵי אֲמָרִים

לכ"ק אדמו"ר הזקן

הרב רבי שניאור זלמן מליאדי

שְׁעַר הַיְחוד וְהַאֱמוּנָה

פֶּרֶק ה'



COMMENTARY ON TANYA

By: Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi
(the *Admor HaZaken*)

Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmuna
(The Gate of Unity and Faith)
Chapter 5

Commentary by
Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz

From:
Volume Four of an upcoming
eight-volume series on the entire Tanya

טו סיון
פשוטה
טז סיון
מעוברת

15 Sivan
(ordinary year)
16 Sivan
(leap year)

והנה על זה אמרו רז"ל
בתחלה עלה במחשבה
לברוא את העולם במד"הד
ראה שאין העולם מתקיים
שתף בו מדת רחמים
דהיינו התגלות אלהות
על ידי צדיקים ואותות
ומופתים שכתורה.

והנה על זה אמרו בזהר
דלעילא בסטרא דקדושה
עילאה אית ימינא ואית
שמאלא דהיינו חסד
וגבורה פי' דשתיהן הן
מדות אלהות למעלה
משכל הנבראים והשגתם
דאיהו וגרמוהי חד בעולם
האצילות

ואף השגת משה רבינו עליו
השלום בנבואתו לא היתה
בעולם האצילות אלא על
ידי התלבשותו בעולם
הבריאה ואף גם זאת לא
בשתי מדות אלו חו"ג אלא
על ידי התלבשותן במדות
שלמטה מהן במדרגה שהן
מדות נצח הוד יסוד [כמ"ש
בשער הנבואה]

And so, with regard to this, the Rabbis stated, "At first, God considered creating the world with the attribute of judgment, but saw that the world would not endure, so He combined it with the attribute of mercy" (*Bereshit Rabba* 12:15). This attribute of mercy is expressed as **divine revelation through tzaddikim** (the righteous) and the signs and miracles recorded in the Torah.

And so, with regard to this, the Rabbis stated in the *Zohar* (1:53a), "Above, on the side of supernal holiness, there is Right and there is Left," referring to the *sefira* of *Hesed* (Kindness) on the right and *Gevura* (Restraint) on the left. This means that both of these *sefirot* are attributes of the Divine, beyond the comprehension of created beings' intellect, since God and His attributes are one in the world of *Atzilut* (Emanation).

Even Moses, our teacher, may he rest in peace, could not comprehend with his prophetic vision the world of *Atzilut* without its translation into the lower world of *Beria* (Creation). And even so, he could not apprehend these two attributes, *Hesed* and *Gevura*, directly, without their translation into the attributes on the level below them: the attributes of *Netzah* (Dominance), *Hod* (Splendor), and *Yesod* (Foundation), [as stated in *Sha'ar HaNevua*].

רק שמתן שכרם של
 צדיקים בגן עדן הוא
 השגת התפשטות החיות
 ואור הנמשך משתי מדות
 אלו חו"ג והוא מזון
 נשמות הצדיקים שעסקו
 בתורה לשמה בעו"הז כי
 מהתפשטות שתי מדות אלו
 נמתח רקיע על הנשמות
 שבגן עדן ורקיע זה נקרא
 רזא דאורייתא וכו' סוד כ"ב
 אותיות התורה הנתונה
 משתי מדות אלו כדכתיב
 מימינו אש דת למו ומרקיע
 זה נוטף טל למזון הנשמות
 דהיינו ידיעת סוד כ"ב
 אותיות התורה כי הרקיע
 הזה הוא סוד הדעת
 והתורה היא מזון הנשמות
 בג"ע והמצות הן לבושים
 כמבואר כל זה [בזהר
 ויקהל דף ר"ט ור"י ובע"ח
 שער מ"ד פרק ג']:

