



## OUR GOAL IN LIFE

Humans like to strive for perfection. However, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the first Chabad Rebbe, wrote an entire book about reaching the level of a 'beinoni,' commonly translated as 'mediocre.'

What exactly did he mean?

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**TEACHER'S MANUAL**



# JEWISH INSIGHTS

A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS



THE  
SHLUCHIM  
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Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India

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In his monumental work of the Tanya, the Alter Rebbe describes the human condition as a conflict between two souls, a G-dly soul and an animal soul. This is not a conflict between good and bad, but rather a contest between the reality of the world and the search for spirituality (Source 1 & 2).

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The ideal for ordinary human beings isn't to become a tzaddik, someone who transforms his animal soul into something G-dly. Rather, it is to fight the perpetual struggle to retain control over one's faculties of thought, speech, and deeds, ensuring that they remain under the dominion of the G-dly soul.

Contrary to many teachers of ethics who maintain that a person should strive for a state in which his actions are in complete identification with his essence – something almost perpetually out of our reach – the Alter Rebbe asserts that a person should strive for control over his behavior, a much more feasible goal (Source 3 & 4).

Before a soul enters a body, an oath is administered to it: "Be righteous and be not wicked." As the Alter Rebbe explains, this is an injunction to strive for the status of the *beinoni* (Source 5 & 6). The Rebbe points out in Source 7 that this also means a person is given the power to achieve the goal.

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But a careful look at the Alter Rebbe's description of the *beinoni* seems to put it beyond our reach. The *beinoni* is someone who never sins at all! Is that really feasible?

The answer, the Rebbe explains, lies in a nondescript law in Maimonides.

This week's Torah portion speaks of the oaths one takes in court (Source 8). Maimonides tells us that before the oath was stated, the individual would be told that the oath would be interpreted according to the understanding of the judges – regardless of the individual's personal intent (Source 9).

This answers our question. Before we are born, we are administered an oath to be righteous. That means it's on G-d's terms. G-d knows the real difficulties we face, G-d knows that we will ultimately do the right thing, and G-d knows that we want to do the right thing – even at the very moment of failure.

Being a *beinoni* seems to be difficult, but that's only true from a human perspective. Let G-d make those judgments, and meanwhile, you try your best.

# Introduction:

This week's Torah portion is a collection of laws which Moses taught to the people of Israel following the giving of the Torah. As we learned in previous weeks, every law in the Torah has deep spiritual and emotional meaning which we can apply to the broader context of our lives.

In this talk, the Rebbe focuses on the laws which pertain to the administration of an oath in court – uncovering its deeper meaning and relevance.

To understand the context of the talk, we will first delve into the Alter Rebbe's description of the ideal person – the *beinoni*.

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לשםיעה: <https://ashreinu.page.link/sFtE>

A portion of the sicha appears in Living Torah as well:

<https://jemtv.page.link/R3D3>

# A. The New Approach

## **The Battle of the Souls**

[The following excerpts (teacher's manual, sections 1 & 2) are culled from "Opening the Tanya" by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel, pg. xxi–xxiii.]

*The Tanya is not only one of the fundamental works of Chasidism, it is also one of the greatest books of moral teaching of all time. Although the author modestly describes himself as a "compiler," this is a most original work, both in its basic premise as well as in the many ideas and insights it expresses parenthetically. And though the author repeatedly notes that the book is intended for a select audience, for "those who know me personally," it strives to solve the dilemmas with a most broad and comprehensive approach – an approach that is not specific to a particular person, time, or outlook.*

*Tanya trains its students to see the many thousands of complexities, doubts, and drives within them as expressions of a single basic problem: the struggle between the good and evil in the human soul. Although the book is written with great restraint, it energetically and dramatically depicts human life as an immense battle between good and evil that one endures throughout one's lifetime, a battle between the forces that drag the soul down and the forces that strive heavenward. Each chapter develops from the previous one, and all are interconnected, progressively leading their student to recognize the inner soul, its intrinsic duality, the array of conflicting forces within it and their respective strengths and weaknesses, and the battle's nature and vicissitudes.*

