ביוון ושתי عشر יומ

BeYom Ashtei-Asar Yom
Everyone who shared a connection with the Rebbe at that time remembers that special night. In 5731 (1971), Yud-Alef Nissan — the date of the Rebbe’s birthday — was yet to be established by the Rebbe as a time when he would hold a farbrengen with chassidim.¹

On the eleventh of Nissan, the Rebbe went to the Ohel. After he returned, he davened Minchah together with the chassidim. Later, the Rebbe gave notice that he would hold a farbrengen that night. At the farbrengen, after an opening niggun, he indicated that the shluchim who had returned to New York from Australia and guests who had come from Eretz Yisrael should say LeChayim. The Rebbe then asked that the niggun traditionally preceding a maamar be sung, and delivered the maamar translated here.²

In that maamar, he cited a teaching of the Midrash³ that focuses on the Aramaic phrase, Ana nasiv malka — “I will choose the king.” In doing so, he put into words a fundamental approach with which he had been nurturing his chassidim for the more than two decades of his leadership.

THE CHOICE OF THE CLEVER PERSON

The Midrash begins with an analogy:

A king entered a country accompanied by a duke, a prefect, and a commander. ... One person said, “I will choose the duke as my patron.” Another said, “I will choose the prefect as my patron.” And still another said, “I will choose the commander as my patron.” There was a clever person [among them] who said: “I will choose the king, because the others are all subject to replacement, whereas the king is not subject to replacement.”

¹. The last time the Rebbe had done so was nine years earlier, in 5722 (1962), on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday.
². The text of the maamar was afterwards edited by the Rebbe and published in connection with Yud-Alef Nissan, 5749 (1989) and later included in Sefer HaMaamarim Melukat, Vol. 3.
The *Midrash* explains the analogue:

There are gentile nations that serve the sun and others that serve the moon…. Israel, by contrast, serves only the Holy One, blessed be He. This is the intent of the verse, “‘G-d is my portion,’ says my soul.”

Although the *Midrash* speaks of the worship of the sun and the moon, its lesson still relates to our lives today. For the pagans worshiped the sun and the moon because they saw them as intermediaries that convey G-d’s influence to the earth. The worship — at least in a figurative sense — of other such intermediaries is unfortunately still widely prevalent in our times. True, we don’t bow down to images or offer them animal sacrifices, but we bow our heads and make many sacrifices of time and effort to appease the powers that we see as controlling our lives and our fortunes.

The proper approach is that of the clever person: “I will choose the king” — to focus on a relationship with G-d alone.4

**WHY CLEVERNESS IS NOT ENOUGH**

The *maamar* asks: Why must a person be “clever” to come to such a realization? Even a child understands that a king is greater than his officers, or in the analogy, that G-d is greater than the intermediaries through which He dispenses His influence.

In resolution, it is explained5 that if a person is to receive spiritual influence from the King, from the realm of holiness, there are two prerequisites: he must first have (a) *bittul*, self-nullification and self-transcendence, and (b) *avodah*, working to transform his self-concern. When, however, one receives his spiritual energy via the intermediaries, there is no necessity for *bittul*. Influence is given, in the words of the *Zohar*,6 “at no cost.”

A second consideration that could make a person prefer to be nurtured by the intermediaries is that the influence they dispense is quantitatively greater. The influence granted “from the King” is measured, meted out in a manner

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4. Certainly, G-d will diffuse His influence through various mediums within the natural order. Nevertheless, these mediums will be recognized as nothing more than an axe in the hand of the chopper, with no independent authority or choice.

5. See sec. 4 of the *maamar*.

commensurate with the Divine service performed. Influence granted through the intermediaries, by contrast, is given without any calculations. Hence, it is granted in abundance.

The “clever person” is not concerned with his individual benefit. He is willing to forego the additional benefit and invest hard work to attain bittul — so long as he receives influence from the King’s hand, directly.

LOOKING BEYOND EVEN THE BIG PICTURE

Despite its seeming advantages, all influence received from the intermediaries is temporary. In the Ultimate Future, those who receive their spiritual nurture from the King will receive abundantly more. This realization, however, is not the reason for the Jew’s choice of G-d. After all, such a choice would be no more than enlightened self-interest. Instead of serving the intermediaries for short-term gain, he sees the larger picture and serves G-d, confident that “if this [worldly pleasure] is what those who transgress [G-d’s] desires will receive, then certainly those who fulfill His desires will be even more richly rewarded.7

Nevertheless, this calculation is not the reason for his choice of the King. Rather, the King is chosen because He is the King. The “clever person” realizes Who the King is and seeks to bond with Him. That itself is his rationale.

STEPPING ABOVE SELF

The original question still remains: The King’s eminence can be appreciated by all. Why, then, is the choice of Him not embraced by all mankind?

The core of the resolution is that mortal reasoning alone compels a person to desire his own personal benefit. True, others can appreciate the King’s eminence, but they will still choose the intermediaries. Since their fundamental nature is characterized by yeshus, self-concern, they do not want to enter into a relationship with the King at the expense of having to forego the benefit they will receive from the intermediaries.

In this lies the uniqueness of the “clever person”: he is willing to rise above his self-concern and choose the King because He is King, and for no other reason.

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7. Nedarim 50b; the end of Tractate Makkos.
NOTHING BUT YOU ALONE

The *Midrash* is speaking of crass paganism, but the above pattern also applies to those who give credence to intermediaries at other levels. Indeed, its lesson is relevant — albeit in a subtle manner — even to individuals of lofty stature. In that vein, the *maamar* cites a statement the Alter Rebbe was wont to make at times when he would enter a state of *dveikus*:*8* “I desire nothing. I don’t want Your *Gan Eden;* I don’t want Your *Olam HaBa* [World to Come];*10*…. I want nothing but You alone.”

True, there is a drastic difference between the pagan’s worship of intermediaries and the worship of a holy person who yearns to delight in the revelations of G-d in the spiritual realms. There is, however, one shared factor: self-interest. The pagan’s self-interest is focused on plain material satisfaction. The person seeking the revelations of *Gan Eden* seeks to luxuriate in the radiance of the Divine Presence. Both are concerned with their personal wants and desires.

The “clever person,” by contrast, “want[s] nothing but You alone.” He chooses the King, even though that choice requires *bittul* and *avodah*.

This approach is what the Rebbe cultivated within his chassidim and this is why the *maamar* hit home so powerfully. Throughout his leadership, he exemplified and sought to inculcate in others a willingness to commit oneself to G-d without a reason, to commit oneself to service without any thought of self-interest.

PERMEATING THROUGH AND THROUGH

The *Midrash* describes the Jews with the analogy of a clever person. Nevertheless, when speaking of the analogue, it states:

> Israel, by contrast, serves only the Holy One, blessed be He. This is the intent of the verse, “‘G-d is my portion,’ says my soul.”

There is a seeming conflict between the analogy and the analogue. The analogy attributes the choice of G-d to a logical decision, while the analogue speaks of an essential bond, an inherent, spiritual response.

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8. *Derech Mitzvosecha, Shoresh Mitzvas HaTefillah*, sec. 40, p. 138a. See *HaYom Yom*, the entry for 18 Kislev, for more details. *Dveikus* is a state in which a person enters a rapturous bond with God that lifts him totally above material consciousness.

9. I.e., the abode of souls in the spiritual realms in the Afterlife.

10. It appears that here, the intent of the phrase “the World to Come” is the era of the Resurrection.
The *maamar* explains the interrelationship of these two aspects of our makeup. Why does the clever person make a logical decision to choose G-d? Because of the inner bond with Him that his soul shares. As explained above, a person’s self-interest by nature would motivate him to rely on intermediaries. Nevertheless, he chooses the King — because the inner soul-connection he shares with Him compels him to. The functioning of his mind is shaped by the spiritual bond that transcends reason.

One might then ask: Since the choice of the King is a reflection of the soul’s essential, inherent connection to G-d, why is it necessary for this choice to be filtered through “cleverness”? Let it shine forth with its own essential power, rising above reason.

The resolution of this question lies in the understanding that a person’s bond with G-d is not an appendage to his personality, but the essence of his being — who he is. And since it is his essence, it will permeate every element of his being, including his intellect. If one’s bond with G-d had to remain supra-rational, it would imply that there is an element of his personality that it cannot penetrate and thus, it could not be his essence. For if something is essential, nothing can block its expression. It pervades every aspect of a person’s make-up, beginning with the mind and filtering through all of his various faculties.

With these explanations as well, the *maamar* touched a responsive chord in chassidim worldwide. For the above pattern of development is a fundamental ideal in the *Chabad* school of thought — that every Jew’s essential soul-connection with G-d, as highlighted and inspired by the Baal Shem Tov, should permeate our intellect, which in turn will motivate selfless service that utilizes every one of our soul’s faculties.

**NOT JUST A SLOGAN**

Upon hearing the *maamar*, chassidim understood *ana nasiv malka* — “I will choose the king” — as a message of *hiskashrus*, which means the cultivation of one’s individual bond with the Rebbe. This is no mere exuberant reverence; it is connected with the core themes of the *maamar*.

The *maamar* explains the desire to receive spiritual influence from intermediaries and the desire to receive it from G-d’s encompassing light as parallel motifs. For in both instances, the influence is received without *bittul* and without *avodah*. Conversely, the choice of the King depends on one’s efforts to inter-
nalize one’s essential connection with him — for, as explained above, since the connection is an essential part of the person’s being, it must permeate every dimension of his personality.

That, however, presents an almost insurmountable challenge: the essential connection with G-d is transcendent, whereas we are limited mortals, whose minds cannot comprehend the infinite.

Chassidic thought\textsuperscript{11} explains that the challenge can be overcome because a person’s individual strivings toward this goal are facilitated by the efforts of “the shepherds of faith” whom G-d has apportioned to the Jewish people. Just as in a simple sense, a shepherd enables his sheep to find the nourishment appropriate for them, so too, “a shepherd of faith” enables faith to be internalized by providing nourishment for the conscious development of his flock until their minds are aligned with their G-dly essence.

In that vein, the maamar cites the Midrash on the verse, “For the chief musician, by David, a prayer of remembrance.”\textsuperscript{12} The Midrash offers the analogy of a king who one day grew angry with his sheep. He drove them away, broke open the corral, and dismissed the shepherd. After time passed, he gathered together the sheep, rebuilt the corral, but made no mention of the shepherd. The shepherd protested: “The sheep are gathered together; the corral is rebuilt. Why am I not mentioned?”

This is what chassidim meant when they identified the call, “I will choose the king,” with their bond with the Rebbe. They understood that for them to carry out the avodah called for by the maamar, the influence of a shepherd is needed. They did not want merely to be carried away with the intense spiritual energy that the maamar generated. They wanted to make it their own. And the role of the shepherd is to make that happen.

\textsuperscript{11} See the maamar entitled VeKibeil HaYehudim 5687 [1927], translated in Defiance and Devotion (Kehot, N.Y., 5756/1996), and the maamar entitled VeAtah Tetzaveh 5741 [1981], translated below in this text (p. 343ff.).

\textsuperscript{12} Midrash Tehillim, cited by Rashi on Tehillim 70:1.

It is customary to recite the kapitel of Tehillim whose chapter number corresponds to the years of one’s life. (See the letter of the Rebbe Rayatz published in Kovetz Tehillim and in his Igros Kodesh, letter #3355, Heb. Vol. 10, p. 53.) A footnote appended to his Igros Kodesh (letter #1069, Heb. Vol. 4, p. 429) states that it is customary for chassidim to recite the Rebbe’s kapitel as well as their own. Hence, chassidim began to recite this kapitel daily on 11 Nissan of the year the maamar was delivered, which was 5731 (1971).
THE ULTIMATE SHEPHERD

The Midrash cited directly above is describing the era of Mashiach. In that time, “The world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the ocean bed,”¹³ an all-encompassing revelation of G-dliness. It is possible that a person will be overwhelmed by the abundance of goodness — material and spiritual — that will characterize that era and thus be lulled into passivity. Those who “choose the King” will not be content with the mere appreciation of those revelations, but instead will endeavor to internalize them and have them permeate their beings entirely.

This verse is part of the description of the sacrifices brought by the princes of the tribes of the Jewish people in connection with the dedication of the Sanctuary in the desert. The Sanctuary was dedicated on the first of Nissan. On that day, and on each of the eleven subsequent days, one of the princes of the Jewish people brought sacrificial offerings. On the eleventh day, the prince of the tribe of Asher offered his sacrifices.

Referring to that verse, the Midrash states:

All the tribes were given names that reflect the redemption of Israel and her praise. Asher (אשה) was named for the sake of the redemption of Israel, as it is written: “And all the nations shall praise you, for you will be a land of desire,” says G-d, Commander of legions.”

This praise is associated with redemption, because it is only in the Era of the Redemption that the nations will wholeheartedly praise the Jewish people.

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And Asher was named for Israel’s praise, as it is written: “Fortunate (אשרי) is the nation whose lot is this; fortunate is the nation whose G-d is the L-rd.”

Ashrei, “fortunate” in Hebrew, shares the same root letters as the name Asher.

Israel’s good fortune rests solely on her choice of the Holy One, blessed be He, to be her G-d and G-d’s choice of her to be His cherished nation.

Therefore when the prince of Asher came to offer his sacrifices, he offered those sacrifices in recognition of G-d’s choice of Israel over all the nations, as it is written: “And G-d has chosen you this day to be His cherished people.”

The passage requires explanation:

Initially, the Midrash states that the good fortune of Israel is that they chose – and continue to choose – the Holy One, blessed be He.

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4. Tehillim 144:15.
5. See Devarim 26:18. The Midrash quotes the verse slightly differently from the manner in which it appears in Devarim.
Though the Midrash continues by saying that G-d chose the Jewish people, that appears to be mentioned as a secondary point.

This is also reflected in the prooftext used to illustrate this point: “Fortunate is the nation whose G-d is the L-rd.” This is comparable to the Jews’ choice of the Holy One, blessed be He, “to be their G-d.”

Afterwards, however, the Midrash states that the sacrifice of the tribe of Asher (who was so named because of Israel’s good fortune) was brought because the Holy One, blessed be He, chose Israel.

It is thus necessary to understand why the focus was switched from the Jewish people’s choice of G-d to G-d’s choice of the Jewish people.

It is also necessary to understand why the term “choice” is used.

The term “choice” is relevant when one chooses between two equal entities or between two entities whereby each possesses an advantage the other lacks.

If one entity is clearly preferable over the other, it is not appropriate to say that the preferable entity is chosen. On the contrary, one is forced, as it were, to select it because of its superiority. Doing otherwise would not make sense. The term “choice” is appropriate only where there is no reason compelling one to choose one article over the other.

Why then is the term “choice” used to describe Israel’s choice of the Holy One, blessed be He, over false gods?

6. Note Rashi’s commentary to Devarim, op. cit.: “I have separated you from false gods,” indicating that there is a clear distinction.
A similar question applies regarding G-d’s choice of Israel.

Since Israel is incomparably superior to all other nations, how can it be said that the Holy One, blessed be He, chose Israel?