Yet the reward given to the righteous in the Garden of Eden consists of comprehending the emanation of life force and light drawn from these two attributes of *Hesed* and *Gevura*. This constitutes nourishment for the souls of the righteous who engaged in Torah study for its own sake in this world, since from the emanation of these two attributes a firmament is stretched above the souls in the Garden of Eden. This firmament is called the "secret of the Torah"; within it lies the secret of the twenty-two letters comprising the Torah, which is imparted through these two attributes, as it is written, "From His right, a fiery law to them" (Deuteronomy 33:2). From this firmament drips dew to nourish the souls, with knowledge of the secret of the twenty-two letters of the Torah. For this firmament represents the secret knowledge, and the Torah is the nourishment of the souls in the Garden of Eden, while the mitzvot are their garments, which is all explained [in the *Zohar* (*Vayak'hel* 209–210) and in *Etz Hayyim* (gate 44, chap. 3)].

Chapter 5 – Commentary

וְהִנֵּה עַל זֶה אָמְרוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ
 זְכוּרֵנוּם לְבִרְכָה בְּתַחֲלָה עֲלֵה
 בְּמַחֲשָׁבָה לְבְרוּא אֶת הָעוֹלָם
 בְּמִדַּת הַדִּין רָאָה שְׂאִין הָעוֹלָם
 מִתְקַיֵּים שְׂתַף בּוֹ מִדַּת רַחֲמִים
 (בראשית רבה יב, ט)

And so, with regard to this, the Rabbis stated, “At first, God considered creating the world with the attribute of judgment, but saw that the world would not endure, so He combined it with the attribute of mercy” (*Bereshit Rabba* 12:15).

This discourse contends with the different appellations of God in the book of Genesis. From the first verse of the Torah, “In the beginning God [*Elokim*] created...” (Genesis 1:1), through the verse describing the seventh day, “On it He rested from all His works that God [*Elokim*] created to make” (Genesis 2:3), only the name *Elokim* appears. As explained previously, the name *Elokim* connotes strict judgment, constriction, and the hidden aspect of the Divine. This divine name implies an entirely natural, law-bound, totally independent system. God “saw that the world would not endure” because the concealment this engendered was too impenetrable, so He “combined it with the attribute of mercy.” The addition of the attribute of mercy is represented textually in Genesis by the addition of the Tetragrammaton, the name that expresses the revelation of divinity within nature, in the second chapter: “The Lord [*YHVH*] God [*Elokim*]” (Genesis 2:4).

The first creation came into existence through the attribute of strict judgment alone and thus created a paradigm that did not allow for the perception of any reality beyond that of this world. God then combined it with the attribute of mercy. In so doing, He shined into the darkness a glimmer of His divine light so that the darkness would not be totally opaque, and the barrier between the Creator and the creation would not be completely impermeable.

דְּהֵינּוּ הַתְּגִלוֹת אֱלֹהוֹת עַל
 יְדֵי צְדִיקִים וְאוֹתוֹת וּמוֹפְתִים
 שֶׁבְּתוֹרָה.

This attribute of mercy is expressed as **divine revelation through tzaddikim** (the righteous) **and the signs and miracles recorded in the Torah.**

The inclusion of the attribute of mercy in the creation introduces flashes of light into otherwise impenetrable concealment of the Divine. Every so often a glimmering hint of that transcendent light flickers in the dark.

Rambam describes the prophetic experience in a similar manner: A man is walking in total darkness when suddenly a flash of lightning illuminates the world for an instant. For one moment, the entire world is lit up. Immediately afterward, the darkness returns. For that one instant, though, he manages to get his bearings and reorient himself to face the correct direction.

These revelations, these interplays between strict judgment and mercy, express themselves in two ways: First through the tzaddikim, who by virtue of their powerful souls are capable of perceiving that which is beyond the limits of the natural world. Second, through the miracles that are recorded in the Torah, which are a direct revelation from above and reached their apex at the revelation of the giving of the Torah.