## **The Animalistic and the G-dly**

*In describing this battle, the author offers a completely new approach. The battle in a person's soul is actually not between good and evil (expressions he rarely uses, except when he needs to clarify a point by using the ordinary semantics of these terms) but between the two elements within the human soul: the G-dly soul and the animal soul. The G-dly soul is that part of the soul that aspires to the Divine, in all its connotations. The animal soul is the part that relates to one's physical identity and one's involvement in the material world.*

## Source 1 Tanya, Chapter 1-2

Every Israelite person, whether righteous or wicked, possesses two souls, as it is written (Isaiah 57:16), “And neshamot (souls) which I have made.” These are two life-forces. One soul originates in the *kelipah* and *sitra achira*. It is this life-force that is clothed in the blood of a human being, giving life to the body...and the second soul in the person is truly “a part of G-d above.”

כל כל איש ישראלי, אחד צדיק ואחד רשע, יש שתי נשמות, וכיותם: “ונשמות אני עשית”, שחו שתי נפשות. נפש אחת מצד הקליפה וסטרה אחורא, והיא המחלבה בנים הארץ להחיות הגו... ונפש השנית בישראל היא חלק אלוה מפעל ממש...

### A Superior Biological Creature

These are not merely alternative terms for “good” and “evil” or for “body” and “soul”; they draw a far subtler distinction. The animal soul is not negative in essence, nor is it necessarily hedonistic. The animal soul can become refined and wise and achieve much in the life of the spirit yet remain animal. The animal soul is the soul of a human being as a biological creature, as a specific level of development in the zoological system. Even in this sense, humans are superior to other creatures in our ability to attain great heights in the realms of thought and feeling; still, we remain an animal among animals.

### The G-dly Aspiration

It is in the G-dly soul, in its aspiration to the Divine, that man’s uniqueness lies. The G-dly soul yearns to cleave to and be absorbed by the Divine, and only by this aspiration, by the constant struggle of the G-dly soul to transcend its needs and its very self in order to attain identification with the Divine light, does one achieve a true identity as a human being.

## Source 2 Tanya, Chapter 9

It is written, however: “One nation shall prevail over the other nation.” For the body is called a “small city.” The two souls are just as two kings who wage war over a city, which each wishes to capture and to rule.

אך הנה כתיב: “ולאמ מלאמ יאמץ”, כי הוגה נקרא “עיר קטנה”. ובמו שני מלכים נלחמים על עיר אחת, שבל אחד רוצה לכבשה ולמלך עליה,

**That is to say**, each king wishes to direct its inhabitants according to his will so that they obey him in all that he decrees upon them.

**So, too, do the two souls — the Divine soul and the vitalizing animal soul, which originates from *kelipah* and is therefore the very antithesis of the Divine soul — wage war against each other over the body and all its organs**, the body being analogous to the city and the organs to its inhabitants.

דְּהַיָּו לְהַנְּהָגָה יוֹשְׁבֵיה  
כִּרְצָוֹנוּ וְשִׁיקְיוּ סָרִים  
לְמִשְׁמַעַתּוּ בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר יָגוּר  
עַלְיָהֶם.

כִּי שְׂתֵי הַנְּפָשֹׁות, הַאֱלָקִית  
וְמַחְיוֹנִית הַבָּהִמִּית  
שְׁמִינְקָלָפָה, גַּלְגָּלוֹת זוּ  
עַם זוּ עַל הָגָוף וְכָל אֲבָרוֹן.  
שְׁחַאָלָקִית, חַפְצָה וּרְצָוָה  
שְׁתַּהְאָה הִיא לְבָקָה הַמּוֹשָׁלָת  
עַלְיוֹ וּמִנְהִיגָּתוֹ...

