

If G-d Is Good, Why Can Life Be So Bad?

A Groundbreaking Approach to Life

B'H

מאמר

וידעת מוסקבה תרנ"ז

MA'AMAR

V'yodato—Moskva (Moscow) 1896

A Chassidic Discourse

By **Rabbi Sholom Dovber Schneersohn**

Fifth Rebbe of Chabad Lubavitch

With Commentary by Rabbi Dovid Vigler

V'yodato—Moskva (Moscow) 1896
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Bar Mitzvah of Sholom Vigler

Published by Rabbi Dovid Vigler

This book has been written as a study aide to the Ma'amar V'yodato—Moskva (Moscow) 1896 of the Rebbe Rashab, Rabbi Sholom Dovber Schneersohn, Fifth Rebbe of Chabad Lubavitch. The intention is for the student to study the original ma'amar in Hebrew or English together with the explanations and commentary of the author.

The English translation of the ma'amar has been kindly provided by Sichos in English.

Please send comments, suggestions and feedback to the author:

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In Everlasting Memory of
Rabbi Gershon Mendel Garelik

Chief Chabad Rabbi of Italy since 1959.

Jewish history is replete with stories of countless great Jewish leaders—men and women of amazing faith.

Some found their faith under pressure while others seemed to have always had it.

An example of the latter is Nachshon ben Aminadav, the fearless leader of the tribe of Yehuda, who leapt into the Red Sea on Moshe's command.

Though the instruction made no sense at the time, his faith in Hashem and devotion to his Rebbe made him fearless.

Nachshon's unshakable faith made the impossible possible and split the Red Sea, ripping open not only the waves but the Gates of Freedom for all subsequent generations.

With no fear in his lexicon, he perceived no obstacle before him, but only the command of his Rebbe.

Rabbi Gershon Mendel Garelik, too, was a Nachshon of our times.

He fearlessly ventured forth, together with his loyal wife Bassie, (may she live and be well) on the word of the Rebbe, without asking any questions.

Like Nachshon, they made miracles as they transformed Italy into a bastion of Jewish life.

The ma'amar V'yodato Moskva (Moscow) is an appropriate tribute to who he was and how he lived his life.

Rabbi Gershon Mendel lived his life by the teachings of Chassidus.

This he portrayed by always having a sicha or ma'amar of the Rebbe in his breast pocket, learning it at any free moment, whether in a waiting room or on a train. Chassidus was his most treasured companion.

May we, his students and descendants, be so fortunate as to emulate his courage and vision; V'yodato will serve as our lighthouse to illuminate his journey for us.

PROLOGUE

Thursday, September 14, 1746, changed the course of Jewish History.

On that night of Rosh Hashanah in the town of Mezhibuz in western Ukraine, Rabbi Yisrael Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of the Chassidic movement, experienced an elevation of his soul in Heaven. His soul ascended to the celestial chamber of the Moshiach (the Messiah) himself, whereupon Rabbi Yisrael asked him *"When is the master coming?"* Moshiach responded with three cryptic words translated as: *"When your wellsprings will disseminate outward."* With this incredible mission statement, a movement was born.

Chassidus is not a denomination of Judaism, it is a philosophy. Specifically, the teachings of Chabad Chassidus are a collection of teachings delivered over seven generations since the first Rebbe of Chabad—the Alter Rebbe—who was born on September 4, 1745. These teachings are a profound yet rational approach to faith, seeking to understand and appreciate what we've had to accept and believe heretofore.

In his cryptic answer, Moshiach was telling the Ba'al Shem Tov that only when the world had become saturated with the wisdom of the teachings of Chassidus—the Ba'al Shem Tov's wellsprings—would it experience the dawn of redemption. Ever since that time, the disciples of the Ba'al Shem Tov have striven to make the wisdom of Chabad philosophy accessible to as many people as possible.

Under the leadership of the Rebbe—Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson—the

Baal Shem Tov

Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760) was the founder of the Chassidic movement. He spent ten years learning the secrets of the Torah from the prophet Achiyah Hashiloni. Achiya was born in the times of Moshe in Egypt and experienced the Exodus in person. His fascinating life led him to become the teacher of Eliyahu Hanavi (Elijah the Prophet).