Tanya states that the phrase “And You chose us from all nations and tongues” refers to the body which, in its physical form, appears to resemble the bodies of the nations.

I.e., it is inappropriate to use the term “choice” regarding the souls of the Jewish people, because the Jews’ souls are obviously higher. The body of a Jew, however, resembles that of a non-Jew and hence, in that context, the term “choice” is relevant.

Explanation is also required here.

(Seemingly,) the fact that the bodies of the Jewish people resemble the bodies of the non-Jews (externally) does not sufficiently explain why the term “choice” is used regarding G-d’s choice of the Jewish people.

There is a fundamental difference between the bodies of the Jewish people and the...
bodies of non-Jews. The source of the life-force of a Jewish body is *kelipas nogah*, i.e., the source of the existence of permissible substances whose G-dly spark can be revealed in a direct manner by utilizing them for a holy purpose. The source of the life-force of a body of a non-Jew is the three impure *kelipos*, the source of those substances whose G-dly spark cannot be revealed in an ordinary manner.9

Now, for a person on the physical plane, it is appropriate to say that the selection of one body over the other stems from choice because we are not capable of distinguishing between entities on the basis of their spiritual source. G-d, however, obviously appreciates this distinction. Why then is His selection of the Jewish people termed “choice”? One would think that the positive quality even their bodies inherently possess would necessitate their selection.

**SUMMARY**

Commenting on the sacrifices brought by the princes of the tribes for the dedication of the Sanctuary in the desert, the *Midrash* associates the sacrifices brought by the prince of Asher with “Israel’s good fortune.” It links that good fortune with Israel’s “choice of the Holy One, blessed be He, to be her G-d and G-d’s choice of her to be His cherished nation.” This presents somewhat of a difficulty because the *Midrash* first states that the good fortune of Israel is that they chose G-d, and afterwards, it speaks of G-d’s choice of Israel. Also, the use of the term “choice” is problematic. That term is appropriate when speaking of two entities that are equal or when each possesses an advantage the other lacks. Seemingly, it is not appropriate to speak of choosing G-d over false deities, or to speak of choosing the Jews over other nations.

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The above can be understood by prefacing with an explanation of the verse. “G-d is my portion,” says my soul.”

On this verse, the Midrash comments:

To illustrate with an analogy: a king entered a country accompanied by dukes, prefects, and commanders. …

One person said: “I will choose a duke as my patron.” Another said: “I will choose a prefect as my patron.” And still another said: “I will choose a commander as my patron.” I.e., they wanted to attach themselves to one of the officers so that he would be their benefactor.

There was a clever person among them who said: “I will choose the king, because the others are all subject to replacement, while the king is not subject to replacement.”

In the analogue, there are gentile nations who serve the sun and others who serve the moon. … Israel, by contrast, serves only the Holy One, blessed be He. This is the intent of the verse: “G-d is my portion,’ says my soul.”

11. Eichah Rabbah to the verse.
There are well-known explanations regarding the details of the Midrash.12

For, on the surface, its intent requires explanation:

Everyone, even one who is not clever, even a very young child,13 knows that the king is greater than the duke or the other officers. Why then would “cleverness” be required to choose the king?

Also, the rationale given for choosing the king requires explanation.

Even if the position of the duke and the other officers would be permanent and they would not be subject to replacement, it is obvious that the king is greater than they.

[This is certainly true according to the well-known explanation14 of the verse:15 “From his shoulders up, he was taller than all the people.”]

The verse refers to King Shaul, the first of Israel’s kings. The spiritual implications, however, apply to all proper monarchs. They possess inner qualities that are inherently loftier than those of their subjects.

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12. See the maamar entitled Es Havayah Amarta (Or HaTorah, Ki Savo, pp. 1072, 1083) and in Sefer HaMaamarim 5630, p. 291); Biurei Zohar of the Tzemach Tzedek, p. 248ff.; Sefer HaMaamarim 5660, p. 11.

13. This is the wording used in Or HaTorah, op. cit. and Sefer HaMaamarim 5660, op. cit.


15. I Shmuel 9:2.
Implied is that the king’s shoulders, i.e., his emotions that are drawn down from the intellect in his head and which influence his lower levels, are higher than the heads (i.e., the intellect) of the people at large.

The king’s inherent superiority places him in a different category than the entire nation.

This includes even the nation’s most elevated officers, including the dukes, prefects, and commanders.

Why then is it necessary to state the rationale that all the officers “are subject to replacement”? Seemingly, the king should be chosen in any case because of his superior qualities.

SUMMARY

On the verse, “‘G-d is my portion,’ says my soul,” the Midrash offers an analogy:

A king entered a country accompanied by dukes, prefects, and commanders.... One person said: “I will choose a duke as my patron.” Another said: “I will choose a prefect as my patron.” And still another said: “I will choose a commander as my patron.” There was a clever person among them who said: “I will choose the king, because the others are all subject to replacement, while the king is not subject to replacement.”

In the analogue, there are gentile nations who serve the sun and others who serve the moon.... Israel, by contrast, serves only the Holy One, blessed be He. This is the intent of the verse: “‘G-d is my portion,’ says my soul.”

The Midrash provokes questions:

a) Why must one be “clever” to choose the king? Seemingly, choosing him...
should be obvious.

b) The rationale given for choosing the king – because all the officers “are subject to replacement” – requires explanation. Shouldn’t the king be chosen in any case because of his superior qualities?
On the surface, the above can be explained based on the well-known concept\(^{17}\) that in the early generations, the people who worshiped the stars and the constellations, i.e., the Zodiac constellations which are associated with (and seen as representations of) different spiritual forces did not think that the stars could generate these blessings independently. They knew that the sustenance conveyed to the earth through the stars and the constellations (as implied by the verse:\(^{18}\) “With the goodness of the sun’s crops and with the goodness of the moon’s yield,”) is not brought forth by them independently.

Many have difficulty relating to these concepts because the worship of the stars and the constellations has, thank G-d, to a large extent disappeared from contemporary society. Nevertheless, the concepts are still relevant, for, as will be explained, the intent is not only the actual stars and the constellations, but rather all the intermediaries through which G-dly blessings\(^{19}\) are conveyed to the earth and its inhabitants. The service – at least in a figurative sense – of such intermediaries is unfortunately still widely prevalent in our times.

\(^{17}\) See Derech Mitzvoscha, p. 6a ff.; see also Rambam, Hilchos Avodas Kochavim 1:1.

\(^{18}\) Devarim 33:14.

\(^{19}\) The term “blessings” is being used as a translation of the Hebrew term שפע. That term literally means “flow,” as in the flow of water from one body of water to another. Often, it is translated as “influence.” Throughout the maamar, it will be translated as blessings, sustenance, or prosperity.
Instead, it is the Holy One, blessed be He, who conveys sustenance through them.

Where these people erred, however, was in thinking that the sustenance which G-d conveys through the stars and the constellations is transmitted by their choice.

Hence, since according to their misconception, the stars and the constellations – and, by extension, the entire array of intermediaries in the natural order – have the power of choice, these people felt that the intermediaries deserve to be served.

They did not know the truth: that the stars and the constellations have no free choice at all and are only like an axe in the hands of the chopper.\(^{20}\)

This was the reason they bowed down to the stars and the constellations and served them.

In Chassidus,\(^{21}\) it is explained that this error (thinking that the intermediary powers have the choice whether to convey sustenance or not) is not considered the worship of false deities, but rather shituf, associating G-d with other powers, considering that He works in “partnership” with them, as it were. According to certain authorities, such a conception of G-d’s relationship with other powers is permitted to non-Jews. The further error committed by subsequent idolaters (explained later on in the text of the maamar) was that G-d abandoned the earth and relegated the authority over it to the stars. This is, by contrast, the worship of false deities itself.

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\(^{20}\) Cf. Yeshayahu 10:15.

\(^{21}\) See the maamar entitled Es Havayah HaAmarta, 5678, sec. 3 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5678, p. 414); the maamar entitled Kol HaMaarich, 5686, sec. 4, (Sefer HaMaamarim 5686, p. 157ff.); and the maamar entitled Mayim Rabbim, 5717 (Sefer HaMaamarim Melukat, Vol. 1, p. 54).
According to their mistaken conception, (the sustenance drawn down through the stars and the constellations was dependent on the free choice of those celestial bodies).

Therefore, the people thought, it is appropriate to thank them,

following the logic of the saying: "The wine belongs to the owner, but the waiter deserves favor," i.e., although the wine does not belong to the waiter, he deserves recognition for his efforts in serving it.

In Chassidus, another example is given to illustrate this concept: Our Sages state that there are three partners in the birth of a child: the two parents who provide the cells from which the fetus develops, and G-d Who gives the fetus the soul through which it lives. Obviously, G-d's share of the partnership is much greater, for we see that the physical act itself cannot generate life. Nevertheless, since the parents have a choice as to whether or not to conceive the child, they are considered as partners and the child is obligated to honor them. (Here we are speaking about the obligation of honoring one's parents that stems from the fact that they have given their children the gift of life. Obviously, parents also deserve honor for many other reasons including their efforts in raising their children and sustaining them throughout their lives.)

This concept does not apply to the stars and the other intermediaries through which G-d grants sustenance to this world. Although they do convey vitality, they do so without any independent choice. They are merely instruments through which G-d acts. As such, they are not deserving of any honor or favor, as are a waiter or one's parents.

22. Bava Kama 92b.
23. See Or HaTorah, Yisro, Vol. 8, p. 303ff.; Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 36, p. 92ff. See also the sources mentioned in fn. 21.
Furthermore, because of their mistaken conception that the stars and the constellations have free choice, they thought that by serving them, i.e., through such service, they could ingratiate themselves with them and they would motivate them to grant them greater prosperity.

This led to their committing an even greater error: the thought that G-d abandoned the earth, relegating the authority over it to the stars and the constellations, and that they alone control the earth’s destiny.

To illustrate by analogy: these individuals thought that the situation resembled a king who appointed officers to run a country.

Now, it is true that the officers’ authority over the country came about because the king appointed them, i.e., they recognize that the king is the ultimate authority and it is only because of him that they have power.

Nevertheless, once they were appointed, it is they who govern the country.

making decisions independently. As such, there is reason to worship them in an attempt to curry favor with them.

and the king does not involve himself

(except on rare occasions when extreme measures are necessary).

[Both types of errors described above are included in our Sages’ statement\(^{26}\) that the nations of the world refer to G-d as “the G-d of gods,” i.e., they conceive of their false deities as gods, but acknowledge that G-d is “the G-d of gods.”

For even those who believe that G-d abandoned the earth – and relegated the authority over it to the stars and the constellations – refer to G-d as “the G-d of gods.”

They acknowledge that He is greater than those bodies and rules over them.

Moreover, they realize that the very fact that (according to their mistaken conception) the stars and the constellations are deities

and have the authority to control the earth and convey sustenance to it,

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\(^{26}\) Menachos 110a.
כי זה, בדרומת שרי המלך שמוגנים והמדיארים(KP) المتحدة העולם ברווח זה. לאוים, אם השתייכות השמיים מאכדורים ברווח זה על ידי הזכוכית המ pueda הזה בבריחים, נכלל (בדקות) בעליא רואים, הם זה השוכלים לשון דבר ומדיארים רואים(ל(language desconne)
האר על זה) הם עיניו של الشريف – אלהים. רשות שנים וראות—they are therefore considered gods.

This did not come about because these bodies have independent authority.

Instead, their worshipers recognize that G-d gave these celestial bodies the authority over existence, as in the analogy of the officers of the king who rule the country because the king appointed them.

Thus, they recognize G-d as “the G-d of gods.” They err in their conception that the intermediaries He appointed also have authority and are therefore “gods.”

Conversely, even the error that the stars and the constellations are significant because the sustenance that the stars convey from the Holy One, blessed be He, comes through their choice, is included (abstractly)

as part of the approach that refers to G-d as “the G-d of gods.”

Though these people’s error is less grievous than that made by those who worship the intermediaries themselves, nevertheless, they can also be considered as conceiving of the intermediaries as “gods.”

I.e., in a general sense, the conception of G-d as “the G-d of gods” applies only to those who believe that G-d abandoned the earth and relegated the authority over it to the stars and the constellations, but seemingly, it does not apply to those people whose error is that the intermediaries have independent choice. However, on a more abstract level, the conception of G-d as “the G-d of gods” can also be applied to the latter category.

For the very fact that the intermediaries can do as they desire (i.e., convey or withhold sustenance) would imply that they have a certain measure of authority, and are therefore considered gods.
Negating the concept of other gods altogether

In Chassidus,27 commenting on the commandment:28 “You shall not have other gods before Me,” it is explained that the term elokim (translated as “gods”) means “rulers.” In the explanation there, it is stated that the stars and the constellations are not agents to whom it would be appropriate to honor, like the favor given to the waiter mentioned above. Instead, they are merely like an axe in the hand of the Chopper.

On this basis, it is possible to explain the nature of the wisdom of the clever person who (in the analogy) said: “I will choose the king.”

The fact that the Jews know the truth – that all the intermediaries through which sustenance descends are merely like an axe in the hand of the Chopper – comes as a result of their great knowledge,

that they perceive the inner truth.

For from a surface perspective, the reason it appears that the sustenance comes as a result of the stars and the constellations

In Chassidus,29 it is explained that “lowly creatures that possess neither knowledge nor

27. Note Or HaTorah, Yisro, p. 918.
29. See Sefer HaMaamarim 5678, p. 357.
understanding judge only according to external appearances. Therefore they give importance to the intermediaries.” I.e., since it appears that the intermediaries are sources of sustenance, a person who does not think deeply will honor them.

To understand the relevance of the maamar’s content, it is necessary to go beyond the discussion of the stars and the constellations and focus on what they represent: intermediaries to convey G-dly blessings to the world at large. The maamar mentions three approaches as to how to relate to such intermediaries:

a) the approach of the later worshipers of false deities who maintain that G-d abandoned the world to the stars and the constellations. According to this approach, what is most important is the intermediary. These individuals recognize that G-d is “the G-d of gods” and can control and change the natural order if He so desires, but that is a rare occurrence. Instead, they view the intermediaries as those who control the world in practice and who are therefore deserving of respect and homage. In ancient times, the people’s respect for the intermediaries was expressed by making statues for these “deities” and bowing down to them. In contemporary terms, it is expressed through submission to the powers that one perceives as controlling one’s sustenance, be it one’s employer, the larger network of powers that control commerce and finance, or the myriad intermediate levels in between.

b) the approach of the original worshipers of false deities who maintained that indeed, it is G-d Who gives the intermediaries power, but the intermediaries have free choice regarding the dispensation of the Divine blessings they convey. According to this approach, although the intermediaries are not the ultimate source of sustenance man receives, they deserve a certain degree of deference, and command a measure of respect. To explain by analogy, sight is one of the powers of the soul. We cannot say that it is a function of the body, because without a soul, the body cannot see. Nevertheless, the soul sees by way of the medium of the body. Without the body and the eyes, the organ of sight, the soul cannot see. In this instance, there is an interrelationship between the body and the soul: e.g., an improvement of the functioning of the physical eye enhances the soul’s power to see.