### The Tzaddik's Definition

It is from this definition of the inner struggle of the soul that the appropriate solution emerges. This is not a war to the death, in which a person tries to destroy and obliterate a part of the self. As the animal soul is not fundamentally evil, the battle against it is essentially a battle of education. A person's task is to train the animal soul, to elevate it to a higher level of awareness and understanding, until it is unified, both in its objectives and in its aspirations, with the G-dly soul. Thus, one achieves full harmony of body and soul, of earthliness and transcendence.

## B. The Ideal: Beinoni

The perpetual battle in the human soul, which stems from its dual nature, also has moral and pragmatic implications. The teachers of mussar have always recognized the almost vital need for a person to achieve total inner identification with his deeds and actions. The assumption is that a purely mechanical act has a low moral and spiritual value. However, few individuals are capable of truly attaining such an inner identification. This leaves to most the choice of either giving up the spiritual struggle or descending to hypocrisy and self-delusion.

### What is Perfection?

The Tanya, by delving into the nature of the relationship between a person's two souls, finds an approach that is very different, indeed revolutionary. It readily acknowledges that not everyone is able to achieve complete victory for the G-dly soul over the animal, but not everyone is required to do so. A state of war within the human soul, says the Tanya, is not a negative thing. A person might achieve perfection with respect not only to deeds but also to speech and even to inner thoughts without achieving complete perfection within the soul. The Tanya requires a person to achieve perfection in the "garments" of the soul (thought, speech, and action) but not in the soul's essence.

### Source 3 Tanya, Chapter 12

**The beinoni ("intermediate man") is he in whom the evil of the animal soul never attains enough power to conquer the "city," so as to clothe itself in the body and make it sin.**

**That is to say, the three "garments" of the animal soul — namely animalistic thought, speech, and action originating in the kelipah are, in the beinoni, so subdued that they do not prevail within him over the Divine soul to the extent of clothing themselves in the body, the brain, nor in the mouth, nor in any of the other 248 organs to cause them to sin and to defile them, G-d forbid.**

ונבינוני הוא שלולים אין  
הרע גורר כל כך לכבש את  
העיר קפנה, להתלבש בגוף  
להחטיאו.

דוחינו: שלשות לבושים נפש  
הבהמית, שם מתחשה  
דבר ומצאה שמצד  
הקליפה, אין גוררים בו  
על נפש האלקית להתלבש  
בגוף, בפה ובפה ובשאר  
רמ"ח אברים להחטיאם  
ולטמאם חס ושלום...

...The *beinoni* has never committed any transgression, nor will he ever transgress; the name “*rasha*” has never been applied to him, however temporarily, not even for a moment, throughout his life.

...Nevertheless, he is not deemed a *tzaddik* at all, for the Divine soul’s dominance over the darkness and folly of the *kelipah* of the animal soul...is limited to the Divine soul’s aforementioned three garments — only in thought, speech, and action, but the essence and core of the Divine soul does not dominate the essence and core of the [animal soul deriving from the] *kelipah*.

For in the *beinoni*, the essence and core of the animal soul originating in *kelipah*...remains undisturbed.

...In that case, it is possible for the folly of the “wicked fool” (i.e., the animal soul) to reveal itself...craving all physical matters of this world, whether permitted or whether prohibited, G-d forbid.

ולא עבר עברה מינימו ולא עבר לעולם, ולא נקרא עלייו שם רק ש� אפלו שעה אחת ורגע אחד כל ימיו.

...ונאף על פי כן איינו נקרא צדיק כלל, מפני שיתרונו זהה אשר לאור גוף האלקית על החש וסכלות של הקלהה הנדרשה ממילא, איינו אלא בשלה לבושים הונכרים לעיל, ולא במוחת ועצמותה על מהותה ועצמותה של הקלהה.

כ”י מהותה ועצמותה של גוף הבנימית שמהקלהה שבחלל השמאלי לא נדרשה כלל ממקומו בבינוני...