His first recorded prophecy (Kings 11:31-39) led to the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel as the Ten Tribes of Israel seceded from the rule of the Kingdom of Yehuda in Jerusalem.

After finishing his studies with Achiya, the prophet urged the Baal Shem Tov to reveal himself to mankind as the teacher of Jewish mysticism. Reluctantly, Rabbi Yisrael complied as he established the Chassidic Movement in 1734.

spiritual leader of our generation, learning of Chabad Chassidic teachings exploded as Chabad manuscripts that had never yet seen the light of day were printed and translations were made into countless languages. Today, Chabad Chassidus is easily accessible online and on social media platforms.

This book is our sincerest attempt to push the envelope even further. In this edition, we have striven to present one of the most foundational texts in all of Chabad Chassidic Philosophy, V'yodato—Moskva, in a manner that allows any reader of English to understand and appreciate the depth of the original wisdom directly from the original source.

V'yodato—Moskva was delivered by the fifth Rebbe of Chabad, Rabbi Sholom Dovber Schneersohn, in Moscow in 1897. Its wisdom is so essential and foundational, that it is taught to every Chabad Yeshiva student when he first begins to delve into the teachings of Chabad philosophy seriously. Never before has this text been explained to the English reader. Only after overcoming the significant language barrier was one able to approach it. This book has now made it possible to appreciate this life-changing wisdom without any language barrier at all.

In just a few short months since its first printing, the feedback from V'yodato—Moskva has been both overwhelming and deeply touching. Members of our community have successfully mastered the ma'amar and have managed to apply it to their personal lives. Past struggles have been reframed and many now have the fortitude to face new challenges in the future with a deeper understanding and appreciation of G-d's ways.

I am grateful for the deeply personal feedback that many have shared with me. This second edition has incorporated much of the suggestions that I have received from readers in order to improve one's experience in mastering the ma'amar. I hope that you too will share your feedback with me by sending your comments to **Rabbi@JewishGardens.com**.

How to use this book

The original text appears with a direct translation alongside it in areas that have a white background. My curated explanation appears in the purple boxes before and after the original text of V'yodato—Moskva. New concepts are elucidated in the red boxes when they first appear and also found in alphabetical order at the very end of the book for easy reference.

In order to assist the reader in assimilating the profound wisdom of this ma'amar, I have divided the book into thirty days of study, each requiring around twenty

minutes per day. Thus, in just one month, one can master this majestic ma'amar. Each day is followed by an applied meditation in the brown boxes entitled "*Call to Action.*"

Ample empty space has been provided before and after each day to allow you space to record your thoughts, feedback, and reflections on each idea.

A Gift to our Son on his Bar Mitzvah

My wife, Chana and I are thrilled to publish this Second Edition of V'yodato—Moskva in honor of the Bar Mitzvah of our eldest son, Sholom. As Sholom matures from boy to man, it is our deepest hope and aspiration that he will learn to cherish and value the priceless gift that was passed on to him by all the generations that preceded him. The teachings of Chabad Chassidus are the light that helps us navigate through the darkness of this world.

When I was a teenager, it took me years to be ready to learn V'yodato–Moskva. And even then, it was hard to capture its breadth and retain its depth. This book is our gift to our son to empower him with the tools to begin his life as a full-fledged, adult member of the Jewish People and the wisdom that he needs to succeed.

It is our hope and prayer that the publishing of this book be the final hammer blow in the fulfillment of what so many others have done before us in "*spreading the wellsprings outward.*" Indeed, may the Divine consciousness that this book inspires within us prepare the world for the time of redemption through Moshiach about which Isaiah (11:9) prophesies: "*And the world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the sea bed.*"

Rabbi Dovid Vigler

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26 Menachem-Av 5782,

August 23, 2022

Bar Mitzvah of Sholom Vigler

INTRODUCTION

What we're trying to achieve

1391 BCE -
1271 BCE

Moshe Rabbeinu brought the Torah from *Heaven to Earth*;

1534-1572

The Arizal, father of contemporary Kaballah (Jewish mysticism), brought it from the secret circles to the *public* by promoting the study of *Kabbalah*