To relate the concept to the analogue: these people acknowledge that the only reason an intermediary has any importance is that G-d chose it. Nevertheless,
they erroneously argue that since G-d chose this intermediary, it should be given the honor and respect due it. To translate the above into contemporary terms: A person might think, for example, that if he spends more time in meditation during prayer, his business affairs will suffer. Likewise, if he gives generously to tzedakah, he may be left with less money to invest. What prompts him to feel that he must compromise his religious priorities? His conception that the intermediaries – the powers that appear to control his financial future – have independent importance.

c) The true approach: that all the intermediaries are merely an axe in the hand of the Chopper. According to this understanding, a person uses intermediaries to earn his sustenance, but only because G-d so commanded. The natural ways and means he employs are, in and of themselves, of no importance in his eyes. They are nothing more than a means of fulfilling G-d’s will.

This explains the teaching of our Sages on the verse, “He shall be the faithfulness of your times…. ” The Sages teach that here, emunas (“faithfulness”) alludes to Seder Zera’im which is the section of the Mishnah that deals mainly with the laws applying to agriculture, for a Jewish farmer “believes in He Who is the Life of all the worlds – and sows.”

True enough, it is a natural phenomenon, a fact, that the sprouting of a seed follows sowing. It does not matter whether the farmer is Jewish or not, or even if the seed fell to the ground without any human agency. The earth by nature promotes germination, regardless. (Indeed, this intrinsic nature of the earth is constant, as in the verse, “seed time and harvest… will not cease.”) Nevertheless, nature does not command any independent status in the mind of a Jew. When he sows, he does not do so because according to the laws of nature sowing leads to germination, but only because “he believes in He Who is the Life of all the worlds – and sows.” That is why he sows.

Following this approach, a person will not ascribe any independent importance to the conduit that he makes for G-d’s blessing. He will involve himself with it only in order to fulfill the Creator’s will, as reflected in the promise, “And G-d your L-rd will bless you in everything that you do,” which implies that one should create a medium in nature for his livelihood.

When viewed from that perspective, his involvement in these natural mediums

30. Shabbos 31a; see Tosafos, s.v. Emunas, citing the Talmud Yerushalmi.
33. Bereishis 8:22.
34. Shmos 15:18.
becomes a mode of Divine service. Accordingly, conflicts like those involving giving tzedakah or meditation in prayer mentioned above will not arise, because one's religious obligations and his efforts to earn his livelihood are seen as two complementary expressions of a single thrust: fulfilling G-d's will.35

The awareness possessed by the Jews: that the intermediaries are like an axe in the hand of the Chopper,

stems from their great knowledge.

SUMMARY

A possible reason for choosing false deities (the duke or the other officers) can be explained based on the rationale as to why the initial pagans worshiped the stars and the constellations in the first place. They did not think that the stars could generate sustenance independently. They knew it derived from G-d. Nevertheless, they thought that the stars and the constellations had free choice as to whether or not to dispense the sustenance. Hence, they thought it appropriate to thank them, following the logic of the saying: “The wine belongs to the owner, but the waiter deserves favor.” They did not know the truth: that the stars and the constellations have no free choice and are only like an axe in the hands of the chopper. They thought that by serving the stars they could ingratiate themselves with them and motivate them to grant them greater prosperity.

This led to their committing an even greater error: having the thought that G-d had abandoned the earth, relegating the authority over it to the stars and the constellations. These individuals erroneously concluded that the situation resembled a king who appointed officers to run a country. While the officers’ authority over the country derives from the king, in practice, it is the officers who govern the country, making decisions independently. As such, there is reason to “worship” them in an attempt to curry favor with them. Both these errors are included in our Sages’ statement that the nations of the world refer to G-d as “the G-d of gods.”

35. See Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 18, p. 294ff., translated in As a Father Loves His Only Son, p. 71ff., where these concepts are explained in detail.
The clever person (in the analogy, the Jews) who says: “I will choose the king,” makes that choice because he knows the truth – that all the intermediaries through which sustenance is given are merely like an axe in the hand of the Chopper Who controls every aspect of existence. The intermediaries, on the other hand, have no independent power or choice.
A further concept can be derived from the analogy given in the Midrash of a king, dukes, and other officers.

In the analogy – in contrast to the analogue – the dukes and the other officers have free choice.

The analogy does not truly reflect the analogue, for, in truth, as explained in sec. 3, the intermediaries through which G-d conveys His influence do not possess free choice.

Therefore it is logical to assume that the choice of the duke (“I will choose a duke as my patron”) will motivate the duke to convey a greater amount of influence to those who choose him.

I.e., in appreciation of the service of those who choose them as their patron, these officials will grant them favors.

[In the analogue, this is not so.

The service one renders to the stars and the constellations is of absolutely no benefit because these celestial bodies do not have free choice.

They are merely “an axe in the hands of the Chopper.”]

From this, it can be understood that the clever person’s decision, “I will choose the king.”

36. To offer an analogy: It’s like flipping a switch that is not connected to an electric current.
is motivated by the fact that serving the king is of greater import to him than the benefit (i.e., sustenance) he will receive from the officers.

To refer to the analogue:

The primary reason the nations of the world serve the intermediaries that convey Divine influence, e.g., the sun, the moon, etc., while the Jewish people serve G-d is

(not that the gentiles err and maintain that the intermediaries, the stars, the constellations, and the like have free choice,

while the Jews, by contrast, know the truth that the intermediaries are merely “an axe in the hands of the Chopper.”

I.e., although the explanation in the previous section is true, it does not reflect the fundamental motivation for the conduct of the non-Jews and the Jews.

Instead, the fundamental reason is that) what is most important for the nations of the world is that they receive sustenance,

and therefore, they seek to curry favor with the intermediaries who dispense the sustenance by serving them.

while what is most important for the Jews is serving the King. 37

37. See Sefer HaMaamarim 5686, p. 136.
In one of his *maamarim*, the Rebbe Rayatz focuses on the analogue, describing a person who is overly engrossed in his business affairs. He compares that person's preoccupation in business to bowing down to the stars and the constellations. Why does the person conduct himself in this manner? Because he thinks that the business activities with which he is involved are the source of the sustenance he receives. He does not appreciate that G-d is the source of his prosperity and his business activities are merely intermediaries.

In developing this concept, the Rebbe Rayatz states: 38 “All his thoughts concern only his own benefit; i.e., they are for the sake of his body, his wealth, and his possessions.” From these words, it appears that not only is the person's preoccupation with earning his livelihood, even to the extent of compromising his spiritual values, comparable to the worship of false deities, but the very thoughts that “are only about his own benefit” are comparable to the worship of false deities.

Previously, the emphasis was that the conception of the intermediaries as having independent importance was comparable to accepting a false deity. At this point, the *maamar* introduces a new concept: that self-concern itself is comparable to the worship of false deities.

To explain the concept:

The fundamental reason that the gentile nations serve the stars and the constellations is (as explained in the *maamarim*), 39

that in order to receive influence from holiness, *bittul* is necessary.

For, as stated in *Tanya*, 40 G-dliness only rests on entities characterized by *bittul*, the willingness to rise above self-concern and dedicate oneself to a higher purpose.

38. Ibid., p. 137.
39. I.e., the maamarim cited in sec. 2, fn. 12 above (Or HaTorah, loc. cit., pp. 1072ff., 1084) and in Sefer HaMaamarim 5630, p. 292ff.; Biurei Zohar, loc. cit.; Sefer HaMaamarim 5660, p. 11ff. See also Siddur Im Dach, p. 142c; Derech Mitzvoscha, p. 6a, et al.
40. Tanya, ch. 6.
Since they do not desire to nullify themselves, people at large choose to serve false deities or other intermediaries which they believe to be sources of sustenance.

For to receive influence from these intermediaries, bittul is not required, as the Zohar states:41 “A spirit of impurity is continuously found where there is no cost and there is emptiness,

as it is written:42 ‘… We ate in Egypt without charge.’”

Commenting on this verse, the Sifri (quoted by Rashi) interprets “without charge” as “without mitzvos,” i.e., without service. Expanding on that interpretation, it can be inferred that influence from the nether side (Egypt) is conveyed without cost, i.e., without the cost of going beyond oneself.

A second reason why the non-Jewish nations seek to receive their sustenance from the stars and the constellations44

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41. Zohar, Vol. II, p. 128a; see the lengthy exposition in Siddur Im Dach (p. 56d) on the verse: “Do not place your trust in generous men.” There the Alter Rebbe explains that “generous men” refers to kelipah, because influence from kelipah is given “freely.” In contrast, influence from holiness is given commensurate to a person’s Divine service. See sec. 5 of this maamar.

42. Bamidbar 11:5.

43. L’umas zeh, lit. “the opposite side,” i.e., the forces of kelipah, the source for evil, which oppose holiness.

44. This rationale is explicitly stated in the Biurei Zohar of the Tzemach Tzedek, p. 249.
The prosperity that emanates from that source is dispensed without any calculations.

There are two implications of the statement that the prosperity that derives from the or makkif is dispensed without any calculations:

a) It does not matter whether the recipient is worthy or not. For as explained above, since the influence is not internalized, the worthy and the unworthy are equally capable of benefiting from it.

b) The influence is granted in abundance, as befits light that reflects G-d’s infinity.
To clarify the contrast: Influence from the forces of holiness is internalized within the recipient. Hence, the influence that is given is commensurate with the refinement (through Divine service) of the recipient and is thus limited. The influence from kelipah, by contrast, reflects the infinite nature of the encompassing light and hence, it is granted in abundance.\(^{45}\)

On this basis, we can appreciate the unique positive quality and “cleverness” of the Jewish people who serve only the Holy One, blessed be He.

To receive sustenance from the realm of holiness, service and labor is required to make oneself a fit medium to receive that sustenance.

Moreover, (initially) the blessings are measured, meted out in a manner commensurate with the Divine service performed.

Nevertheless, for the sake of serving G-d alone, the Jews are willing to forego the abundant (material) prosperity that could be received.

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\(^{45}\) See the lengthy explanations of this concept in Torah Or, p. 61a; Kuntres U’Maayon, Discourse 8, ch. 2ff.
[For even the Jewish people can (temporarily) receive influence from the nether side.

In Chassidus, it is explained that, ultimately, when the Jews’ essence will be revealed, a Jew will be unable to receive influence from the realm of kelipah. Since his essence is G-dly, his nurture can only come from holiness. See sec. 5 below.

Nevertheless, when a Jew sins, he draws down energy into the forces of kelipah. And since he draws down this energy to them, he becomes, temporarily, a recipient of its influence.

Indeed, when doing so, as explained, since the Jews are the ones who convey Divine energy to the nether side, energy which would not otherwise be granted to those forces, they receive the first and choicest portion.

Nevertheless, they are willing to forego this because they cherish the limited influence they receive from the realm of holiness more.

SUMMARY

A deeper explanation can be offered for the non-Jews’ choice of the intermediaries. The motivation is not intellectual; i.e., that the non-Jews make an error in logic and maintain that the intermediaries have free choice. Instead, their fundamental motivation is to receive sustenance, while what is most important for the Jews is to serve the King.

In order to receive beneficence from G-d, bittul (self-nullification) is necessary. In

46. See Kuntres U’Maayon, the end of Discourse 6; Discourse 7, ch. 4; Discourse 11, ch. 2.
47. See Tanya, Iggeres HaTeshuvah, ch. 6; Kuntres U’Maayon, Discourse 7, loc. cit.
contrast, people at large choose to serve false deities because they do not desire to nullify themselves.

A second reason to seek beneficence from the intermediaries is that the beneficence derived from them is quantitatively greater, for its source is in G-d’s encompassing light that is above the framework of the Spiritual Cosmos and hence, has no limits. On this basis, we can appreciate the unique positive quality and “cleverness” of the Jewish people who serve only G-d. To receive sustenance from the realm of holiness, service and labor is required. Moreover, the blessings are meted out in a manner commensurate with the Divine service performed. Nevertheless, for the sake of serving G-d, the Jews are willing to forego the abundant material prosperity that could be received were they to serve the intermediaries.
Initially, a question was raised concerning the *Midrash* which states that there were people who chose intermediaries: Why does a person have to be “clever” to choose the king? Seemingly anyone — even a young child — realizes that the king is greater. In resolution, it was explained in sec. 3 that those who chose the intermediaries did so because they believed that the intermediaries possess free choice and could independently decide to convey sustenance or withhold it. It requires cleverness to realize that the intermediaries are merely an axe in the hand of the Chopper and everything comes from Above.

In sec. 4, a deeper resolution was offered: that the sustenance granted by the intermediaries has its source in the *sitra achra*, which derives nurture from the *or makkif*, G-d’s encompassing light. As a result: a) it is possible to receive that light even when one is unworthy; and b) the sustenance they grant is abundant. Nevertheless, the unique positive quality of the Jewish people is that they “choose the King.” They desire to receive sustenance from G-d directly, even though Divine service is required and as such, the sustenance will be meted out in a measured manner.

At this point, there are implied questions in the conceptual flow of the *maamar*: Certainly, the desire to receive sustenance from G-d directly reflects a higher level of spiritual refinement. Why, however, does the analogy in the *Midrash* associate such a choice with “cleverness”? What role does wisdom play in the process? In this and the subsequent sections, the *maamar* resolves these questions.

The rationale the *Midrash* gives as to why the “clever person” chooses the king and not one of his officers is that “the others are all subject to replacement, while the king is not subject to replacement.”

As mentioned above, this rationale requires explanation, for one would think that the choice of the king should be obvious.
the sustenance that comes from the sitra achra
lit., “the other side,” one of the kabbalistic terms for evil –
(even though it is more abundant than the sustenance that comes from holiness) –

Since, as explained in the previous section: a) the sustenance received from the nether side has its source in G-d’s encompassing light which reflects His infinity; and b) it is given freely, without being measured by the scales of judgment, it is more abundant than the blessings that derive from the realm of holiness. Nevertheless, it

is merely temporary, something that will not endure.

For after the task of refinement is completed and the sparks of G-dliness that fell into kelipah –

Our Sages relate\(^{48}\) that G-d “would build worlds and destroy them.” It is explained that this refers to the world of Tohu. This was a very elevated framework of existence in which the lights were very powerful while the keilim (vessels) were insubstantial. For this reason, not only were the vessels unable to contain the light, they were shattered by it. After they shattered, their sparks fell and were filtered through the lower levels of the Spiritual Cosmos and dominated by the powers of kelipah, because the higher an entity’s spiritual potential, the lower it falls in its descent.

(and from which kelipah derives its vitality) are refined and elevated,

These sparks which stem from lofty levels of G-dliness are the source for the en-

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ergy present in kelipah. (Indeed, their loftiness explains why the energy of kelipah is so great.)

kelipah will be nullified entirely.49

Chassidus50 explains concepts similar to the above when interpreting the verses:51 “Do not place your trust in generous men…. Nevertheless, when his spirit departs… his plans perish.” The term “generous men” refers to kelipah, because largesse from kelipah is given “freely,” without the necessity to refine oneself. Nevertheless, “when his spirit departs” — when the spirit of holiness that stems from the 288 sparks of G-dliness from the realm of Tohu that fell into kelipah are elevated — “his plans perish,” the existence of kelipah will cease.