ואז י יכול להיות סככות הכספי הרע בהתגלות לבו בחלל השמאלי, להתאות תאוña לכל עניין גשמיות עולם זה, בין בתר בין באסור חס ושלום...

Thus, the Tanya removes the veil of hypocrisy that has cloaked many a soul as a result of the demand to elevate us beyond our capacity. The recognition of the intrinsic duality of the soul enables a person to understand that his moral imperfection need in no way impede his aspiration and ability to fulfill his Divinely ordained role.

Once we know that our undesirable lusts and thoughts emanate from a fundamental source within ourselves that might not be within our power and duty to uproot, their presence within us is not tragic, nor will it necessarily bring about an unsolvable inner crisis. On the contrary, a person can achieve perfection precisely through this knowledge. One can be righteous in all particulars of one’s life and at the same time be engaged in the constant struggle within one’s soul.

## A New Moral Status

Tanya assigns to this spiritual persona a new moral status – that of the *beinoni*, the “intermediate.” The intermediate is the hero of this book: the book addresses him, discusses him, and carries his name (one of the titles the author gave Tanya is the Book of *Beinonim*). The intermediate is the “one who serves G-d,” whose entire life is a perpetual battle for the sake of the Divine, whose inner struggle is a hymn of praise to his Creator. The concept of the *beinoni* as an ideal to which every person should aspire. It opens the door to everyone, regardless of spiritual status, to be counted among those who aspire for true greatness – those who serve G-d in truth.

## Source 4 Tanya, Chapter 14

Now, the rank of *beinoni* is one that is attainable for every person; each person should strive for it, for every person can, at any time or hour, be a *beinoni*. Because being a *beinoni* does not mean that one must abhor evil, for this is a matter entrusted to the heart, and as explained earlier, the *beinoni* has yet to conquer [the evil in] his heart.

Rather, the task of the *beinoni* is only to “turn away from evil and do good” (Psalms 34:15) in actual practice – in deed, speech, and thought.

In these matters, every person is given the choice, ability, and freedom to act, speak, and think even that which is contrary to the desire of his heart and diametrically opposed to it.

והנה, מנתת הבינוני היא מדת כל אדם, ואחריה כל אדם ימשך, שבל אדם יכול להיות בינהו בכל עת ובכל שעה. כי הבינוני אינו מושם בברע, שיזהו כבר המסור ללב, ולא כל העתים שות.

אלא (תהלים לד טו): ”סור מרע ועשה טוב”, דהיינו בפועל מפש במעשה דבר ומתחשבה,

שבדיהם הבחן והיכלה, והירושות נתונה לכל אדם לעשות ולדבר ולחשב גם מה שהוא נגד תאות לבו והפכה מפש.

## Source 5

Tanya, Chapter 1

We have learned (Tractate Niddah 30b): “An oath is administered to the soul before birth: ‘Be righteous and be not wicked; and even if the whole world tells you that you are righteous, regard yourself as if you are wicked.’”

תניא [בסוף פרק ג' דנדה]:  
”משביעים אותו, תהי  
צדיק, ואל תהי רשע,  
ונאפלו כל הולם כלו  
ומורדים לו צדיק אתה,  
היה בעיניך כרשע.”

## Source 6

Tanya, Chapter 14

Now we can understand the repetitious wording in the oath administered to every Jew before birth, “Be righteous and be not wicked” (as quoted from the Talmud in the opening words of the Tanya).

At first glance, it seems puzzling: once he is charged to “be righteous,” implying clearly that he be not wicked, why the need to adjure him again not to be not wicked?

The answer is that not everyone is privileged to become a tzaddik, and a person doesn’t always have the full advantage of choice in whether he truly delights in G-d and actually and truly abhors evil. Therefore, [each person] is consequently adjured a second time: “You shall, at any rate, be not wicked.”