1698-1760

The Baal Shem Tov, founder of Chassidism, took it from *public* to *practical* by establishing Chassidism;

1745-1812

The Alter Rebbe, founder of Chabad, took it from *practical* to *rational* by establishing Chabad and authoring the Tanya;

1860-1920

The Rebbe Rashab, Rabbi Sholom DovBer Schneerson, the fifth Chabad Rebbe, considered the Maimonides of *Chassidus* for his clarity of explanation, took it from *rational* to *granular detail* through his meticulous style of teaching *Chassidus*;

1902-1994

The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the seventh Chabad Rebbe and the spiritual leader of our generation, took it from *granular* to *personal* by teaching us how our embrace of modernity is never in conflict with our identity as fully observant Jews.

Tanya

The magnum opus of the Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi and founder of Chabad. First published in 1796, the Tanya has been reprinted over three thousand times in countless of cities across the world. The first part of Tanya consists of fifty three chapters that explain the structure and systems of the two souls that we all have and how we can achieve self mastery over them. The goal of the Tanya is to provide us with the tools to allow each Jew to reach a meaningful, emotional relationship with G-d. At the very least, it shows us how we are all capable of fulfilling all the mitzvos of the Torah on a practical level.

Chassidus

Jewish mystical teachings that form the foundation of Chabad philosophy. Tanya is the foundational text of Chabad. Chassidim are Jews who study the teachings of *Chassidus*.

In writing this book, my vision is to bring the gift of *Chassidus* to the world in a language that is appealing, relevant, and inspirational. Learning a *ma'amar* of the Rebbe Rashab is not an easy task and certainly not accessible to all. Though *V'yodato Moskva* is profoundly practical in the deeply empathetic way in which it explains why bad things happen to good people, the first half of the *ma'amar* is academic, abstract, and ethereal.

The format of this book is designed to serve as a friendly chavrusa (study partner) that patiently explains each section of the *ma'amar* in advance of reading it from the original text in Hebrew or in English.

In order to make the *ma'amar* more accessible and user-friendly, I have divided it into 30 parts (spanning less than 30 minutes each). Each section includes an introduction, overview, and explanation of a section of the *ma'amar*, followed by the original text in both the Hebrew original and the English translation. Thus, in a period of just 30 days, it is possible to master this majestic *ma'amar*.

The division of sections is carefully thought out in order to allow students to meditate when each section upon completing it, thus incorporating it into their *weltanschauung* over 30 days.

This book was inspired by the Rebbe's call for chassidim to write *he'aros* (notes) and *chiddushim* (novel ideas) on every part of Torah. I have always felt that the teachings of Chabad *Chassidus* in general, and of the Rebbe Rashab in particular, have been difficult for people to comprehend. It has been a lifelong dream of mine to try to make these saintly teachings more accessible and user-friendly. Far be it from me to attempt to explain the Rebbe Rashab, but if my work is able to inspire my fellow Jews to study *Chassidus*, it would have been worth every effort.

Any errors, omissions or imperfections are entirely my own and I take responsibility for them. I would greatly appreciate your constructive criticism and reflections on this work or any of its details. Please contact me at the email below.

I would like to extend a special thank you to those who participate in the daily Minyan of Chabad of Palm Beach Gardens, who studied the *ma'amar* with me in person and on Youtube Live. It was your questions, comments and critiques that helped me form the basis of this manuscript.

I hope and pray that this will be part of the ultimate fulfillment of the directive of Moshiach to the Baal Shem Tov, that he will come when the wellsprings of *Chassidus* will disseminate “outward”—to the places that have never seen its light before.

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ABOUT THE MA'AMAR

The precise date on which this *ma'amar* was delivered is unknown. The Frierdiker Rebbe writes that his father, the Rebbe Rashab, delivered it sometime during the winter of 5657 (either end of 1896 or beginning of 1897).

Frierdiker Rebbe

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson (1880-1950) was the sixth Rebbe of Chabad. His son in law is our Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. 'Frierdiker Rebbe' means 'previous Rebbe. The Frierdiker Rebbe's father was the Rebbe Rashab, Rabbi Sholom Dovber Schneerson, the author of the *ma'amar* V'yodato.