To explain: “the spirit,” i.e., the vitality of kelipah, is from holiness. In the present framework of existence, that G-dly spark is “swallowed up” and in exile,52 i.e., controlled by kelipah, as stated later in the maamar. After the task of refinement is completed, the sparks will be elevated and the existence of kelipah will cease. Since, in essence, kelipah is not desired by G-d, its existence will ultimately cease, as it is written:53 “I will cause the spirit of impurity to pass from the earth.” This is the meaning of the Midrash’s statement that the other officers are “subject to replacement.” For ultimately, kelipah has no lasting power.

[Certainly, this, i.e., the fleeting nature of the benefits received from kelipah, applies to the Jewish people, for even in the present era, a Jew can only receive vitality from the nether side temporarily.]

Since a Jew is essentially G-dly – the very opposite of kelipah – he can only derive nurture from kelipah for a limited time.

49. See the maamarim in Or HaTorah, loc. cit., p. 1074 and p. 1085; Sefer HaMaamarim 5630, p. 294; Sefer HaMaamarim 5660, p. 13.
50. See Siddur Im Dach, p. 57a ff.
51. Tehillim 146:3-4.
52. See Tanya, ch. 6.
The converse is also true.

The fact that sustenance from holiness is measured and limited is only true in the present era, before the world has reached its perfected state when G-d’s true intent for existence will be revealed.

Ultimately, after the source of the inward beneficence is revealed – its source being the inner dimension of the encompassing light –

The external dimensions of an entity refer to its functional qualities, the way it expresses itself. Its internal dimension refers to its true intent. Obviously, there is far greater power in an entity’s true intent than in its functional qualities.

The beneficence granted to the side of holiness which derives from the internal dimension of G-dliness,

will be far greater than the abundance that stems from the external dimension of the encompassing light

In the present era, since the material substance of the world has not yet been refined, only the external dimensions of the encompassing light can be drawn down. In the Ultimate Future, however, the world will be refined and made fit to accept even the inner dimensions of that light.

(from which the kelipos can also derive nurture), as explained in sec. 4.
In this vein, our Sages state:54 “If this is what those who transgress G-d’s will receive, certainly, those who fulfill His will, will receive even greater benefit.”

The Talmud relates that Rabbi Akiva and other Sages were traveling to Rome on a mission on behalf of the Jewish people. While still far away from the city, they heard the noise of its revelers. The other Sages wept in mourning at seeing the great joy of the idolaters. Rabbi Akiva laughed and explained his conduct with the quote above.

The rationale is that ultimately, when the world is refined and it will be possible for the inner dimension of the encompassing light to be revealed, the Jews will receive infinitely greater benefit.

This explanation, however, is not sufficient.

For from it, it logically follows that the “clever person’s” choice of the king would also have been made in expectation of the sustenance he would receive.

He realizes that ultimately, “those who fulfill His will, will receive even greater benefit.”

54. Nedarim 50b; the end of tractate Makkos; see Torah Or, p. 61c.
as our Sages say:55 “Who is a wise man? One who sees what will be.”

Thus, according to this explanation, there is no fundamental difference between the two. Both are concerned with their self-benefit. The others make their choice in order to receive immediate, short-term benefit, and “the clever person” has the wisdom to view the larger picture and see the long-term consequences. Nevertheless, according to this explanation, they share the same objective: what is good for themselves.

However, the fact that the Midrash states that Jews “solely serve the Holy One, blessed be He,” because “G-d is my portion,’ says my soul,”

indicates that the “clever person’s” choice of the king is not because of the benefit that he will derive,

but solely because of the king, i.e., because of the bond with the king created by serving him and not because he realizes that he will ultimately receive greater benefit as a result of his service.

The reason the Jews choose G-d even though at present, abundant sustenance is granted to those who violate His will

55. Tamid 32a.
is (not because of the calculation that afterwards, an even greater measure of prosperity will be received by those who fulfill His will.

Rather,) their choice is motivated by the fact that the sustenance granted to those who fulfill His will is given from the inner dimensions of His will; it is His true desire.

The sustenance given to those who violate His will, by contrast, is given as one who throws something over his shoulder to his enemy, against his will.

In Chassidus, it is explained that there are situations when a person is required to give something to an enemy. Nevertheless, the fact that he is required to give to him does not indicate his love for him. Indeed, the opposite is true; he is upset at having to give to his enemy. Hence, even when giving to him, he cannot bear to look at him and therefore throws the article over his shoulder.

Similarly in the analogue, G-d does not desire to give beneficence to the forces of kelipah. Nevertheless, according to the prevailing gestalt of the world, a certain degree of beneficence must be given to them to allow for free choice. Even while bestowing that influence, however, G-d loathes them and does not give to them willingly.

Therefore the Jews desire the sustenance that is given to those who fulfill His will, because

even though it is lesser than that which they would receive from kelipah – it emanates from His inner will and desire.

56. Tanya, ch. 22; Kuntres U’Maaryon, Discourse 2, ch. 2ff.
To use an analogy, it is like a father giving to a son, or a teacher to a favored student, in which instance they give from the depths of their heart, doing so happily, with a beaming countenance.

One might ask: If the clever person’s choice of the king is due to his desire to bond with him, why does the Midrash offer the rationale that all the others are subject to replacement?

According to the above explanation, even if they were not subject to replacement but would endure endlessly, the clever person would in any event choose the king because of his desire to bond with him.

In resolution, the intent of the statement is that the fact that they are all subject to replacement indicates that even at present, while they are in power, they do not represent true existence.

To illustrate with an example from halachah: The water used for the sprinkling of the ashes of the Red Heifer must be “living water,” taken from a spring or river that flows from the depths of the earth and is not dependent on rain water. If a spring dries up once in seven years, it is termed “deceptive water” and is not acceptable for this purpose. Although the river exists, since it will run dry at some point, its existence is not halachically significant. Similarly, in the present instance, although the forces of kelipah exist, their existence is not significant, even at present, since ultimately they will be nullified.

In the analogue, the fact that the stars and the constellations possess vitality that enables them to convey life-energy to the animals and to the nations of the world is not because of their own inherent power, Heaven forbid,

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57. Parah 8:9.
but rather because they derive vitality from the realm of holiness.\footnote{58}

Now, since the vitality that comes from the holiness within them does not become one with them

Since \textit{kelipah} is not characterized by \textit{bittul}, such oneness is impossible.

\begin{itemize}
\item the inherent state of these intermediaries is one of death.\footnote{59}
\item As explained in \textit{Tanya},\footnote{60} the wicked are referred to as “dead”\footnote{61} because their vitality stems from a place of death and impurity.]
\end{itemize}

Their vitality derives from the realm of \textit{kelipah}, which has no inherent vitality.

\begin{itemize}
\item On this basis, we can understand the “clever person’s” statement: “I will choose the king, because all the others are subject to replacement.”
\end{itemize}
He does not desire the prosperity that is drawn down from the place of death and impurity even though it is abundant. Instead, he desires sustenance from the realm of holiness even though it is limited in nature, for he desires to receive from the King Himself.

At the beginning of this section, it was stated that the “clever person’s” choice of the king could have been motivated by his desire for his own benefit. Unlike the others who were shortsighted, however, he looked at the larger picture and realized that ultimately, it would be more beneficial to receive from the king directly than from the intermediaries.

That explanation was rejected because it does not fit the analogue. The Jews’ choice of G-d is because “G-d is my portion,” says my soul,” i.e., they share a bond with the King. In resolution, it was explained that their choice of G-d stems from the realization that He is the truth of existence and the intermediaries are merely temporary. To highlight the difference: the first explanation was dependent on the benefit the person received. The second explanation is dependent on the realization of the truth: that G-dliness is genuine existence and the intermediaries are not.

**SUMMARY**

Section 5 concluded by stating that for the sake of serving G-d, the Jews are willing to forego the abundant material prosperity that could be received from serving the intermediaries. It is necessary to understand the connection between this concept and the rationale given by the Midrash why the “clever person” chooses the king and not one of his officers: because “the others are all subject to replacement, while the king is not subject to replacement.” Also, as mentioned above, this rationale requires explanation, for one would think that the choice of the king should be obvious.

It can be explained that the intent of the Midrash is that the sustenance that stems from the officers comes from the sitra achra, “the other side.” Hence, even though it is more abundant than the sustenance that comes from holiness, it is merely temporary, something that will not endure. For after the task of refinement is completed and the
sparks of G-dliness that fell into kelipah are refined and elevated, kelipah will be nullified entirely. This is especially true for the Jewish people, for even in the present era, a Jew can only receive vitality from the nether side temporarily.

The converse is also true. The fact that sustenance from holiness is measured and limited is only true in the present era, before the world has reached its perfected state when G-d’s true intent for existence will be revealed. Ultimately, the true source of the beneficence granted by G-d in an inward manner will be revealed and it will be manifest that this beneficence is rooted in the inner dimension of the encompassing light. In that future time, the beneficence granted to the side of holiness will be far greater than the abundance that stems from the external dimension of the encompassing light. As our Sages state: “If this is what those who transgress G-d’s will receive, then certainly, those who fulfill His will, will receive even greater benefit.”

This explanation, however, is not sufficient. For from it, it follows that the “clever person’s” choice of the king would also be in expectation of the sustenance he will receive. He realizes that ultimately, “those who fulfill His will, will receive even greater benefit.” The difference between him and those who choose the other officers is that they merely look at the present situation, while he, “the clever person,” thinks about the future. However, the fact that the Midrash states that Jews “solely serve the Holy One, blessed be He,” because “‘G-d is my portion,’ says my soul,” indicates that the “clever person’s” choice of the king is not because of the benefit that he will ultimately derive, but solely because of his desire to bond with the king.

One might ask: If the clever person’s choice of the king is due to his desire to bond with him, why does the Midrash offer the rationale that all the others are subject to replacement?

In resolution: An entity that is “subject to replacement” is not true or genuine. Even while it exists, its existence is not true. By saying, “I will choose the king because all the others are subject to replacement,” the clever man is stating that he does not desire the prosperity that is drawn down from the place of death and impurity even though it is abundant. Instead, he desires sustenance from the realm of holiness even though it is limited in nature, for it is true and genuine, coming from the King’s inner desire.
Further explanation is necessary, for it appears that the “clever person’s” choice of the king is an intellectual decision. This applies even according to the explanation that he is not choosing the king because of his desire for personal benefit, but because of his realization of the king’s eminence.

As a result of this realization, he foregoes the abundant influence that comes from the intermediaries. Thus the “clever person’s” choice of the king appears to stem from his understanding.

Indeed, the Midrash cited describes him as a clever person.

He realizes that since “all the others are subject to replacement,

And thus, as explained in sec. 5, since they are subject to replacement, they do not represent true existence, even when they are in power.

while the king is not subject to replacement,”

I.e., this can be understood even by mortal intellect.

To offer a parallel: In Chassidus, it is explained that ahavah rabbah, “abundant love,” is characterized by a person’s desire for G-d’s Essence and not the radiance of His light, even though bonding with Him on that level will cause the person’s own existence to be

62. See Likkutei Torah, Vayikra, p. 20b.
nullified. Such love is “referred to as being ‘male’ in nature, because it reflects powerful knowledge such that the person chooses what is of fundamental importance and not what is of secondary importance.” Ahavah zuta, a lesser level of love (characterized by a desire for the radiance of G-d’s light so that the person’s existence will remain intact) is “referred to as being ‘female’ in nature, because his knowledge is fickle, i.e., he grants primacy to what is secondary, seeking to receive the radiance of Divine light because he seeks his own self-importance.”

the abundant influence conveyed by the “officers,”

the various intermediaries through which Divine blessings are channeled,

and choose the limited influence that comes from the King Himself.

Nevertheless, from the fact that the Midrash associates the “clever person’s” choice of the king with the verse, “G-d is my portion,’ says my soul,” it appears that the Jews’ choice of G-d stems from their souls (because their souls are “an actual part of G-d from Above”63 and thus seek to cleave to their source because of an innate spiritual desire that transcends intellect.

To explain by analogy: A son desires to cleave to his father not because of his appreciation of the good that his father has done for him or the positive virtues his father possesses, but because of the mere fact that he is his father. They share an essential bond. Similarly, the soul shares a core connection to G-dliness that transcends all reason and logic.

64. Tanya, ch. 2.
Thus there is an apparent contradiction: If the choice comes from the soul’s inherent G-dly nature, how is it connected with the wisdom of the “clever person”? And if the choice is motivated by logic, what connection does it have to the soul’s innate desire for G-dliness?

The core of the resolution is that, as it exists on its own, mortal logic compels a person to desire his own personal benefit.

That is the reason why the nations of the world choose the officers

even though they can also understand that the king is of fundamental importance.

(After all, the rationale that “all the others are subject to replacement

while the king is not subject to replacement”) is a logical imperative that, seemingly, they can also comprehend. Nevertheless,

since their fundamental nature is characterized by yeshus, self-concern,

they do not want to forego the benefit they will receive from the officers.

Their fundamental self-concern prevents them from internalizing the awareness of the truth of G-d’s prominence. Even though they are capable of understanding that G-dliness is the only true existence, that understanding does not affect their fundamental approach to life. Hence, they choose the intermediaries, the entities that appear to provide them with immediate benefit.
Conversely, the reason that Jews recognize that they should forego the benefit they could receive from the officers, and instead, rise above their self-concern and choose G-dliness is because of their souls –

As explained in Tanya,\(^65\) the soul’s desire “to cleave to its root and source in G-d, the Life of lives – even though as a result it will be nothingness and void and have its existence subsumed in G-d entirely” – is a natural drive that transcends intellect. Now, the soul desires to cleave to G-d because He is “the Life of lives” (the ultimate eminence), i.e., something that logic would accept. Nevertheless, since by cleaving to G-d, the soul will become “nothingness and void,” its desire to cling to its source stems from a natural drive that transcends intellect. For a person’s intellect on its own would never desire to entirely obliterate his own selfhood. It is the soul’s essential G-dly nature that motivates such a desire.

On this basis, it is possible to explain the statement cited above,\(^66\) that the reason for the soul’s desire to bond with G-d’s Essence is “powerful knowledge,” i.e., seemingly a motivation stemming from logic, while Tanya states that the soul’s desire to cleave to G-d stems from a natural drive that transcends intellect.\(^67\) The apparent contradiction can be resolved on the basis of the statements that follow in this maamar: that the desire which stems from the soul’s natural drive, a desire that transcends intellect, affects its thinking processes.

\(^{65}\) See Tanya, ch. 19 (cited in Likkutei Torah, loc. cit.).
\(^{66}\) Likkutei Torah, loc. cit.
\(^{67}\) Indeed, the maamar in Likkutei Torah cites the passage from Tanya mentioned above.
For their choice is not motivated by their awareness of G-d’s eminence that “the King is not subject to replacement” – but rather by His Essence.