The tzaddik, as the author of the *Tanya* explains above,¹ is not just a person who *does* good. A person who does only good in action, speech, and even thought is still not considered a tzaddik. A tzaddik is a different quality of person. An average person does not become a tzaddik. A person is born either with or without the potential to become a tzaddik. This potential is the unique ability and brilliance to recognize God.

(This definition of tzaddik is in no way a treatment of the question of reward and punishment. Reward and punishment are dependent on effort and to some degree on what a person does to further fulfill his unique mission in the world. In this sense, a *beinoni*, an intermediate-level person, can self-actualize even more than a perfect tzaddik.)

It is said that the hidden tzaddikim sustain the universe, but they do so not through action but rather through their very existence.

A hidden tzaddik may be concealed behind the crudity of a menial occupation or disguised as a respected leader. Whether shoemaker or chief rabbi, his power as a tzaddik is inherently hidden, unrecognized, and entirely detached from worldly reality. The tzaddik interfaces with the world using only one aspect of his being, while the other is tuned in to that which transcends existence.

Therefore, purely by virtue of his existence, the tzaddik expresses divine revelation from within the predictable world of nature, which conceals God, and thus expresses the interplay between the attribute of mercy and the attribute of strict judgment through which the world is constantly sustained.

1. *Likkutei Amarim*, part 1, chap. 10.

וְהִנֵּה עַל זֶה אָמְרוּ בְּזוֹהַר
 דְּלֵעֵילָא בְּסִטְרָא דְקִדּוּשָׁה
 עֵילָאָה אֵית יְמִינָא וְאֵית
 שְׂמָאלָא דְהֵיִינוּ חֶסֶד
 וְגְבוּרָה

And so, with regard to this, the Rabbis stated in the *Zohar* (1:53a), “Above, on the side of supernal holiness, there is Right and there is Left,” referring to the *sefira* of *Hesed* (Kindness) on the right and *Gevura* (Restraint) on the left.

Even above, in the world of *Atzilut* (Emanation), there are two modalities of revelation: *Hesed*, which is the force that influences and acts, and *Gevura*, the force of concealment and constriction.

פְּרוּשׁ דְּשִׁתִּיחֵן הֵן מְדוּת
 אֱלֹהוֹת לְמַעְלָה מִשְׁכָּל
 הַנְּבֻרָאִים וְהַשְּׂגָתָם דְּאִיהוּ
 וְגִרְמוּהֵי חֵד בְּעוֹלָם הָאֲצִילוֹת

This means that both of these *sefirot* are attributes of the Divine, beyond the comprehension of created beings’ intellect, since God and His attributes are one in the world of *Atzilut* (Emanation).

Unlike in our dichotomous world, in the world of *Atzilut* the acting force and the instrument that is being acted upon are not two distinct entities. In the world of *Atzilut*, the *sefirot*, the attributes through which the Divine is manifest, are themselves part and parcel of the Divine.

By contrast, the lower worlds of *Beria* (Creation), *Yetzira* (Formation), and *Asiya* (Action) are separated from the Divine by distance and barriers. Though an angel in the world of *Beria* is on a very high level and serves as a vessel for divinity, it is still a created being and therefore has self-awareness. It is only in the world of *Atzilut*, where there is no barrier, that God and His attributes are truly one. Therefore, that *Hesed* and *Gevura* are “beyond the comprehension of created beings’ intellect” means that by definition anything that is comprehensible and definable is not divine.

וְאַף הַשְּׁגַת מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּינוּ עָלָיו
 הַשְּׁלוֹם בְּנִבְרָאתוֹ לֹא הִיְתָה
 בְּעוֹלָם הָאֲצִילוֹת אֲלָא עַל יְדֵי
 הַתְּלַבְּשׁוֹתוֹ בְּעוֹלָם הַבְּרִיאָה

Even Moses, our teacher, may he rest in peace, could not comprehend with his prophetic vision the world of *Atzilut* without its translation into the lower world of *Beria* (Creation).