With regard to this (not being wicked), the right of choice and freedom is extended to every man, to control the spirit of lust in his heart and to conquer his nature, so that he shall not be wicked for even one moment throughout his life. [This applies] both in the realm of “turning away from evil” and in that of “doing good.”

ובזה יזנו בכל לשון  
השבועה, (נדה ל, ב) ”תהי  
צדיק ואל תהי רשע.”

دلכארה פמוה, כי מאחר  
שפשביעים אותו ”תהי  
צדיק”, ומה ארכיכם  
להשביעו עוד שלא היה  
רשע?

אלא מושום שאין כל אדם  
זוכה להיות הצדיק, וαιין  
לאדם משפט הבחן  
בזה כל כך, להטעג על  
ה' באהמת ושייה הבעל  
מאוס ממש באהמת. ולכן  
משביעים שנית: ”אל תהי  
רשע” על כל פנים,

שבזה משפט הבחן  
והרשות נתונה לכל אדם  
למשל ברוח תאותו שבלבו  
ולכבר יצרו שלא היה  
רשע אפלו שעה אחת כל  
ימיו, בין בבחינות ”סוד  
מרע” בין בבחינות ”ונעשה  
טוב”.

## Source 7 Maamar Baruch Hagomel, 12 Tammuz 5737

Our sages say that before the soul begins its descent, it is administered an oath: "Be righteous and be not wicked." This oath also empowers the soul; the term *mashbiin*, which means to administer an oath, can also be read *masbiin*, which means to nourish. G-d nourishes the soul and its abilities are vastly expanded so he will be able to fulfill his oath to "be righteous," to fulfill the mitzvot, "and be not wicked" and veer off the straight path. For this requires special powers.

וְהַעֲנִינוּ הוּא, דֶּהָנָה אָמְרוּ  
רְבָותֵינוּ ז"ל מִשְׁבִּיעִין  
אוֹתוֹ תְּהִי צָדִיק וְאֶל תְּהִ  
רְשָׁע, דְּלִפְנֵי יְרִידַת הַגְּשָׁמָה,  
בְּגֹוף מִשְׁבִּיעִין אֶת הַגְּשָׁמָה,  
וּפִירּוֹשׁ מִשְׁבִּיעִין הַיִּינָה (גַם)  
מִשְׁבִּיעִין מֶלֶשׁוֹן שׂוּבָע,  
שְׁמִשְׁבִּיעִים אָתוֹ (אֵז  
מְזֻעְטִיגָּט אִים אֵז) בְּכָחוֹת  
שְׁלָא בְּעָרְקָן מִהְכָּחוֹת  
שְׁקָיוֹ לוֹ ?פָנֵי זֶה. כִּי בְּכָרִ  
שְׁיוֹכֵל הָאָקָם לְמִלְאֹות  
תוֹךְן הַשְׁבוּעָה דְּתְהִי צָדִיק,  
בְּקִיּוֹם הַמְּצֹוֹת, וְאֶל תְּהִ  
רְשָׁע, שְׁלָא לְעַבּוֹר אֶת  
הַדָּקָן כֹּו, אַרְיךָ לְנִתְינַת כֶּם  
מִיּוֹחָד.

# C. The Great Question

In the first two sections, we read about the novel contribution of the Alter Rebbe: ordinary people are not expected to become tzaddikim who transform their animal souls and teach them to strive for spirituality. Rather, ordinary people should strive to be the beinoni. A person's goal should be that his thought, speech, and deeds be in the sole dominion of his G-dly soul, even as his animal soul still tries to pull him down.

However, being a beinoni is also highly unpractical. A beinoni is someone who never sins! In that case, what exactly is the unique contribution of the Alter Rebbe? Either way, he describes a level which is not attainable for most people – while claiming that it is achievable and close to every single person!

Can we really be a beinoni?