Nevertheless, their essential bond with G-d affects their thinking processes as well,

In Chassidus, it is explained that: “Because of the essence of the soul’s cleaving to G-d… its power of wisdom is inclined to comprehend the positive nature of G-dliness and choose what is good.”

causing their minds to realize that since G-d is true Being, that He is alive and exists everlastingly

(– i.e., “the King is not subject to replacement” –)

they should forego their own self-concern and choose G-dliness.

SUMMARY

Further explanation is necessary, for it appears that the “clever person’s” choice of the king is an intellectual decision. Even according to the explanation that he is not choosing the king because of his desire for personal benefit, his choice of the king appears to stem from his understanding of the truth of the king’s eminence.

Nevertheless, from the fact that the Midrash associates the “clever person’s” choice of the king with the verse, “‘G-d is my portion,’ says my soul,” it appears that the Jews’ choice of G-d stems from their souls because their souls are “an actual part of G-d from Above.”

The core of the resolution is that, as it exists on its own, mortal logic compels a

68 See Sefer HaMaamarim 5560, p. 16.
person to desire his own personal benefit. That is the reason why the nations of
the world choose the officers even though they can also understand that the king
is of fundamental importance. Since their fundamental nature is characterized by
yeshus, self-concern, they do not want to forego the benefit they will receive from
the intermediaries.

Conversely, the reason that Jews recognize the need to forego the benefit they
could receive from the intermediaries, and instead, rise above their self-concern and
choose G-dliness, is due to their souls’ intrinsic bond with G-d. Nevertheless, their
essential bond with G-d also affects their thinking processes, causing their minds
to realize that since G-d is true Being, they should forego their own self-concern
and choose G-dliness.
Until now, the maamar has explained the analogy of the Midrash, which speaks of “a clever person who said: ‘I will choose the king,’” and the analogue, the Jewish people’s choice of G-d. A difficulty was noted: that the analogy did not parallel the analogue. For in the analogy, it appears that the clever person chooses the king due to that person’s wisdom. Hence, he provides an explanation for his choice: “The others are all subject to replacement, while the king is not subject to replacement.” Nevertheless, in the analogue, when describing the Jewish people’s choice of G-d, the Midrash states that the choice is made because “G-d is my portion, says my soul,” implying that what motivates the choice is not an intellectual rationale but an inherent spiritual bond.

In resolution, it was explained that the essence of the soul affects its intellectual functioning: because of the soul’s inherent spiritual connection to G-dliness, its intellect operates in a manner that enables it to appreciate the advantage of choosing G-d.

As explained previously, it is possible for a person to attain an intellectual appreciation that G-dliness is the ultimate truth and yet, because of one’s own self-interest, he will seek to receive sustenance from the intermediaries. In contrast, the soul’s essential connection with G-d causes one’s thinking processes to rise above self-interest and understand that it is desirable to choose G-d even though it may conflict with its self-interest.

The question, however, remains: If the choice is a reflection of the soul’s essential, inherent connection to G-d, why is it necessary for this choice to be filtered through the person’s intellect? Let it shine forth with its essential power. This question is resolved through the explanations in this and the subsequent sections.

As mentioned above, the soul’s choice of G-d stems from the essence of the soul, a level that transcends intellect. Perhaps one can add that when this choice is drawn down and has an effect on the intellect, it elevates the soul to a loftier rung than its natural, inherent level.
This can be understood by prefacing with a concept explained in the maamar entitled *Avadim Hayinu LeFarah BeMitzrayim* in the Siddur *Im Dach:* that the Divine blessings granted to those who transgress G-d’s will are as “an aside,” like one who throws what he gives to another over his shoulder.

The sustenance is given begrudgingly, with disdain. For G-d to bring into being and maintain the world in its present form, there must exist entities that He does not fundamentally desire. He brings them into being only “as an aside,” i.e., solely to create the setting He desires for His will to be expressed.

To explain by analogy, it is like a king who makes a celebratory feast for his prominent officers and prestigious servants and spares no expense. Now, even lowly servants and maids found “behind the millstones” receive the leftovers from the feast.

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69. *Siddur Im Dach,* p. 293d.
71. This example is also cited in *Toras Chayim,* Shmos, p. 157a; *Derech Mitzvosecha,* p. 79a; *Kuntres U’Maayon,* the beginning of Discourse 7; *et al.*
And even dogs feast on the bones that were discarded.

Of course, the king had no intention of spending money on them.

The leftovers they receive (and the leftovers from such a feast are indeed of great value) are given merely as an aside.

Does the king really desire to provide a feast to the lowly servants and the dogs? Of course not. But in order for the king’s palace to be maintained and the feast to be served, the lowly servants and even the dogs are necessary.

Similarly, in the analogue, those who violate G-d’s will receive sustenance as an aside. It is given to them begrudgingly, like one who throws it over his shoulder, as explained at length in that source. It can be explained that the details of the analogy are significant.

The two examples that the maamar cites of those who receive sustenance as an aside (and do not sit at the king’s table)
On the lowest level are the dogs. They do not serve the king; they are motivated solely by their own desire that material things be given to them and that the largesse should continue endlessly, enabling them to receive more and more, as it is written: 73 “The dogs are fiercely wanting; they know no satiation.” This can be associated with the well-known concept 74 that כלב, Hebrew for “dog,” can be associated with the phrase: כולם לב, “all heart.”

The inherent nature of a person and his innate tendency is that his mind rules over the heart. 75

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74. Meorei Or, erech kelev.
A person described with the analogy of a dog is the direct opposite.

Not only does his mind not rule over his heart, he is “all heart.”

All of his concerns are solely to fulfill the desires of his heart.

On a higher level are the lowly servants who do not enter the king’s presence.

They do serve the king, in contrast to the dogs that only serve themselves.

Nevertheless, they serve the king only out of compulsion (because they fear that otherwise they will be beaten).

Serving the king runs contrary to their will and their pleasure,

76. Truly “all” his concerns, because he is “all heart.”

77. See the Siddur Im Dach which describes these servants as “the lowly among the servants.”

78. See Derech Mitzvosecha, p. 83b; Or HaTorah, Mishpatim, p. 1128. In those sources, however, a slightly different explanation is given.
for a servant enjoys living without any restraints upon him,⁷⁹ behefkeira nicha lei, in the original Aramaic.

Since their desires and pleasures are directed to worldly matters,

and the only reason they do not violate G-d’s will is that they fear punishment,

they are not worthy of sitting at the king’s table.

Since they have no real desire to serve the king, they are not worthy of beholding his countenance.

In contrast, the “prestigious servants” serve the king willingly; this is their desire.

True, their service is primarily motivated by the acceptance of the king’s yoke.

[As is well known,⁸⁰ this constitutes the difference between the service of a son and a servant.

A son carries out his father’s will because of his love,

⁷⁹. Gittin 13a.
⁸⁰. See Tanya, ch. 41; the series of maamarim entitled Yom Tov shel Rosh HaShanah, 5666, p. 308ff., et al.
while a servant carries out the will of his master because he accepts his yoke.]

Nevertheless, a “prestigious servant” accepts the king’s yoke willingly and with desire; in the analogue, he desires to accept the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, he is worthy of a place at the king’s table.

And the gifts the king grants him are granted face to face, joyfully.

On a higher level than this are the king’s officers. They know the conventions of the kingdom. [For that reason, many of the matters of the kingdom are entrusted to their authority.] They also comprehend the virtues of the king and therefore, they love him. Thus their service is not motivated by the acceptance of the king’s yoke alone; it also results from their love of him.
The category of officers itself subdivides into several levels.

In general, there are two levels, ordinary officers and prominent officers.

It is possible to say that these three categories found at the king's table – prestigious servants, ordinary officers and prominent officers – correspond to the three types of officers – a duke, a prefect, and a commander – whom the above-mentioned Midrash describes as accompanying the king.

The description the Midrash gives – that they accompany the king – is similar to the concept mentioned in the analogy: that the prestigious servants and officers sit at the king’s table.

On this basis, it is possible to offer further insight concerning the Midrash cited above:

The obvious analogues to the duke, the prefect, and the commander are the seventy patron angels of *kelipas nogah*

(as explained in the *maamarim* cited above).78
This is also evident from the fact that the Midrash describes the people who chose these officers as those who serve the sun and the moon.

Nevertheless, the fact that the Midrash describes the duke, et al., as “accompanying the king,” alludes to the concept that the analogue refers [not to the seventy patron angels who are characterized by yeshus and possess an independent identity,

Accordingly, it is explained in Chassidus81 that the vitality drawn down to the seventy patron angels is in exile within them.

like the lowly servants whose place is removed from the king’s table,

Since these patron angels are characterized by yeshus, self-concern, it is not fit to speak of them as “accompanying the king.”

but] also to those angels whose identity is subsumed in G-dliness.

Moreover, on a higher level, the analogy can also refer to the Sefiros of Atzilus,

about which is said:82 “He and His life-energy are one; He and His causations are one”

– entities that are at one with the King at all times

And hence, can be described as “accompanying” Him. Previously, the maamar

81. See Siddur Im Dach, p. 287b ff., et al. See also Tanya, Iggeres HaKodesh, Epistle 25.
82. Etz Chayim, Shaar 47 (Shaar Atzilus, Beriah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah), ch. 2, et al.; Tanya, Iggeres HaKodesh, the beginning of Epistle 20.
described the intermediaries as being powers within the realm of *kelipah*. At this point, the *maamar* is emphasizing that it is possible to conceive of there being intermediaries even within the realm of holiness. Nevertheless, they are merely intermediaries. The uniqueness of “the clever person” is – as the *maamar* proceeds to explain – that he does not want to receive sustenance even from these intermediaries. He desires a bond solely with the king.

On this basis, one can further comprehend the extent of the “cleverness” of the person who states: “I will choose the king.”

Not only is he unwilling to receive sustenance as do the dogs or the lowly servants that are removed from the king’s table

(even though the sustenance granted to them is vast),

he wants to be present at the king’s table.

Moreover, he does not desire intermediaries like the duke,

(in the analogue, the angels, the *Sefiros of Atzilus*, or intermediaries on even higher levels).

He desires the king himself: “I will choose the king.”
This can be illustrated by the Baal Shem Tov’s well-known analogy on the phrase: “A prayer of a poor person when he languishes and pours out his soul before G-d.”

The “poor person” does not desire anything.

His request is only that he be able to “pour out his soul before G-d.”

Choosing the King rather than the intermediaries requires great wisdom.

As in the analogy of a mortal king, in order to reach the throne room where the king is found and his countenance can be beheld, it is necessary to pass through numerous chambers, each containing fabulous treasures.

There are people who will derive such wonderful pleasure from seeing the great treasures that are found in the outermost chamber that they become transfixed and will remain there and thus fail to reach the chamber where the king sits.

83. Kesser Shem Tov, sec. 97 (p. 13c), Or Hamei’ir, Parshas Vayishlach.
84. Tehillim 102:1.
Others are transfixed by the pleasure they derive from the treasures found in an inner chamber.

Only one who is very wise is unaffected by the magnitude and the value of the magnificent treasures that are found in even the innermost chambers,

but instead, focuses his will and his desire solely on entering the throne room where the king sits,

so that he can behold the king's countenance.

SUMMARY

The soul's choice of G-d stems from the essence of the soul, a level that transcends intellect. Perhaps one can add that when this choice is drawn down from its essence and has an effect on the intellect, it elevates the soul to a loftier rung than its natural, inherent level.

This can be understood by prefacing with a concept explained in the Siddur im Dach: that the Divine blessings granted to those who transgress G-d's will are like "an aside," like one who gives something to another by throwing it over his shoulder. To explain by analogy, it is like a king who makes a celebratory feast for his prominent officers and prestigious servants. Now, even lowly servants and maids receive the leftovers from the feast. And even dogs feast on the bones that were discarded, but of course, the king had no intention of spending money on them. The leftovers they receive are given merely as an aside. Similarly, in the analogue, those who violate G-d's will receive sustenance as an aside. It is given to them begrudgingly.

The details of the analogy are significant. The two examples of those who receive sustenance as an aside and do not sit at the king's table – i.e., the servants and maids, and the dogs – and the two examples of those who sit at the king's table – the prominent officers and prestigious servants – parallel four levels in the analogue.
On the lowest level are the dogs. They do not serve the king; they are motivated solely by their own desire that material things be given to them. On a higher level are the lowly servants who do not enter the king’s presence. They do serve the king, but only out of compulsion, because they fear that otherwise they will be beaten. Serving the king runs contrary to their will and their pleasure. Therefore, they are not worthy of sitting at the king’s table.

In contrast, the “prestigious servants” serve the king willingly; this is their desire. True, their service is primarily motivated by the acceptance of the king’s yoke. Nevertheless, he accepts that yoke willingly and with desire. In the analogue, the person desires to accept the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, he is worthy of a place at the king’s table. On a higher level than this are the king’s officers. They comprehend the virtues of the king and therefore, they love him.

The category of officers itself subdivides into several levels. In general, there are two levels, ordinary officers and prominent officers. It is possible to say that these three categories found at the king’s table – prestigious servants, ordinary officers and prominent officers – correspond to the three types of officers – the duke, the prefect, and the commander – whom the above-mentioned Midrash describes as accompanying the king.

The description the Midrash gives – that they accompany the king – resembles the concept mentioned in the analogy: that the prestigious servants and officers sit at the king’s table. On this basis, it is possible to offer further insight concerning the Midrash cited above: Although the obvious analogue to the duke, the prefect, and the commander are the seventy patron angels of kelipas nogah, since the officers are described as “accompanying the king,” they can also be understood as referring to angels whose identity is subsumed in G-dliness, and even to the Sefiros of Atzilus.

On this basis, one can further comprehend the extent of the “cleverness” of the person who states: “I will choose the king.” He wants the king alone, not any intermediaries, not even one bonded with the king.

This relates to the Baal Shem Tov’s well-known analogy explaining the phrase: “A prayer of a poor person who pours out his soul before G-d.” The poor person wants nothing else but to come before the king.
It is possible to say that this approach is synonymous with the love for G-d described by the verse:55 “Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing.”

As the Alter Rebbe was wont to say at times when he would enter a state of deveikus:66 (Deveikus refers to a state in which a person enters a conscious bond with G-d that lifts him totally above material consciousness.)

“I desire nothing. I don’t want Your Gan Eden. Here, the term Gan Eden refers to the abode of the souls in the spiritual realms in the afterlife.

I don’t want Your Olam HaBa (World to Come) …. Here, the intent of the phrase “the World to Come” is the Era of the Resurrection.

I want nothing but You alone.”

The revelations of Gan Eden, and how much more so the revelations of the World to Come, are truly very lofty.