These two attributes were even beyond the apprehension of Moses, the person who, according to Rambam, was “the father of all prophets” and whose personal development and, moreover, his prophetic depth reached levels unparalleled both before and after his time.

Comprehension in the world of *Atzilut* means experiencing intimately the infinity of the Divine itself at its primary stage. Yet even Moses was told, “You cannot see My face” (Exodus 33:20). His comprehension would be limited to “You can see [only] My back” (Exodus 33:23), which is a revelation of the world of *Atzilut* as it is translated into the world of *Beria*. Revelations on the level of one world can be comprehended through the vessels of the world beneath it. While the lower world enables an otherwise unattainable comprehension of the higher world, it also conceals the true essence of that higher world, since the revelation is a mere translation of the original. The revelation is achieved through *aḥorayim*, “indirect means.” Even the comprehension of Moses was referred to as *aḥorai*, “My back,” meaning that he did not merit revelation from the world of *Atzilut* itself but rather its indirect manifestation in the world of *Beria*.

וְאַף גַּם זֹאת לֹא בִשְׂתֵי מְדוֹת
 אֵלּוּ חֶסֶד וּגְבוּרָה אֲלָא עַל יְדֵי
 הַתְּלַבְּשׁוֹתָן בְּמְדוֹת שְׁלֵמֻטָּה
 יִמְהֶן בְּמְדֻרְגָּה שֶׁהֵן מְדוֹת נִצְח
 הוֹד יְסוֹד [כְּמוֹ שְׂכָתוֹב בְּשַׁעַר
 הַנְּבִיאָה]

And even so, he could not apprehend these two attributes, *Hesed* and *Gevura*, directly, without their translation into the attributes on the level below them: the attributes of *Netzah* (Dominance), *Hod* (Splendor), and *Yesod* (Foundation), [as stated in *Sha’ar HaNevua*].

H*esed* and *Gevura* are apprehensible only indirectly through the lower attributes of *Netzah* and *Hod* – which are outward manifestations of *Hesed* and *Gevura* respectively – and through the attribute of *Yesod*, the essential channel of giving and transmitting.

Neither the expressed nor the concealed aspect of a divine attribute is apprehensible in its essence, for the divine realm remains intrinsically beyond the grasp of any created being, regardless of his level. Even prophecy, which is the highest level of transcendent perception attainable by a human being, is not a firsthand experience of the divine realm but rather divine perception embedded within multiple layers of concealment.

This is because prophecy is not received through the higher attributes of *Hesed* and *Gevura* but rather through the secondary stages of *Netzah* and *Hod*. Therefore, they are considered the “channels of prophecy,” because prophetic vision transmits divine perception as it has been translated into worldly terms.

Also, the source of the prophetic experience is not in the highest world, *Atzilut*, where pure, essential divinity emanates, but rather in the lower world of *Beria*. Even though the world of *Beria* is so sublime that the spiritual creatures called the seraphim and ophanim of the Holy Chariot exist there, still the Divine is manifest through a partition that necessarily separates Creator and creation.

רַק שְׂמֵתֵן שְׂכָרָם שֶׁל צְדִיקִים בְּגֵן
 עֵדֶן הוּא הַשְּׂגָת הַתַּפְשׁוּת הַחַיּוּת
 וְאוֹר הַנִּמְשָׁךְ מִשְׁתֵּי מַדּוֹת אֵלּוּ
 חֶסֶד וְגְבוּרָה

Yet the reward given to the righteous in the Garden of Eden consists of comprehending the emanation of life force and light drawn from these two attributes of *Hesed* and *Gevura*.

The Talmud describes how the righteous sit in the Garden of Eden with crowns on their heads, basking in the radiance of the Divine Presence (*Berakhot* 17a). This “radiance” is an illumination from the Divine that descends to a low enough level for the soul to be able to perceive it. This perception is in and of itself the Garden of Eden.