Ma'amar

A scholarly discourse delivered by each of the Seven Rebbes of Chabad. Each discourse would delve into the mystical and Kabbalistic teachings of the Torah. These discourses were meticulously studied by the Rebbe's students (Chassidim). To this day, chassidim will meditate upon a discourse before prayer in order to infuse passion and vitality into their Divine service.

In the *Hayom Yom* of 28 *Tammuz*, the Rebbe writes that this *ma'amar* was extraordinary:

"Each of the Chabad Rebbes had certain ma'amarim (plural for maamar) that they would repeat once every two or three years in order to purify the air. One of the ma'amarim of the Rebbe Rashab that served this purpose was V'yodato Hayom-Moskva (Moscow) 5657."

As you will soon discover, this *ma'amar* is not just a Torah explanation. It represents a way of life—a paradigm shift in our perception of everything that happens to us. Specifically, it completely reinvents our understanding of the bad things that happen to us.

Chabad

Chabad is not a denomination of Judaism. It is a relentless intellectual attack on faith, always challenging us to understand our relationship with *Hashem* instead of following it with faith alone. The Chabad philosophy is made up of thousands of volumes of philosophical teachings by the seven Rebbes of Chabad Lubavitch.

The year 1897 was a time of great change. Fissures were already forming in the Russian aristocracy as the last Czar of Russia, Nicholas II, was crowned in May 1896. The ensuing Khodynka Tragedy resulted in the deaths of 1,389 people who had come to witness the crowning ceremony. The Czar attended a celebratory call that same night and the people's anger at his apathy contributed to the eventual overthrow of the Czar.

In January 1897, Vladimir Lenin was exiled to Siberia for counter-revolutionary activities. Russia's political landscape was soon to experience a massive upheaval.

August 31, 1897, Thomas Edison was granted a patent for the Kinetoscope, a precursor of the movie projector that revolutionized mass entertainment.

September 1, 1897, the Boston subway opened, becoming the first underground metro in North America and transforming transportation from the horse and buggy that had dominated the early part of the century.

We can only assume that these cataclysmic world events prompted the Rebbe Rashab to deliver this monumental *ma'amar* in which he revealed the presence of *Hashem* in a way like never before, to a rapidly changing world. He did so in Moscow, the capital of the land in which most of the world's Jews lived at that time. It would sadly, soon become their torturous prison for many decades. Perhaps his delivery of the *ma'amar* softened the blow of the trauma and suffering of Jews in Russia, preparing them to endure their subsequent hardships with faith rather than fear.

As the *ma'amar* concludes, the application of this attitude of faith in the face of fear is what will transform darkness into light. Perhaps it was this oft-repeated *ma'amar* that ultimately led to the miraculous fall of the Soviet Union and its inexplicable transformation into the host of countless thriving Jewish communities that it has since become.

May we too, merit to use this *ma'amar* to turn our personal darkness into light and thus illuminate the darkness of the entire world with the greatest light the world will ever see—the arrival of Moshiach, may it happen speedily!

Moshiach

Messiah. One of the thirteen foundations of Jewish faith is the belief in the coming of Moshiach. He is a human being, scion of King David, who will lead humanity to world peace and Divine consciousness through his meticulous observance of Torah and Mitzvos and his ability to inspire all of mankind. Jews believe that Moshiach can and will arrive at any moment.



DAY 1

The foundation stone of Yiddishkeit



MA'AMAR V'YODATO

וידעת היום - מאסקווא

DAY 1

“And you shall know today and take it unto your heart, that *Havayah*¹ is the *E-lohim*² in the heavens above and the earth below; there is nothing else.”³

וידעת היום והשבות אל לבבך כי הוי' הוא האלקי'

The Foundation Stone of Yiddishkeit

This *ma'amar* speaks to the essence of all of Yiddishkeit (Judaism).

The concept of the fusion of G-d *Havayah* (G-d) and *Elokim* (Lord), which the *ma'amar* develops, seems to be quintessential to Yiddishkeit.

The very first words we teach our children, and the last we recite before passing from this world are “*Shma Yisrael, Havayah Elokeinu, Havayah Echad* (Hear o Israel, *Havayah* is *Elokim*, *Havayah* is one).”