In 1988, the Rebbe asked this question:

## >> The Rebbe

### If Only, A Beinoni...

The Tanya begins with a quote, “An oath is administered to him: ‘Be righteous and be not wicked.’” Tanya continues to explain at length the levels of tzaddik, beinoni, etc., and exalts the level of a beinoni as someone who “has never committed any transgression, nor will he ever transgress.” Following this, the Tanya turns to explain the continuation of the aforementioned quote, that “even if the whole world tells you that you are righteous, regard yourself as if you are wicked.” The Tanya explains that the term “as if you are wicked” is precise, because a person should not consider himself an actual rasha, but rather as a beinoni. The teaching means to say that one shouldn't consider himself a tzaddik, because that isn't a level everyone merits to

בהתחלת ספר התניא: ”תניא [בסוף פרק ג' דנדה] משביעים אותו תהיל צדיק וכו'” – ולאחרי אריכות הביאור בפרט הדרגות צדיק ובינוני כו', עד להפלאת מעלה הבינווי ש"לא עבר עבירה מימיו ולא יעבור לעולם”<sup>1</sup> – מבאר המשך המאמר (ד”משביעים אותו כו'”) ”היה בעניין ברשע”<sup>2</sup>, ”כרשע” דייקא, ”זלא רשות ממש, אלא שיחזיק עצמו בינווי”<sup>3</sup>, ככלומר, לא דרגת צדיק, ”שאין כל אדם זוכה להיות צדיק ואין לאדם משפט הבחירה זהה כל כך”, אלא דרגת ביןוני (”אל תהיל רשות”). ש”מדת

(3) פרק יג.

(1) ריש פרק יב.

(2) ריש פרק א.

achieve, and not everyone has the ability to reach it. Rather, one should consider oneself a *beinoni*, because “every person can, at any time or hour, be a *beinoni*.”

This begs the question: how can this statement be squared with the honest reality that we know about ourselves? As Rabbi Hillel of Paritch would say, “If only I would be a *beinoni*.”

This can be explained based on the law stated by Maimonides: “When the judges administer a person an oath, they tell the person that the oath is not according to his definition of it, but according to the judges’ definition.”

הבינוני היא מدت כל אדם ואחריה כל אדם ימושך, שככל אדם יכול להיות ביןוני בכל עת ובכל שעה<sup>4</sup>.

ואינו מובן: כיצד מתאים עניין זה עם המציאות בפועל כפי שידע איניש בנפשו?! וכיוז הפטגם של ר' הלל מפאריטש “הלווי ביןוני”!

והסבירה בזו - על פי מה שכותב הרמב”ם ”כשמשבעין הדיניין את הנשבע אומרים לו לא על דעתך אנו משביעים אותו אלא על דעתנו”:

## Source 8 Exodus 22:9-10

*This week’s Torah portion tells us about oaths; when a person calls his fellow to a trial in rabbinical court, he is obligated, in certain instances, to swear that his testimony is truthful.*

If one person gives another a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any other animal to watch, and it dies, is maimed, or is carried off in a raid, without eyewitnesses,

Then the case between the two must be decided on the basis of an oath to G-d. If [the person keeping the animal] did not make use of the other’s property, the owner must accept it, and [the person keeping the animal] need not pay.

כifyan איש אל רעהו חמור  
או שור או שה וכלההמו  
לשמר, וממת או נשבר או  
נשבה אין ראה.

שבעתה ה' תהיה בין שנייהם,  
אם לא שלח ידו במלאת  
רעהו ולקח בעליו ולא  
ישלם.

Maimonides, in his laws regarding oaths, teaches an important point regarding the process of administering an oath: Sometimes, the court will interpret the oath in one way, while the individual will interpret it differently – doing so intentionally for the purpose of excusing himself of lying under oath. Despite the apparent dishonesty, he will always tell himself that he meant something else, and he may even make that claim at a later point in court.

To avoid this problem, our sages made a special addition to the oath:

## Source 9 Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Shevuos 2:16

Therefore, when judges administer an oath to a person, they tell him: “We are not administering the oath dependent on your intent, rather on our intent.”