This is what makes the human soul unique – that through preparing properly in this world, namely through the power of the Torah and mitzvot (commandments), one becomes capable of attaining a bond with the divine attributes on a Garden of Eden level. This bond, however, is not formed directly with the divine attributes themselves but rather with an illumination that emanates from them.

וְהוּא מְזוּן נְשָׁמוֹת הַצְּדִיקִים
 שֶׁעֲסָקוּ בַּתּוֹרָה לְשִׂמְחָה בְּעוֹלָם
 הַזֶּה כִּי מֵהַתְּפִשּׁוּת שְׂתִי
 מִדּוֹת אֱלֹהִים נִמְתָּח רָקִיעַ עַל
 הַנְּשָׁמוֹת שֶׁבְּגֵן עֵדֶן

This constitutes nourishment for the souls of the righteous who engaged in Torah study for its own sake in this world, since from the emanation of these two attributes a firmament is stretched above the souls in the Garden of Eden.

Our Sages explain that the heavenly firmament is comprised of water and fire, which is a mixture of the manifestations of *Hesed* and *Gevura* respectively. Just as the physical sky marks the outer limit of our visual perception, the firmament designates the outer limit of spiritual perception. In a broader sense, the spiritual firmament demarcates the incomprehensible aspect of every world. For us, the sky is our visual limit upward; for the souls in the Garden of Eden, their firmament is an illumination of the divine attributes of *Hesed* and *Gevura*, which is the upper limit of their comprehension in the Garden of Eden.

וְרָקִיעַ זֶה נִקְרָא רִזָּא
 דְּאוֹרֵייתָא

This firmament is called the “secret of the Torah”;

The righteous comprehending the “secret of the Torah” in the Garden of Eden means that they comprehend an illumination of the divine attributes of *Hesed* and *Gevura* within their reality.

וּבוֹ סוּד כ"ב אוֹתִיּוֹת הַתּוֹרָה
 הַנִּתּוֹנָה מִשְׂתֵּי מִדּוֹת אֱלֹהִים

within it lies the secret of the twenty-two letters comprising the Torah, which is imparted through these two attributes,

The Torah is rooted in both the attributes of *Hesed* and *Gevura*. This shows that the nature of the Torah is not purely revelation but also concealment. Had the Torah been only revelatory and given solely in divine terms, it would either be entirely out of human reach, or it would consume our subtly separate lives in its unbearably intense revelation of Oneness.

We are able to relate to the Torah only because, rather than being completely explicit, it is enveloped in veiled disguises and expresses its truths through metaphors within metaphors. Its words are comprised, as the Talmud states, of black

fire on white fire, an epic combination of revelation and concealment, dark and light, all of which are expressions of the Divine.

The twenty-two letters of the *alef-bet*, which are the basic building blocks of reality, function in another role as letters of the Torah. Each letter is a revelation of the Divine, a specified and defined facet of divine illumination.

The source of the illumination itself is in the attribute of *Hesed*, whereas that which lends the illumination its definition – its “form” in the medieval lexicon – is the attribute of *Gevura*.

The very same interplay between *Hesed* and *Gevura*, which vivifies the twenty-two letters of the Torah, is what sustains the firmament stretched over the souls in the Garden of Eden. This firmament stands as their “ceiling of apprehension” in their reality through which shines the illumination of the Torah.

כְּדַכְּתִיב מִיְמִינוֹ אֵשׁ דָּת
לָמוֹ (דְּבָרִים לִג:ב)

as it is written, “From His right, a fiery law to them” (Deuteronomy 33:2).

Fire always expresses the consuming *Gevura* energy of the left side. Therefore, “from His right, a fiery law” implies the combination of the Right and the Left, of *Hesed* and *Gevura* together.

This is the source of the idea that Torah is not just *from* heaven but rather, in a deeper sense, the Torah constitutes the heavens. Both are different embodiments of the same spiritual dynamic, the interplay between divine *Hesed* and *Gevura*.