Hashem

We most often refer to G-d as *Hashem*, this term simply means ‘the name’, a general allusion to G-d. G-d, however, has many names expressing different characteristics.

Elokim

Elokim is a holy name of G-d that may only be used during prayer or Torah study. It has the same numerical value as *Ha'Teva* (nature). Just like the repetitive patterns of nature conceal the presence of G-d, the name *Elokim* represents Him the way He chooses to hide His presence from us.

Havayah

Havayah is the four letter name of G-d that we are never allowed to pronounce due to its intense holiness. This name is written as Yud-Hey-Vav-Hey, but normally pronounced as *Ado-nai*, a name of G-d that will not be addressed in this *ma'amar*. For the sake of clarity, when referring to the ineffable name of Yud-Hey-Vav-Hey, we rearrange the letters to sound “*Havayah*.”

Havayah means Creator. It is made up of the words past (*haya*), present (*hove*) and future (*yihye*) because it represents Almighty G-d the way He is infinite and timeless.

¹ The term *Havayah* is derived from a rearrangement of the letters of the name יהוה-יהוה which, because of its holiness, is not pronounced in the usual manner.

² Both *Havayah* and *E-lohim* (א-להים) are names which refer to G-d. As explained in the *Kabbalah* and in the Midrash (Shmos Rabbah 3:6), the different names of G-d represent different manifestations of G-d's attributes. Indeed, a major portion of this *maamar* is devoted to explaining the difference between the qualities expressed by these two names.

³ Devarim 4:39.

This powerful affirmation is also the pinnacle of the Yom Kippur service when we passionately declare at the end of the final service of Neilah that “*Havayah hu ha’Elokim (Havayah is Elokim)*” seven times!

Not only do we recite “Shma Yisrael” twice daily by Biblical command, the affirmation that *Havayah is Elokim* is also the opening of the “Ata Hareisa” prayer recited on *Simchas Torah*.

Clearly, this idea is deeply fundamental to all of Yiddishkeit!

This unity is what we celebrate on the festival of *Pesach*: When Moshe relayed the message of *Hashem* to Pharaoh: “*Let my People go so that they may serve Me.*” Pharaoh brazenly told Moshe, “*Lo yadati es Havayah*” (“I don’t know who *Havayah* is”)! As a result, *Hashem* instructed Moshe to inflict ten crushing plagues upon Egypt so that the Jews will “believe that *Havayah* has indeed revealed Himself (to them).”

It turns out, that the entire purpose of the plagues was pedagogical—to teach the world about the existence of *Havayah*.

The Egyptians believed in what they saw, hence they served multiple gods. It was Moshe’s mission to teach them that there is one Almighty Creator—*Havayah*—behind each and every detail of existence. He did this by manipulating vital elements of the universe through each of the ten plagues. When the Jews witnessed the fact that *Hashem* was able to manipulate each and every element of this world, they finally realized that Almighty G-d—*Havayah*—is behind it all.

The entire process of the Exodus, and our reliving it each year on *Pesach*, is to reeducate ourselves to this idea—to break out of the Egyptian mindset that “seeing is believing” and enter into “the promised land,” to elevate our consciousness to a place where G-d’s Almighty power is evident, obvious, and apparent.

If Moshe’s goal had been merely to take the Jews out of Egypt, he could have done so with a magic carpet or nuclear bomb. But the goal was not to *get the Jews out of Egypt* as much as it was to *get Egypt out of the Jews*—with a *Havayah* consciousness—as the verse explicitly states:

“*that they should know that I am Havayah, amidst the land.*” (Exodus 8:18)

Shma Yisrael

This verbal affirmation is the central prayer of Judaism. By Biblical command, we recite this prayer twice daily, once in the morning and once in the evening. This is also one of the first words we teach our children as well as the last words recited before leaving this world. It affirms our belief in one G-d. It is the meaning of the middle phrase—*Havayah Elokeinu (Havayah is our Elokim)*—that this *ma’amar* comes to clarify.