לפיכך כשהמשביעין הצעינים  
את הנשבע, אומרים לו:  
לא על דעתך אנו משביעים  
אותך, אלא על דעתנו.

When the meaning of the oath is tied to the understanding of the judges, the person can't play games. His understanding of the oath is irrelevant; all that matters is what the court understood it to mean.

What's the connection to the topic at hand?

In previous classes, we learned that every rule in the Torah has deeper meaning which can teach us lessons in all aspects of life. Even this technical rule – the oath tied to the intent of the court – contains in it a powerful message.

Previously, we learned that when a person is administered the oath to “be righteous and be not wicked,” he is empowered to fulfill it as well. We learned that the Hebrew word for an oath – *שבועה* – can also mean satisfy; that during his oath, he is filled (nourished) with the power to fulfill his oath.

## >> The Rebbe

### An Oath of the Heavenly Court

When the Heavenly Court administers the oath to the unborn person, “Be righteous and be not wicked,” this oath follows the definition of the Heavenly Court, not human logic.

And, from the perspective of the Heavenly Court:

כאשר בית-דין של מעלה ”משביעים אותו (לפני צאתו לאיר העולם) תהי צדיק ואל תהי רשע“ - אין שבועה זו על דעת האדם דלמטה, אלא על דעת בית-דין של מעלה.

ומצד הדעת בית-דין של מעלה -  
הרי:

### Only G-d Can Calculate

1. The Heavenly Court knows the true state of a person when he performs a mitzvah or commits a sin, G-d forbid. Heaven is aware of this person's particular struggles etc. As a result, it is possible that, for this person, a single mitzvah — even a minor mitzvah — is considered like an entire world, far more significant than a number of undesirable actions. As Maimonides writes, “the calculation of a person's merits is not according to the quantity of mitzvos and transgressions, but according to their quality. One mitzvah may outweigh a number of transgressions,” either due to the value of the mitzvah or due to the personal state and circumstances of the person. Maimonides concludes, “This calculation is made by the understanding of G-d, Who knows how to weigh mitzvos and transgressions against each other.”

א) בית-דין של מעלה יודע מעמדו ומצבו של האדם בזאת עשיית המצוה, או בזאת שנכשל חס ושלום בעניין של חטא (על כל פנים חטא מלשון חסרונו) הקשיים המיוחדים שלו וכוכ' וכוכ', ובמיילא, יתכן למצואה אחת, אפילו מצואה קלה, נחשבת אצלם לריבוי גדול, עולם ומילואו, שלא בערך לגביו כמה עניינים בלתי-רצויים - על דרך מה שכותב הרמב"ם "שיקול זה (חשבון הזכויות כו') אינו לפי מנין הזכויות והעונות אלא לפני גודלם, יש זכות שהיא נגד כמה עונות", מצד איות המצוה, או מצד מעמדו ומצבו של האדם כו', ומסיים, "ו אין שוקlein אלא בדעתו של אל דעת, והוא הידוע איך עורכין הזכויות נגד העונות".

## Failure is Only Temporary

2. The Heavenly Court knows that when a Jew commits a transgression, G-d forbid, it is only a temporary state. Eventually, he will certainly repent, as the verse states, "no person will be left behind." And when a person repents, all of their transgressions are transformed into merits.

ב) בית-דין של מעלה יודע שכאשר יהודי נכשל חס ושלום בעניין בלתי-רצוי, אין זה אלא לפי שעה בלבד, ובודאי שסופה ל לעשות תשובה, כמו שכותוב "לא ידח ממנה נדח", שאז נהפכים אפילו הزادנות לזכיות>.

## Failure Isn't Real

3. The Heavenly Court knows that even while a Jew is committing an act of transgression, G-d forbid, it is not reflective of his true desire. As Maimonides says, every single Jew "desires to observe all of the mitzvos and abstain from transgression, it is only his negative inclination that overcomes him."