וּמִרְקִיעַ זֶה נוֹטֵף טַל לְמִזְוֵן
הַנְּשָׁמוֹת

From this firmament drips dew to nourish the souls,

The firmament is the upper limit that delineates between the apprehensible and the entirely inapprehensible. It therefore points toward the hidden, toward the mystery that lies just behind every comprehensible thought.

While even the souls in the Garden of Eden cannot fully grasp the mystery of the firmament, the sliver of comprehension to which they are privy nourishes them like dew from the physical sky.

It is not that these souls in the Garden of Eden live in a different place but in a different state of existence. Gaining entrance into this state of existence relies on two factors: First, the soul must be without a body, because the body necessarily

affects the limits of its perceptive capacities and even influences its ideological tendencies.

Second, entrance into the Garden of Eden depends on one's actions while the soul was in his body. If during his lifetime one cleaves to God by engaging in Torah and mitzvot, he creates the garments and receptors necessary for entering the Garden of Eden, which allow him to tune in to the frequency of the inner illumination and be nourished by the dew that drips from the firmament of Eden.

דְּהֵיִינוּ יְדִיעַת סוּד כ"ב אוֹתֵיּוֹת
הַתּוֹרָה

**with knowledge of the secret of the
twenty-two letters of the Torah.**

The twenty-two letters of the Torah provide a certain grasp of the unattainable, supernal knowledge, like the dew that drips from the firmament, each an intentional, heavenly drop of illumination beyond which lies the incomprehensible.

כִּי הַרְקִיעַ הַזֶּה הוּא סוּד
הַדַּעַת

**For this firmament represents the secret
knowledge,**

It is taught (*Berakhot* 64a) that Torah scholars do not have rest in this world nor in the next, as the verse states, "They will go from strength to strength..." (Psalms 84:1). This implies that even in the Garden of Eden there is a firmament above every soul. This firmament bears the secret of unknowable supernal knowledge. When the soul climbs from "strength to strength," from one level to the next, it crosses the threshold of its current firmament and is now able to grasp what was previously unknowable to it. At its new level, the soul attains a "new sky and a new ground" (Isaiah 65:17), a totally new spectrum of divine consciousness, ranging from simple understanding (a new ground) to the infinite beyond (a new sky). There will always be a firmament above, because the essence of a firmament is an unknowable secret – the enigma of the infinite, beyond which it is impossible to pass.

וְהַתּוֹרָה הִיא מְזוֹן הַנְּשָׁמוֹת בְּגֵן
 עֵדֶן וְהַמִּצְוֹת הֵן לְבוּשִׁים כַּמְבוֹאָר
 כָּל זֶה [בְּזֵהָר וַיַּקְהֵל דָּף ר"ט וּר"י
 וּבְעֵץ חַיִּים שְׁעַר מ"ד פָּרָק ג']:

and the Torah is the nourishment of the souls in the Garden of Eden, while the mitzvot are their garments, which is all explained [in the *Zohar* (*Vayak'hel* 209–210) and in *Etz Hayyim* (gate 44, chap. 3)].

The relationship between nourishment and clothing is, in the most general sense, the relationship between the Inner Light and the Surrounding Light. Perceiving the Inner Light is like spiritual nourishment. Just as food enters the body and is absorbed into the limbs, this apprehension penetrates and is absorbed into consciousness.² The Surrounding Light, on the other hand, is not internalized. Perceiving the Surrounding Light is like getting an impression or sensing ambience. It eludes all attempts at understanding, categorizing, or analyzing its essence. Perception of the Surrounding Light can be just as crucial and meaningful as the internalized perception, but it is simply not susceptible to analysis.