Moreover, the Alter Rebbe had comprehended the nature of these revelations,

For unless he understood the nature of these revelations, saying that he did not

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55. Tehillim 73:25.

desire them would be of no significance. If an unschooled youth says he does not desire an artistic masterpiece, but instead wants something else, his comment has no significance. He does not understand its value; therefore, he does not desire it. How different it is when a connoisseur of art makes such a statement! He appreciates the value of the work and yet desires something else.

Intellect enables a person to bond with the idea he understands. Despite having understood, and thus bonded with, the World to Come in all its sublimity, the Alter Rebbe did not seek it. Instead, he desired “You alone.”

This approach reflects the wisdom of “the clever person.”

He does not desire the revelations of *Gan Eden* or the revelations of the World to Come.

His will is solely and entirely focused on G-d’s Essence: “You alone.”

A further point can be made. The fundamental aspect of his cleverness in not choosing the duke or the other officers

– (i.e., in the analogue, the intermediate levels that exist within the Spiritual Cosmos or which transcend the Spiritual Cosmos) –

is that he does not desire these intermediaries even when they are at one with their G-dly source. Among the intermediaries

87. As explained in *Tanya*, ch. 5, p. 9b.
are the Sefiros of Atzilus.

(The term sefirah relates to the term sefirus which means “shining”)  

and these Sefiros do not conceal G-d’s infinite light.

The intermediaries mentioned previously include angels. Although the angels’ source is in the realm of holiness and not in the realm of kelipah, they are, nevertheless, characterized by yeshus, a sense of self. They are separate entities who desire G-dliness. The Sefiros, by contrast, are Divine attributes with no sense of self. Hence, they are able to reveal G-d’s light without any concealment. Even so, “the clever person” does not desire even them; he desires G-d’s Essence.

When Divine beneficence is drawn down through the Sefiros (i.e., their keilim),

but emanates from G-d’s infinite light which provides the beneficence through them.

This is true to an even greater extent regarding the light of the Sefiros, for through this light, the light that transcends the Sefiros is revealed.

The light that shines within the Sefiros has undergone a degree of tzimtzum so that

88. See Or HaTorah, Chayei Sarah, p. 106b, et al.
89. See the series of maamarim entitled BeShaah SheHikdimu, 5672, Vol. 1, sec. 106, (pp. 204-205); et al.
90. See ibid., sec. 119.
it can be enclothed within the Sefiros. Nevertheless, it is not separate from the higher levels of light from which it is drawn down and, indeed, serves to reveal them.

Certainly, it applies to the levels of light that transcend Atzilus.91

I.e., those levels of G-dliness whose lights are too transcendent to be revealed and are therefore referred to as “hidden worlds.”

For light reveals everything that is possible to be revealed from the Source of light.

The words “everything that is possible to be revealed from the Source of light” imply that not everything is revealed.

To explain: Light emanates from His Essence and reveals those dimensions of His Essence that can be revealed. Nevertheless, because G-d’s Essence is not limited to being a Source of light, there are elements of His Being that the light does not reveal. Ultimately, the light cannot reveal Who He is, for His Essence is of another nature entirely.92

Nevertheless, “the clever person” does not desire these intermediate levels;

he desires the King alone – “I will choose the King.”

It is possible to say that this is the intent of the precise wording used by the Alter Rebbe: “I don’t want Your Gan Eden. I don’t want Your World to Come….”

91. See ibid., sec. 121ff.; see also ibid., sec. 123 (p. 239).

92. The series of maamarim entitled Yom Tov shel Rosh HaShanah, 5666, pp. 343-345.
Even though he spoke about “Your Gan Eden” and “Your World to Come,” i.e., Gan Eden and the World to Come as they reveal “You,”

– implying that aside from Gan Eden and the World to Come being elevated levels in and of themselves,

and everything that is possible to be revealed from the Source of light is revealed through them –

nevertheless, a “clever person” does not desire even such lofty intermediaries.

His entire will is focused on G-d’s Essence: “You alone.”

SUMMARY

At times, when he would enter a state of deveikus, the Alter Rebbe was wont to say: “I desire nothing. I don’t want Your Gan Eden. I don’t want Your Olam HaBa. I want nothing but You alone.”

Even though the Alter Rebbe appreciated the richness of the revelations of Gan Eden and Olam HaBa, all that concerned him was the bond with G-d’s Essence. Similarly, to refer back to the Midrash, although the duke and others accompany the king and are one with him, the clever person ignores them and focuses only on the king.
It could be said that the interpretation\(^9\) of the statement “I will choose the king” (offered in secs. 7-8),

– that “the clever person” does not desire the levels (of holiness) that exist in the spiritual realms Above,

but rather desires G-d’s Essence –

and the simple interpretation of that statement

(that he does not serve the stars and the constellations), i.e., the intermediaries that G-d has established through which He conveys sustenance to the world and which the pagans worshiped as deities, (as explained in secs. 3-4),

are interrelated.

Their interrelation can be understood according to the well-known explanation\(^4\) that the love for G-d intimated by the verse, “Whom have I in heaven but You?” (See sec. 8)

– i.e., that he does not desire the revelations of Gan Eden, but rather desires G-d’s Essence –

stems from the person’s willingness to rise above self-concern. As will be explained,

\(^9\) See secs. 7-8.

\(^4\) Likkutei Torah, Vayikra, p. 20a ff.; Derech Mitzvosecha, loc. cit.
the self-concern of a person who desires the revelations of Gan Eden is on an elevated level. He does not desire physical things, but rather to behold the radiance of G-d’s Presence. Ultimately, however, his desire is for his own personal satisfaction; spiritual satisfaction to be sure, but satisfaction nonetheless.

In Gan Eden, one’s soul remains a distinct entity that will comprehend and delight in G-dliness (as our Sages state:95 in Gan Eden, the souls “take pleasure in the radiance of the Divine Presence”).

The revelation of G-d’s Essence, by contrast, will cause a person’s existence to be nullified entirely.

Nevertheless, since the revelations of Gan Eden are merely a ray (“the radiance of G-d’s Presence”) which cannot be compared to G-d’s Essence, “the clever person” chooses what is of primary importance, i.e., G-d’s Essence, and not what is secondary, i.e., the radiance of His light.

From this explanation, one can understand that when one chooses the revelations of Gan Eden (which have no importance at all in relation to G-d’s Essence),

95. Berachos 17a.
he is doing so for the sake of his self-interest

so that he can retain his identity and derive satisfaction from the radiance of the Divine Presence.

As a consequence, the possibility exists that this will lead (through a long sequence of chainlike descents)

to the approach that although the person knows that the largesse conveyed by the seventy patron angels comes from the place of death (as explained at the end of sec. 5),

he nevertheless desires this largesse more than deriving his sustenance from holiness,

because in this manner, he will receive greater abundance.

I.e., the desire for the radiance of the Divine Presence reflects an elevated plane of spiritual awareness, while the desire for prosperity bestowed by the seventy patron angels stems from base material desire. Nevertheless, they share a common factor: self-concern.

Now, self-concern is a slippery slope. When a person is motivated by self-concern, even if that self-concern is on a refined level, it is entirely possible that ultimately, he will find himself expressing his self-concern on a lower – and even base – level.

Similar concepts apply regarding the error of those who serve the stars and the constellations because they consider them as significant entities

96. This is the wording used by Likkutei Torah, loc. cit.
(either because they think that the prosperity comes from the stars and the constellations themselves)

or because they maintain that the stars and the constellations have the choice to convey prosperity). (See sec. 3 above.)

Here, too, the mistaken perspective of one who desires the revelations of Gan Eden and not G-d’s Essence – i.e., he considers something outside of G-d’s Essence as important –

can ultimately lead him (through a long sequence of chainlike descents)

to consider the stars and the constellations as important –

Previously, the maamar spoke from an emotional perspective: i.e., what the person desires. Now, it is speaking from an intellectual perspective: what the person considers important.

and to think that they have free choice,

or to make an even greater error and think that they themselves are the source of the prosperity, Heaven forbid.
Moreover, one may say that even when a person desires Gan Eden because it is the Gan Eden of the Holy One, blessed be He, ("Your Gan Eden,""
(see the explanation of the quote of the Alter Rebbe mentioned in sec. 8)

it is still possible to come to the error that the stars and the constellations have the choice of whether or not to convey prosperity
and even to the error that they are the source of the prosperity.

For even according to this mistaken thinking, the power that the stars and the constellations have to provide beneficence is (not because of their inherent capacity
but) stems from the fact that the Holy One, blessed be He, appointed them to serve this function,
as explained in sec. 3 above.

(Thus there is a commonality between this mistaken approach and the desire for “Your Gan Eden.”)

For, in both instances, there is an intermediate level which, though connected to G-d, is not Him.

The approach that does not even allow for the possibility that “I will choose a duke”
The statement “I will choose the king” is interpreted to mean:

a) that “the clever person” does not desire the levels (of holiness) that exist in the spiritual realms above, but rather G-d’s Essence; and

b) on a more basic level, that he does not serve the intermediaries that G-d has established to convey sustenance to the world, but he serves G-d Himself.

These two interpretations are interrelated. In both instances, the choice of something other than G-d is motivated by self-concern. The revelation of G-d’s Essence causes a person’s existence to be nullified entirely. By contrast, when one chooses the revelations of Gan Eden, he is doing so for the sake of his self-interest, so that he can retain his identity and derive satisfaction from the radiance of the Divine Presence. As a consequence, the possibility exists that this will lead to the approach that although the person knows that the largesse conveyed by the seventy patron angels comes from the place of death, he nevertheless desires this largesse more than deriving his sustenance from holiness, because in this manner, he will receive greater abundance.

Similar concepts apply regarding the error of those who serve the stars and the constellations because they consider them as significant entities. Here, too, the mistaken perspective of one who desires the revelations of Gan Eden and not G-d’s Essence – i.e., he considers something outside of G-d’s Essence as important – can ultimately lead him to consider the stars and the constellations as important, and to think that they have free choice. Or it can lead to an even greater error, thinking that the intermediaries themselves are the source of prosperity.
Further explanation can be added to clarify the connection between the approach of “I will choose the king” and the love of G-d intimated by the verse, “Whom have I in heaven but You?” – i.e., that a person desires G-d’s infinite light.

As a preface: The fundamental error that led to the worship of the stars and the constellations, which, as explained above, serve as analogies for all the intermediaries that control the natural order, is that primacy was attributed to something that was intended to be merely an intermediary. This leads to a twofold misunderstanding:

a) Regarding the stars and constellations themselves:

In truth, they are merely intermediaries (an axe in the hand of the Chopper)

See sec. 3. As explained there, the analogy of an axe is employed because it is merely a tool, an instrument that has no power, will, or initiative of its own.

through which Divine blessings are granted.

Nevertheless, those who serve the stars and the constellations attribute primacy to them.

b) Regarding the material prosperity that is drawn down through them:
The entire purpose of G-d’s granting material prosperity is that it be used for one’s Divine service.

Those who serve the stars and the constellations give primacy to the material benefits themselves.

(Therefore, they choose to receive their sustenance from the nether side so that they will have an abundance of material prosperity, as explained in sec. 4 above.)

A similar misunderstanding motivates one who seeks the revelations of G-dliness in the spiritual realms.

The purpose of the existence of all the revealed levels of G-dliness, even the most lofty, is not for their own sake.

They are merely intermediaries through which G-d’s inner intent for a dwelling in the lower realms\(^7\) is fulfilled.

The statement that G-d desired a dwelling in the lower realms implies that He desired to create a world in which man carries out the service of subduing and transforming the forces of kelipah. (For the existence of forces that seemingly oppose G-dliness is what defines it as “lower.”) To bring such a world into being and inspire that service, G-d brought an entire Spiritual Cosmos into being. Nevertheless, the purpose of even the highest rungs in the Spiritual Cosmos – and even the infinite Divine light that transcends it – is solely for the sake of bringing

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\(^7\) See Tanya, ch. 36, et al.
about a dwelling for Him in this world.

Therefore, when a person seeks these spiritual revelations and gives primacy to them (and not to G-d’s infinite light), there is a possibility that he will give primacy to other intermediaries (i.e., the stars and the constellations, and material benefit).

Why is he seeking these intermediaries? Because he is motivated by self-interest. He desires to derive satisfaction from “the radiance of the Divine Presence” and therefore focuses on them rather than on G-d’s Essence. Since that is his primary motivation, the possibility exists that he will also give primacy to other intermediaries – the stars and the constellations (or in contemporary terms, the prevailing structures of the natural order) – with the thought that they will benefit him.

On this basis, it is possible to explain the underlying rationale as to why, as stated in the Midrash cited at the outset,

there are those among the nations of the world who serve the sun and those who serve the moon, while Israel serves only the Holy One, blessed be He.

The source for the existence of the nations of the world is the external dimensions of G-d’s will (whereby one wants something not for its own sake, but for the sake of something else).
To cite an example from ordinary experience: A person engages in a business enterprise. Why? Because he seeks to gain a profit. He does not desire all the struggle of commercial activity for its own sake. What he desires is the ultimate benefit he will derive, and this is the focus of the inner dimension of his will. The external dimensions of his will – what he wants to do so that he can achieve his inner desire – are focused on the activities he must undertake to earn it.

Similarly, in the analogue, G-d created the world because He desired a dwelling in the lower realms.¹ That dwelling is brought about through the Jewish people’s observance of the Torah and its mitzvos in this material world. As Rashi states in the beginning of his commentary to the Torah, this was the motivation for the entire creation. This is the inner dimension of G-d’s will. To enable that will to be brought into expression, He brought into being the entire Spiritual Cosmos and this material world together with all its creations. Although He brought them into being, He does not desire them in and of themselves. They exist only to bring His inner desire to fruition. They are thus all expressions of the external dimensions of His will.

The aspect of the external dimensions of His will

(that serves as the source for the existence of the nations of the world)

is expressed in a manner that does not enable one to understand that this external desire is for the sake of something else, i.e., that in truth, all being exists in order to enable the inner dimension of G-d’s will to be expressed,

but rather thinks of itself as the ultimate purpose.

The maamar is stating that mankind in general is motivated by an innate self-concern, because the souls of people at large are rooted in the external dimension of His will. This leads to a mistake in their world-view: Since their souls are rooted in a level of G-dliness that serves as the source for intermediaries that enable our world to come into existence, the intermediaries are significant to them. As a result,
their focus is immediate, the makeup of the world as they see it. The concept that they exist solely for the sake of the fulfillment of G-d’s inner desire is inherently foreign to them. To refer back to the analogy given above: it is like a workaholic. He has lost sight of the goal for which he works; the work itself becomes a goal. He is focused on the tasks in front of him alone.

Therefore, as a consequence of being created in this manner, in all instances, the nations of the world give primacy to the intermediaries.

Rambam⁹⁸ explains that the reason the early pagans thought that they should honor the stars and the constellations is not (as explained previously in sec. 3, that they thought it necessary to acknowledge them as one acknowledges a waiter who brings wine), but rather because the Holy One, blessed be He, “conveyed honor upon them” and therefore, it is “G-d’s desire” that man convey honor upon them as well.