Lord & G-d

In our prayer books, *Havayah* is translated as “Lord”; *Elokim* is translated as “G-d.” This *ma’amar* will delve deeply into the true meaning behind these two names and the secrets that they teach us about ourselves and the world we live in.

CALL TO ACTION

When you are in a relationship with someone, you are on a first name basis with that person.

Do you have a relationship with G-d?

If so, what do you call him?

Learn the names of G-d:

Elokim when He's acting natural;
Havaya when He's acting miraculous.

Best of all, call him Father or Aba or Tatte.

Develop a personal relationship with your Father in Heaven.

DAY 2

Overview of the Ma'amar

DAY 2

Overview of the Ma'amar

This project is a sincere attempt to make the majesty of *Chassidus* more accessible to all. Too often well-intentioned students of *Chassidus* lose sight of the forest due to the trees: they become overwhelmed by the length and density of the *ma'amar* and sometimes even lose interest before reaching its conclusion.

This edition of the *ma'amar* is designed to serve as a patient chavrusa (study partner) to all students of the *ma'amar*, holding their hand as it guides them through every step, anticipating what lies ahead as well as providing explanations of the abstract concepts along the way.

Before the actual *ma'amar* begins, students are taken in a virtual helicopter to find their bearings—to see where they're starting from and where the finish line is. This way they can be sure to identify the forest before they confront their first tree up close. After the goals are clearly defined, they descend from the helicopter and begin their guided walking tour through the forest, making sure to see the flow of details towards the ultimate goal.

This *ma'amar* tackles the question of why life has to be so hard. Why is struggle necessary?

The answer gives profound meaning to our struggles and offers vision instead of confusion. It liberates us from our anxieties with the realization that *Hashem* is indeed our loving Father in Heaven and that absolutely everything that He does to us is filled with love, even when it doesn't seem that way at all. It's the path to a deep, meaningful, and personal relationship with *Hashem*.

Where this Ma'amar is Going to Take Us

Through a meticulous didactic, the Rebbe Rashab redefines our understanding of human suffering as represented by the metaphor of darkness. Instead of perceiving darkness as a problem which conflicts with light, he brilliantly proves that it is actually the process of revealing a greater light!

The Maggid of Mezritch said that the most appropriate metaphor for the relationship between *Hashem* and humanity is that of a mentor and mentee (*ma'amar* "Issa Bepsikta" of Reb Hillel Paricher). A close analysis of the relationship between the teacher and his student sheds light on the enigmatic nature of our relationship with *Hashem*.

When explaining something straightforward, a teacher can speak clearly without the need to employ metaphors or examples. This method is symbolic of teaching in the "light". But when teaching something profound, the teacher needs to mask the wisdom

Maggid of Mezritch

Rabbi Dovber was the disciple and successor of the Baal Shem Tov as the leader of the Chassidic movement. He was born in the early 1700's and passed away in 1772. He was the teacher of the Alter Rebbe Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of *Chassidus* Chabad.

in parables and analogies that the student can relate to. This method is symbolic of teaching in the “dark.” Thus, the darkness is actually the process of revealing much more than regular light can.

To illustrate: “absence makes the heart grow fonder.” How does this aphorism make any sense? Why would someone love another more when they are apart than when they are together? The answer is in *V’yodato Moskva* (Moscow). On a superficial level, one might think that one can feel the presence of one’s loved one more when together than when apart, but on a deeper level, one senses the presence of his loved one much more when apart than when together.

We can experience a glimmer of this when spending time with loved ones who are constantly distracted on their cellphones. Despite their apparent physical presence, they are hardly really present at all. When apart and speaking to them on the phone, you can sense a greater closeness than in person.

The proof of this point is that, soon after returning from a trip, the intense longing and desire we felt for our loved one while we were away wanes quickly, and we start to take the other for granted, as we did before!

Dovid Hamelech (King David) expresses this frustration in Tehillim (Psalms 63:2-3) when he cries out:

“Tzomoh lcho nafshi, koma lcho bsari, beeretz tziya veayef bli mayim.” (“My soul pines for Hashem when I am in a barren wasteland, removed from Him.”)