There are varying degrees of Surrounding Light. There is a level of perception that is totally beyond the grasp of the human mind, yet powerful and multifaceted, and then there is that which lies just at the brink of consciousness, where one can grasp its outer limit but is unable to grasp its internal content.³

This relationship between the Surrounding Light and the Inner Light, between garment and food, parallels the relationship between the Torah and the mitzvot. The Torah is essentially comprehensible. There is no Torah learning without a conscious internalization of the material in one form or another. Therefore, the Torah is called “nourishment for the souls.” (This may seem contradictory to the statement in chapter 6 of *Likkutei Amarim* that learning Torah is also an aspect of “garment.” This refers, however, to the mitzva of Torah learning, where even mechanical recitation of the words suffices, whether or not the content is understood.)

The Torah serves as nourishment in this world just as it does in the World to Come, but since in this world the body is the frame of reference for all experiences, it does not always realize when the soul has been nourished. Only in the Garden of Eden, when the soul has been freed from the shackles of the corporeal body and its perceptions, can it truly enjoy the nourishing heavenly dew.

2. This metaphor also appears in the Bible, e.g., Proverbs 9:5.

3. See *Likkutei Torah, Devarim* 34:1.

By contrast, mitzvot are intrinsically considered garments. A mitzva, in essence, is not about awareness but about action. Its value is measured by how the deed is performed and not according to how it is understood. Understanding the meaning of the mitzva, to whatever degree, is grasping the Torah illumination in that mitzva but is in no way necessary for its fulfillment. In this sense, the mitzva is not internalized by the person who is performing it; rather, its light hovers over him and surrounds him like a garment.

To enable the soul, which is a created entity, to enter the purely divine reality of the Garden of Eden, it needs to be enveloped in a mediating apparel. To mediate between the created soul and the divine light of the Garden of Eden, the garb must itself be divine. Every mitzva that a person performs in this world clothes his soul in this divine vestment.

Each mitzva is a thread woven into a beautiful personal garment presented to each soul upon arrival in the World to Come. This robe, or “rabbinical garment,” as referred to by the *Zohar*, allows the soul access to the light of Eden. Jewish literature is replete with descriptions of people finally being presented their “rabbinical robes,” and to their dismay they realize that they are missing a sleeve or a shoe. This is the result of the owner failing to perform the corresponding aspect of a certain mitzva in his lifetime.

Chapter Summary

This chapter seems peripheral because it interrupts the overall thematic structure of this section in *Tanya* by straying from philosophical and theological material and delving into the realm of human experience.⁴ The previous chapters, and to some degree subsequent chapters, deal with the general concepts of creation *ex nihilo*, light and shadows, and their interaction and intersection with each other. This chapter instead sheds light on phenomena such as the nature of the *tzaddik*, signs and wonders in the Torah, the prophetic experience, and the reward of the righteous in the Garden of Eden.

Rather than dealing with structure, this chapter deals with breaches of the structure, apertures in the barrier that separates us from the Divine. This barrier, as elucidated in previous chapters, enables the revelation of the infinite itself. Therefore, it is not fixed in time and space, but rather it is a separation that draws its power from the infinite and is therefore essentially beyond. Only select individuals are able to see beyond the barrier, and only in select circumstances is the individual or group privy to these wondrous apertures from above.

The main thesis of this chapter is that there are fixed portals in the barrier, windows to the infinite available to all, that are continually open. These windows are called “Torah and mitzvot.” Although the openings created by the Torah and mitzvot are dimly lit in order to preserve the paradigm of the world as is, they are nonetheless actual access points to the infinite itself. Any person can open these portals and allow the infinite into his finite world. Not always, however, can he access an opening, and not always will he be able to view the illumination pouring through. The more a person is either totally or partially freed from the concealing barrier of his body, and the entire physical world in general, the more he will grasp the illumination exuded by the mitzvot that he performed and be privy to a taste of the dew that drips from the firmament and nourishes the souls in the Garden of Eden.

4. See Discourse 380, *Mishpatim* 5727, chaps. 4–5.