Why did they develop such a misconception? It is possible to say that the reason for their error stems from their inherent makeup. The external dimension of G-d’s will that serves as a source for the existence of the nations of the world gives rise to their mistaken perception that the existence of intermediaries reflects G-d’s inner desire.

The source of the Jewish people, by contrast, is rooted in the inner dimension of G-d’s will – and from the perspective of the inner dimension of G-d’s will, there is no possibility for anything other than G-d’s will to be given prominence.

Implied is that all other entities exist as expressions of His external will. They are intermediaries, whose sole purpose is to facilitate the expression of His inner will. Since their existence derives solely from His will, the power they exercise stems entirely from Him, and their exercise of that power is not at all dependent on their choice. As such, there is no reason to attach any importance to them; they are merely “like an axe in the hands of the Chopper.”

The uniqueness of the Jewish people is that their souls are rooted in the inner dimension of G-d’s will. Therefore, they possess an inherent recognition that they

⁹⁸. Rambam, the beginning of Hilchos Avodas Kochavim.
themselves, and everything that exists on both the material and spiritual planes, are simply mediums to bring G-d’s desire for a dwelling in the lower realms into expression. This insight stems from their innate spiritual makeup and defines their nature.

Therefore the Jewish people recognize that the stars and the constellations are merely intermediaries, like an axe in the hand of the Chopper (and similarly, the material prosperity they receive is solely for the sake of Divine service).

Therefore they serve only G-d, declaring “I will choose the King.”

SUMMARY

The fundamental error that led to the worship of the intermediaries that control the natural order is that primacy was attributed to entities – both the intermediaries themselves and the prosperity they convey – that were intended to be merely intermediaries.

Similarly, the purpose of all the revealed levels of G-dliness is that they serve as intermediaries through which G-d’s inner intent for a dwelling in the lower realms is fulfilled. Thus, one who seeks to derive satisfaction from these revelations rather than be nullified in G-d’s Essence is attributing primacy to something that is fundamentally an intermediary. Therefore, when a person seeks these spiritual revelations and gives primacy to them (and not to G-d’s infinite light), there is a possibility that he will give primacy to other intermediaries.

On this basis, it is possible to explain the underlying rationale as to why, as stated in the Midrash cited at the outset, mankind as a whole serves intermediaries, while the Jewish people serve G-d. The source for the existence of the nations of the world is the external dimensions of G-d’s will. The external dimensions of will resemble
wanting something not for its own sake, but for the sake of something else. Since the nations of the world are rooted in the external dimensions of His will, it is difficult for them to understand that, in truth, all being exists in order to enable the inner dimension of G-d’s will to be expressed. Instead, they think of what is immediately apparent as the ultimate purpose. As a consequence of coming into being from such an external source, mankind at large gives primacy to the intermediaries.

The source of the Jewish people, by contrast, is rooted in the inner dimension of G-d’s will – and from the perspective of the inner dimension of G-d’s will, there is no possibility for anything other than G-d’s will to be given prominence. Therefore the Jewish people declare, “I will choose the King,” recognizing the intermediaries to be no more than an axe in the hand of the Chopper. Similarly, the material prosperity they receive is solely for the sake of Divine service.
Based on the above, we can also explain the advantage of the fact that the Jews’ choice of the Holy One, blessed be He, stems not only from the will of the soul, a level that transcends intellect, but also from the intellect itself (as explained in sec. 7).

As explained in sec. 6, the inherent bond that the Jews share with G-d (as indicated by the prooftext cited by the Midrash, “G-d is my portion, says my soul”) influences their understanding and motivates them to choose G-d even from the perspective of reason and logic. (Therefore, the Midrash describes the Jews with the analogy of “a clever person.”)

Sec. 7 began by stating: “The soul’s choice [of G-d stems from the essence of the soul, a level] that transcends intellect. Perhaps one can add that when this choice is drawn down and has an effect on the intellect, it elevates the soul to a loftier rung than its natural, inherent level.” With that statement commenced the explanation of why it is necessary for the soul’s essential, inherent connection to G-d to be filtered through a person’s intellect. In this and the subsequent sections, the maamar concludes that explanation, highlighting the higher dimension of the soul that is revealed when one’s intellect is aligned with the essence of the soul.

To explain: The source of the Jewish people stems from the inner dimension of G-d’s encompassing light

It was explained in sec. 10 that the source of the existence of the nations of the world derives from the external dimension of G-d’s will, i.e., He does not desire the existence of these nations in and of themselves, but brings them into being to enable the Jews to be involved in the observance of the Torah and its mitzvos,
for that is the purpose of creation as a whole (see the interpretation of our Sages' statement:99 “The entire world was created only to be part of this” in Rambam’s introduction to his Commentary on the Mishnah). Since these nations are intermediaries, their inherent, natural tendency is to choose intermediaries.

The source of the Jewish people, by contrast, is the inner dimension of G-d’s will; i.e., He desires them for themselves, for His dwelling in the lower worlds is established through their involvement in the Torah and its mitzvos. Since their source is rooted in His inner desire, their inherent, natural tendency is to choose G-d’s Essence and not the intermediaries. (the inner dimension of G-d’s will)

because the Jewish people are characterized by inwardness (pnimiyus).

Inwardness begins with one’s power of intellect, for it is the mind that enables a person to internalize his experience and have it become part of his personality. There are higher potentials in our spiritual makeup, e.g., will and pleasure, but they are described as encompassing dimensions, i.e., they affect us – indeed, powerfully so – but we don’t understand them. When motivated by these encompassing dimensions, we feel that we are being swept up in something larger than our conscious selves. When we understand something, by contrast, it is part of who we are.

On an apparent level, the encompassing lights are higher and more powerful than the potential of intellect, but, in the ultimate sense, the inward light reflected in intellect stems from a higher source and possesses an advantage over these encompassing lights, as will be explained below.

And, as is well known, the source of inwardness is the inner dimension of G-d’s encompassing light i.e., this is His fundamental intent.

Therefore the fundamental dimension of the virtue reflected by the Jews’ choice of G-d is

when the soul’s essential will that transcends logic — (i.e., will that reflects an encompassing dimension) is drawn down and affects logic itself (the inward dimension).

Will is fundamentally above logic and reason – a person wants because he wants, not because he has a reason for what he wants. Even if it is explained to him that what he wants does not make sense, his desire remains. For will reflects and manifests the person’s “I,” where his soul seeks expression, while intellect appreciates and internalizes the realities that govern the world at large. As such, there can be a dichotomy between a person’s will and his logic.

When, however, the essence of one’s soul is drawn down, it remakes both his will and his intellect. His wants are not capricious; they reflect his inner being. And his mind does not function merely as a receptor, internalizing the external reality. Instead, in a proactive manner, it gives him the tools to express his inner spiritual reality in the world at large.

The intent is that a person’s thinking processes express his soul’s inner will. To illustrate the above concepts: There are certain spiritual absolutes – e.g., utter reliance and trust in G-d’s providence – that human logic has difficulty in accepting. When the essence of the soul affects and transforms one’s intellect, those absolutes become fundamental premises on which one’s entire thinking process becomes based.

This reflects influence from the essence of the soul (the inner dimension of the encompassing light) which is loftier yet than the will that transcends logic (i.e., will as it reflects the external dimensions of the encompassing light).

In another maamar, the Rebbe speaks of individuals who displayed mesirus

100. The maamar entitled VeAtah Tetzaveh (Sefer HaMaamarim Melukat, Vol. 6, p. 129ff.), translated later in this text (p. 395ff.).
nefesh (self-sacrifice) continuously for many years when they were living in a country where oppressive decrees conflicted with the observance of the Torah and its mitzvos. When, however, these same individuals came to a free country where they could observe the Torah and its mitzvos without external challenges, the mesirus nefesh which they previously displayed was not necessarily manifest as prominently in their conduct.

Why is this possible? Because the mesirus nefesh they expressed throughout the years stemmed from a revelation of the higher, encompassing powers of the soul that transcended their inward powers. Hence, although this revelation spurred these individuals to deeds which were truly lofty, it did not elevate the people themselves. As individuals, they remained on the same spiritual level as before. The self-sacrifice they showed had no direct effect on the functioning of their hearts and minds, i.e., how they operate within the framework of their inward powers.

How was this possible? Because two different potentials were involved. Their self-sacrifice reflected the encompassing powers of the soul, potentials above the person's self, while their inward powers of thought and feeling defined their actual day-to-day selves. Even though their self-sacrifice expressed the encompassing powers of the soul, it did not transform their conscious powers entirely.

Nevertheless, in an ultimate sense, when the essence of the soul as it is rooted in G-d's Essence is expressed, no such dichotomy can exist. The essence of a Jew's soul must permeate his inward powers as well, because the essence of a person's being does not allow for the existence of anything else within his personality. Thus the fundamental expression of the essence of the soul is when it permeates the person's intellect and, through the intellect, every other dimension of his personality. At that point, all dichotomies are erased, for the essence pervades and remakes the person's entire character, causing every dimension of the person to reflect the essence of his soul.

Similarly, the maamar here is emphasizing how the essence of the soul (which stems from the inner dimension of the encompassing light) which is loftier than even the will that transcends logic (which reflects the external dimension of the encompassing light) is expressed when it is drawn down and affects the person's thought itself (the inward light).

To state the concept in terms of the analogy employed by the Midrash: The clever person's choice of G-d stems from an inherent, spiritual connection: “G-d is my portion,” says my soul.” That spiritual connection reflects the essence of his being. Therefore it is drawn down into his intellect to the extent that he can explain his choice logically, giving a rationale: “The others are all subject to replacement,
while the king is not subject to replacement.” This indicates that even his selfhood, which begins with his intellect, is aligned with and expresses the essential G-dly core of his being.

It can be said that this is intimated by the prooftext cited by the Midrash:\footnote{Eichah 3:24.} “G-d is my portion,’ says my soul.”

because that term connotes inwardness

(as is well known regarding the interpretation\footnote{See the maamar entitled Ashreinu, 5700, \textit{et al.} That maamar (Sefer HaMaamarim 5700, p. 36) explains that chelkeinu, “our portion,” refers to Divine service with one’s heart and within one’s heart.} of the lines from the Morning Prayers: “How good is our portion \cite[chelkeinu]{chelkeinu}? How pleasant is our lot! And how attractive is our inheritance!”)

The virtue of the Jews’ choice of G-d — the essential and inherent identification that causes the soul to choose G-d — is also drawn down in an inward manner

and is thus internalized through one’s understanding and comprehension

in such a manner that it affects one’s thought, speech, and action.

The soul’s essential choice of G-d and commitment to His service must permeate not only his understanding and emotions, but also his thought, speech, and deed. When the commitment stems from the essence, there can be nothing – neither
his understanding, nor his actual conduct, nor any level in between – that is not aligned with the soul's essence.

This effort on man's part draws down the inner dimension of G-d's encompassing light into his own being and into the world at large.

SUMMARY

Based on the above, we can also explain the advantage of the fact that the Jews’ choice of G-d stems not only from the soul’s essential connection to G-d, but also from the intellect itself. The source of the Jewish people stems from the inner dimension of G-d's encompassing light. As is well known, the inner dimension of G-d's encompassing light gives rise to pnimiyus, “inwardness.” Hence, the Jewish people are characterized by that quality.

Therefore, the fundamental positive quality expressed by the Jews’ choice of G-d is manifest when the soul’s essential will that transcends intellect is drawn down and affects intellect itself (the inward dimension). Such efforts on man's part draw down the inner dimension of G-d’s encompassing light into the person’s own being and into the world at large.
The importance of *pnimiyus*, inwardness, highlighted in the previous section sheds light on the role of the unique souls designated as “shepherds” of the Jewish people.

The above explanations can be connected to the Midrash’s comments on the phrase: “For the chief musician, by David, a prayer of remembrance.”

The Midrash offers an analogy of a king who had a flock of sheep. At one point, he was angry with them.

He drove away the sheep, broke apart the corral, and dismissed the shepherd.

After time passed, he gathered together the sheep, rebuilt the corral, but made no mention of the shepherd.

The shepherd protested: “The sheep are gathered together and the corral is rebuilt. Why have I not been mentioned?”

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103. *Tehillim* 70:1.*

* According to the custom of reciting the kapitel of Tehillim that corresponds to the years of one’s life (see the letter of the Rebbe Rayatz printed in Ksavet Tehillim and in his Igros Kodesh, Vol. 10, p. 53), on 11 Nissan of the year the maamar was delivered (5731), this kapitel began to be recited. See the note appended to the Igros Kodesh of the Rebbe Rayatz, Vol. 4, Letter no. 1069, p. 429, which states that it is customary for chassidim to recite the Rebbe’s kapitel as well as their own.

104. Midrash Tehillim, cited by Rashi in his commentary to the verse.
To refer to the analogue, in the previous kapitl, David said: 105 “G-d will deliver Zion and rebuild the cities of Yehudah” – this is analogous to “the corral is built.”

David continues: “And they 106 shall settle there and possess it. And the offspring of His servants will inherit it and those who love His name will dwell there” – thus the sheep have been gathered together.

"Why then," asked David, “have I not been mentioned?”

As a result, he authored this psalm beginning, “For the chief musician, by David, a prayer of remembrance.”

It is necessary to understand: The king gathered the sheep after and despite having been angered by them (and even though they previously had lost favor in his eyes) because his desire for them had been rekindled.

Why then did he fail to mention their shepherd on his own?

Why was a special request necessary for this?

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105. Tehillim 69:36-37.
106. The exiles of Zion and Yehudah.
Obviously, sheep need a shepherd. If the king's desire for the sheep – in the ana-
logue, G-d’s desire for the Jewish people – was aroused, seemingly, the need for a
shepherd should be recognized without the shepherd having to make a request.

The concept can be explained as follows:

Will (ratzon) is an encompassing light. As a result, it is possible for the will of G-d to be
drawn down only in an external manner.

For this reason, it is possible that no mention would be made of the shepherd, and it was necessary for
David to request that.

A shepherd is identified with helping his flock
internalize influence

Just as in a simple sense, a shepherd enables the sheep to find the nourishment
appropriate for them, so too, “a shepherd of faith” enables faith to be internalized
by providing spiritual nourishment for the conscious development of his flock
until their minds are aligned with their G-dly Essence.\(^{107}\) Mashiach, as the ultimate
shepherd of faith, will empower the people to draw down the revelation of G-dli-
ness that is above comprehension into the realm of comprehension.

\[\text{(as evident from the well-known contrast between the spiritual shepherds of the Jewish people and their princes).}\]^{108}

\(Chassidus\) explains\(^{109}\) that the input of both the “shepherds” and the “princes”
are necessary for the refinement of the Jewish people and the world at large. The
“princes” draw down an encompassing light that dispels evil. The “shepherds,” by
contrast, nurture the Jewish people, highlighting their internal spiritual potentials
and enabling them to develop.

\(^{107}\) See the maamar entitled VeKibeil HaYehudim, 5687 (translated in Defiance and Devotion).

\(^{108}\) Michah 5:4 speaks of “seven shepherds and eight princes of men.” See also Sukkah 52b.