He continues to pray that that he feel the same intense longing for *Hashem* even when he is in His presence:

“ken bakodesh chazisicha, liros uzecha u’kvodecha!” (so may I yearn for your intimacy and closeness when I am in your presence)

The reason for this phenomenon is that when together, we experience the other “in the light.” The connection is limited by our cognitive processing capacity and encompasses all the perceived imperfections and annoying idiosyncrasies of the one we love. But when apart, we relate to each other “in the darkness.” The connection is now on a far higher and more sensitive level where the intensified presence of the beloved completely overwhelms any attachment disorders or other perceived imperfections. Indeed, the enlightened mind perceives that we connect far more through darkness than through light.

This sheds extraordinary light on the enigma of death. In Tanya Igeres Hakodesh Epistle 27, the Alter Rebbe tells us that we can sense the presence of our loved ones after death much more than in life. In his words “*yatir mebechayayhu (more than in their lifetimes).*” One is more capable of connecting with the soul of a loved one after they pass than during their lifetime. Though at first glance this seems rather strange, *V’yodato* holds

the key to unlocking this riddle: darkness is never in conflict with light, it's the conduit through which passes a light that is too powerful to perceive in a straightforward manner. As soon as we "lose" a loved one, we actually feel their presence much more than before, because we know they are with us through the darkness, instead of being with us through the light.

This idea changes everything about the way we perceive our lives and its struggles. It actually turns the tables on our perception of suffering and struggle.

V'yodato enlightens us to "know G-d," to learn to relate to Him not just when times are good—the light—but even more so when times are not good—the dark. *Hashem* is always there with us and never abandons us. Sometimes He chooses to relate to us in a limited manner and other times He chooses to engulf us with an overwhelming love, taking our breath away and knocking us off of our feet.

The Ultimate Goal

Though it sounds enlightening, it's hardly appealing. Wouldn't it be nice if we could connect deeply with *Hashem* and also live a life that's pleasant, without hardship, pain, and struggle?

This is the ultimate goal of the *ma'amar*: to demonstrate that when we internalize the true meaning of darkness, the realization itself will allow us to mature to the point at which we will be able to experience deeper intimacy with G-d without the need for the light to be hidden. Dovid Hamelech (King David) seems to be referring to this in Tehillim (Psalms) 139:11-12 when he says:

"Night is Light for me. Even Darkness will not darken for me. Night will shine like day. Darkness is the same as Light."

This seems to have been the Rebbe's cry for decades as he yearned for no less than "*tov hanireh vehanigleh (goodness that is clear, obvious and apparent).*" On the one hand, the Rebbe yearned for G-d to send us authentic, unfiltered blessings, but at the same time, he wanted it to be one that we could process and appreciate, without pain or struggle.

Through meditating upon *V'yodato*, we will be able to reinvent our relationship with the Aibershter (the One Above—*Hashem*), to the point where we will be ready to receive the great "hug" from Him

Chochma, Bina, Da'as

These three words collectively make up the acronym Chabad. They represent the three steps of intellectual processing of any concept. *Chochma* is the idea—the initial flash of inspiration. *Bina* is the comprehension of the idea. *Da'as* is realization—feeling with our hearts the concept that we've understood in our minds.

We evolve from *Chochma* (idea) to *Binah* (comprehension) through learning about the idea that we're trying to fully grasp. We evolve to *Da'as* (realization) by meditating upon what we've already understood. A Chabadnik is a Jew whose appreciation of his creator goes through these critical steps to the point that he develops a deep feeling for *Hashem* through meditation.

without the need for camouflage. He will be able to finally emerge from the shadows in His full glory, and we will be ready to receive His light without being blown away.

This is the era that the world has been waiting for 5782 years. This is the era of higher consciousness and Divine awareness that will be the signature of the times of Moshiaich.

Moshiach is at our doorstep, he's just waiting for us to invite him in. That change happens first in the comprehension (*binah*) of our minds and then, through meditation, in the feeling (*da'as*) of our hearts. Once we reach that vision, we are ready to receive the light!

CALL TO ACTION

Which personal problem would
you like to conquer?

Identify it and bring it out to the
forefront of your consciousness.

Prepare to observe it through the
lens of V'yodato.

Open your heart to the wisdom
of this ma'amar.

It will transform your darkness
into light.



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