As a result, the oath to be righteous and be not wicked is administered based on the above understanding, and when a person is judged, all of the above is taken into account. In addition, the judgment itself is conducted with greater kindness and compassion than the judgment of a human court. This is why repentance is effective for the Heavenly Court but isn't taken into account by a human court.

Therefore, even though a person making an honest assessment of himself will reach the conclusion of, "if only I could

ג) בית-דין של מעלה יודע שגם באוותה שעה שנכשל, חס ושלום, בעניין בלתי-רצוי, אין זה מצד רצונו האמתי, כפסק דין הרמב"ם<sup>8</sup> שככל אחד ואחת מישראל רוצה הוא לעשות כל המצוות ולהתרחק מן העבירות, ויצרו הוא שתקפו.

ומכיוון שכן, הרי השבואה "תהי צדיק ואל תהי כורע" היא מלכתחילה על יסוד הידיעה דכל הנזכר לעיל, ובמיוחד, גם כאשר דנים את האדם לocketם בחשבונו כל הנזכר לעיל - נוסף לכך שגם דין ה"דין" עצמו הוא באופן של חסד ביחס לבית-דין של מטה, שכן, בנווגע לבית-דין של מעלה מועילה תשובה, מה שאין כן בנווגע לבית-דין של מטה (כידוע תשובה הנודע ביהודה).<sup>9</sup>

ולכן, גם כאשר מצד החשבונו - צדק שעושה בנפשו מגיע למסקנה

be a *beinoni*,” nonetheless, since he knows that the oath was administered based on the understanding of the Heavenly Court and not his own human logic, his personal assessment shouldn’t make him depressed and incapable of serving G-d joyfully. On the contrary, this knowledge causes him to serve G-d with even greater joy, including repentance with joy. And when one repents in this ultimate manner, through joy, all undesirable matters are utterly transformed, becoming merits.

ש”הלוואי” שהיה בדרגת **בינוני** - הרי, בידעו שהשביעו מלבחתילה על דעת בית-דין של מעלה, ולא על דעתו, אזי, החשוב-צדק שמצד דעתו אינו מביא אותו למצב ש”ירע לבבו ויהיה עצב ולא יוכל לעבד ה’ בשמחה ובטוב לבב”, אלא אדרבה - שמוסיף בעבודתו מתוך שמחה וטוב לבב, כולל ובמיוחד תשובה בשמחה, תשובה עילאה, עד כדי כך, שאפילו אם היה איזה עניין בלתי רצוי, הרי הוא מתחפה לטוב, כאמור, ”זדונות נעשו לו כזכיות.”

משיחת שני, חמישית ושני - ח’, י”א וט”ז אייר,  
ה’תשמ”ח, רשימת השומעים בלתי מוגה  
תורת מנחם ה’תשמ”ח, חלק ג’, ע’ 265

The Rebbe explains that although a person making an honest assessment of himself will reach the conclusion that he is very far from a *beinoni*, he shouldn’t give up just yet.

The oath is administered as per the understanding of the Heavenly Court. They know about our struggles, our difficulties, our backgrounds, and so on. We are judged not only according to the number of good deeds or bad deeds we committed, but also according to the broader context of our lives.

Therefore, we are told: Don’t be depressed by your assessment; keep it going and remember that you will be judged favorably in the Heavenly Court.

Essentially, the Rebbe suggests a novel interpretation to the understanding of the *beinoni*. Until now, we understood it to mean a person who does not sin at all. The moment we sin, we lose the status of the *beinoni*. In this talk, the Rebbe suggests otherwise. Only the Heavenly Court will determine who was the true *beinoni*; ignore those calculations and just keep it up.

The story is told that the Alter Rebbe once said that he was a *beinoni*, and Reb Mordechai of Lieply, a distinguished Chassid, said, “Rebbe, I’m not a *rasha* either.”

The Alter Rebbe responded, “What do you want? There are 500 levels to the *beinoni*...”