\(^{109}\) Torah Or, p. 33b ff, et al.
Thus as long as the inward influence (facilitated by the shepherd) is lacking, the most fundamental element is lacking.

It is possible that such a lack will exist because the or makkif, encompassing light, can be drawn down merely from the external dimensions of the encompassing light –

As mentioned previously (see sec. 4), an encompassing light shines without having to be internalized in a k’li (a “vessel” or “receptor”). To cite an example: the sun shines in a place of filth. Thus from the perspective of the encompassing light, the lack of a shepherd, who makes possible the internalization of the light, is not a shortcoming.

while the source of inward influence is from the inner dimension of the encompassing light.

The inner dimension of the encompassing light is identified with G-d’s Essence. From the standpoint of G-d’s Essence, there is nothing else but Him. Every dimension of existence should be permeated by and manifest His Essence. Therefore the encompassing light that reflects His Essence should be internalized so that it permeates the identity of the souls of the Jewish people.

The question, however, arises: Once the sheep have been gathered together, they will be granted all their needs.

If so, how is it possible to say that they will not have a shepherd?

Sheep need a shepherd. In the analogue, it is necessary for the Jewish people to internalize the influence they are granted from Above. How is it possible that in an era of Divine favor this need will not be granted?

In resolution,
Thus, at a time of Divine favor, when “the corral is rebuilt” and the “sheep are gathered,” i.e., the Era of the Redemption, the Jews will certainly be granted the influence of a shepherd through the Torah they study.

Nevertheless, the Torah of the present age is “emptiness” when compared to the Torah of Mashiach. 

Thus without the revelation of the teachings of Mashiach, the fundamental aspect to be contributed by the shepherd (i.e., internalizing the essential revelations of that Future Era) is lacking.

Even though we are speaking about the Future Redemption after the fulfillment of the prophecy when: “G-d will deliver Zion and rebuild the cities of Yehudah,” and thus all the apparent needs of the Jewish people will be met and thus the external dimensions of the Redemption will be manifest, nevertheless, there is a still a need that King David addresses in his request. For

the fundamental revelation of G-dliness that will take place in that Future Era is the revelation of the Essence of G-dliness which is above comprehension.

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110. See Torah Or, p. 33d ff.
111. Koheles Rabbah 11:8; see also ibid. 2:1.
112. i.e., a shepherd of the level of Mashiach.
This was the request of King David (who is referred to as David, “the anointed king,” and is the progenitor of Mashiach, “the anointed one”)

Since the ultimate goal is to draw G-dliness, even the Essence of G-d that transcends comprehension, into the thinking processes of the Jewish people, for this motif to be fulfilled in a consummate manner, it is befitting that the revelation of G-dliness not come solely from Above, but that there be a request for this revelation from the shepherd of the Jewish people. – and his request will lead to its fulfillment – that there would be a shepherd, i.e., one who would facilitate the comprehension and grasp of this essential dimension of the Torah

More particularly, the teachings of Mashiach which will reveal the Essence of G-d. in a consummate manner.

I.e., G-d granted David’s request that the Essence of G-d — which transcends intellect — would be clothed in the Torah teachings to be revealed by Mashiach. Accordingly, they would be able to be internalized by the Jewish people.

Since we are speaking about the revelations of the Ultimate Future, when transcendent G-dliness will be revealed, it is possible that the revelation will not be internalized. David’s request was that these essential revelations be internalized.

SUMMARY

The importance of pnimiyus, inwardness, sheds light on the role of the unique souls designated as “shepherds” of the Jewish people. To explain by citing the Midrash’s comments on the phrase: “For the chief musician, by David, a prayer of remembrance.” The Midrash offers an analogy of a king who had a flock of sheep. At one point, he was angry with them. He drove away the sheep, broke apart the corral, and dismissed the shepherd. After time passed, he gathered together the sheep, rebuilt the corral, but made no mention of the shepherd.
The shepherd protested: “The sheep are gathered together and the corral is rebuilt. Why have I not been mentioned?"

It is necessary to understand: Since the king gathered the sheep because his desire for them had been rekindled, why then did he fail to mention their shepherd on his own? Obviously, sheep need a shepherd. If the king’s desire for the sheep – in the analogue, G-d’s desire for the Jewish people – was aroused, seemingly, the need for a shepherd should be recognized without the shepherd having to make a request.

In resolution: Will (ratzon) is an encompassing light. As a result, it is possible for the will of G-d to be drawn down only in an external manner. A shepherd is identified with helping his flock internalize influence. For this reason, even when G-d’s will has been aroused, it is possible that no mention would be made of the shepherd and it is necessary that a special request be made for that.

The question, nevertheless, arises: Once the sheep have been gathered together, they will be granted all their needs. If so, how is it possible to say that they will not have a shepherd? This is seemingly a fundamental need.

In resolution: In the analogue, the inner influence drawn down by the shepherd comes about through the people’s study of the Torah. Thus, at a time of Divine favor, when “the corral is rebuilt” and the “sheep are gathered,” i.e., the Era of the Redemption, the Jews will certainly be granted the influence of a shepherd through the Torah they study. Nevertheless, the Torah of the present age is “emptiness” when compared to the Torah of Mashiach. Thus without the revelation of the teachings of Mashiach, the fundamental aspect to be contributed by the shepherd (i.e., the potential to internalize the essential revelations of that Future Era) is lacking.

This is what is meant by the request for a shepherd – that there would be one who would facilitate the comprehension and grasp of the teachings of Mashiach.
Based on the above, it is possible to explain the connection between, and the relevance of, the Jews’ choice of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His choice of the Jewish people.

At its very beginning (sec. 1), the maamar quoted a passage from Bamidbar Rabbah 14:10 and raised several questions concerning it. On the basis of the explanations above, those questions can now be resolved.

His choice of the Jewish people as His treasured people

comes as a result of the fact that G-d’s inner will is focused on the Jewish people.

(As such, they are not an intermediary for achieving another purpose.)

As explained in sec. 10, in contrast to the nations of the world who are merely intermediaries, existing solely to facilitate the expression of G-d’s inner will, the souls of the Jewish people are rooted in the inner dimension of G-d’s will. Thus the inner motivation for the world’s creation and the ultimate expression of G-d’s dwelling in the lower realms is for Him “to dwell and rest within the souls of the Jewish people.”

G-d’s choice of the Jews is the source and the sole factor empowering the Jews’ choice of the Holy One, blessed be He.


114. The series of maamarim entitled Yom Tov shel Rosh HaShanah, 5666, p. 468. See also Torah Or, Parshas Mishpatim, p. 764; Or HaTorah, p. 1267; Sefer HaMaamorim 5630, p. 64; Sefer HaMaamorim 5670, p. 199ff.; Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 16, p. 478ff.
For, as explained above at length,115 the Jews’ choice of G-d comes as a result of their being rooted within the inner dimension of G-d’s will.

[G-d’s choice of the Jewish people is focused on their bodies.116 It is possible to explain that this choice empowers them to reveal the inner dimensions of G-d’s will even in their material matters, enabling them to feel that their material dimensions exist for the sake of their Divine service.]

On this basis, it is possible to explain why the sacrifices brought by the prince of Asher came “in recognition of G-d’s choice of Israel”117 even though “Israel’s good fortune is solely that she chose the Holy One, blessed be He.”

As explained in sec. 1, the Midrash appears to contradict itself: On one hand, it highlights G-d’s choice of the Jewish people. However, it also focuses on the Jewish people’s choice of G-d.
For the primary positive quality possessed by the Jewish people is (not what they have been granted from Above, but) what they achieve through their Divine service.

The resolution of the seeming contradiction is that the fundamental positive quality possessed by the Jewish people is their choice of G-d because that is an achievement of their own service. Nevertheless, the potential for making that choice stems from G-d’s choice of them.

This (– i.e., what the Jews achieve through their Divine service –) is what generates the principal satisfaction and pleasure that the Holy One, blessed be He, derives.

Therefore this is Israel’s good fortune.

Nevertheless, the Jewish people are only able to make this choice because G-d empowered them by drawing down and revealing His choice of the Jewish people.

The revelation of this choice was drawn down through the sacrifices offered by the prince of Asher.

Although the offerings brought by each of the princes during the dedication of the altar were identical, each one had a unique spiritual objective in their offerings.

The spiritual objective of the prince of Asher was to reveal the positive potential
of choice possessed by the Jewish people.

Every Jew possesses an inherent potential to make such a choice because the Jewish people are rooted in the inner dimension of G-d's will.

Nevertheless, the sacrifices brought by the prince of Asher assisted in drawing down and revealing this potential to a greater extent.

These sacrifices affected the state of the Jews' spiritual potential. Instead of merely existing latently in the inner reaches of a person's spiritual subconscious, these sacrifices enabled the potential for positive choice to exert a more active influence on his conscious thought.

We may say that a similar objective was accomplished by the Alter Rebbe in saying: “I want nothing but You alone,” particularly after this was publicized by the Tzemach Tzedek.

By publicizing this statement to people at large, the Tzemach Tzedek highlighted that this approach was not merely a reflection of the personal Divine service of the Alter Rebbe, but is – to a certain extent – within the reach of everyone.

His statement generated the potential (to an even greater extent) for every Jew, particularly those who follow in his footsteps and paths, that even though one has many different desires, even desires stemming from the animal soul,
I.e., the *maamar* is referring to ordinary individuals who, unlike the Alter Rebbe, are motivated by other desires.

I.e., without putting his full heart into them. Since the person has dimensions of his being that are not fundamentally holy, he will have other desires, but he will not be entirely swayed by them.

and his fundamental desire will be to fulfill G-d’s essential desire that a dwelling for Him be made in the lower realms.

(This approach reflects and resembles, albeit in microcosm, the Alter Rebbe’s desire for nothing else but G-d.)

Even the person’s desire for material things will be (primarily) motivated

by the intent to transform the material entities into mediums for G-dliness.

This approach will also draw down an abundance of material influence for him,

as the Alter Rebbe said: “G-d gives the Jews material things and the Jews transform the material into something spiritual.”\(^{119}\)

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118. Our translation follows the interpretation of *I Divrei HaYamim* 12:33 found in *Vayikra Rabbah* 25:2.

119. See *HaYom Yom*, entry for 27 Teves; *Igros Kodesh* of the Rebbe Rayatz, Letter no. 492, Vol. 2, p. 265; *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5700, p. 78.
From this, we can conclude that when the Holy One, blessed be He, grants the Jews an abundance of material blessings, the Jews transform them into spiritual abundance, an abundance that is both quantitative and qualitative, reaching a consummate level of perfection.

The Jews will reach the level where they are bonded and united with the Holy One, blessed be He, in our Sages’ words,120 “Israel, (the Torah), and the Holy One, blessed be He, are all one.”

All of this will be accomplished amidst happiness and gladness of heart, in these days of preparation for “the season of our freedom.”121 And this will bring about the actual experience of “the season of our freedom”: the true and complete Redemption led by Mashiach.

May it take place in the immediate future.

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121. The maamar was delivered on the 11th of Nissan (the Rebbe’s birthday), four days before the Pesach holiday.
SUMMARY

“Israel’s good fortune is solely that she chose the Holy One, blessed be He,” because the primary positive quality possessed by the Jewish people is not what they have been granted from Above, but what they achieve through their own Divine service. Nevertheless, the sacrifices brought by the prince of Asher came “in recognition of G-d’s choice of Israel,” because G-d’s choice of Israel empowers Israel to choose Him. Every Jew possesses the inherent potential to make such a choice because the Jewish people are rooted in the inner dimension of G-d’s will. Nevertheless, the sacrifices brought by the prince of Asher assisted in revealing this potential.

A similar objective was accomplished by the Alter Rebbe in saying: “I want nothing but You alone.” His statement generated the potential for every Jew to relate to all his personal desires with detachment, and for his fundamental desire to be the fulfillment of G-d’s desire that a dwelling for Him be established in the lower realms.
ביום עconti עשר יום, ה'תשס"א

*) יצא לאור בקונטרס י'א ניסן – תשמ"ט, "לקראת יום הבהיר י'א ניסן, יום הולדת הפ"ז של כ"ק אדמו"ר שליט"א.. ערב שה"ג תשמ"ט".

א) נשא ז, עב.
ב) במדב"ר פי"ד, י.
ג) מלאכי ג, יב.
ד) תהלים קמד, טו.
ה) ראה תבוא כו, יז.
ו) ראה יד, ב.
ז) להעיר גם מזה שמביא שם הפסוק "אשרי העם שה' אלקיו" הוא ע"ד "(שבחרו בהקב"ה) להיות להם לאלקים".

ח) ראה פרש"י תבוא שם "הבדלתיו לך מאלהי הנכר".
ט) פמ"ט (ע, רע"א).
י) איכה ג, כד.
יא) איכה עה"פ.
יב) בד"ה את הוי' האמרת להצ"צ (אוה"ת תבוא ע' תתרעב. שם ע' תתרפג) ולאדמו"ר מהר"ש (סה"מ תר"ל ע' רצה). ביאוה"ז להצ"צ ע' רמח ואילך. סה"מ תר"ס ע' יא.

יג) כ"ה באוה"ת ובסה"מ תר"ס שם.
יד) ראה אוה"ת וירא כרך ד תשסד, ב. שה"ש כרך ב ע' תיד.
טו) שמואל-א ט, ב.
טז) ראה גם סה"מ תר"ל שם.
יז) ראה סהמ"צ להצ"צ ו, א ואילך. וראה עד"ז רמב"ם הל' ע"ז בתחלתו. וראה לקמן הערה.

יח) ברכה לג, יד.
יט) ע"פ ל' הכתוב – ישעי' י, טו.

כ) ראה גם ד"ה את הוי' האמרת תרפ"ח פ"ג (סה"מ תרפ"ח ע' תיד). ד"ה כל המאריך תרפ"ו פ"ד (סה"מ תרפ"ו ע' קנז ואילך). ד"ה מים רבים ה'תשי"ז פ"ד (לעיל ח"א ע' שכג ואילך). ושם, שטעות זו (שהם משפיעים בחירתם) הוא לא ע"ז אלא שיתוף, משא"כ הטעות שעזב ה' את הארץ בידי הכו"מ (דלקמן בפנים) הוא ע"ז. ושם, שטעות זו (שהם משפיעים בחירתם) הוא לא ע"ז אלא שיתוף, משא"כ הטעות שעזב ה' את הארץ בידי הכו"מ (דלקמן בפנים) הוא ע"ז.

עיי"ש בארוכה.

כא) ב"ק צב, ב.
כב) מנחות קי, א.

כג) אבל בכללות, ענין "אלקא דאלקויא" הוא רק באלו החושבים שעזב ה' את הארץ בידי הכו"מ, משא"כ הטעות של מאות בחירה, כמפורש בהמצויין בהערה.

כד) להעיר מאוה"ת יתרו ע' תתקיח בפירוש לא יהי' לך אלקים אחרים: "אלקים תואר למושל". ובהמשך הענין שם, שהכו"מ אינם כמו שליח ששייך לתת לו כבוד ע"ד "טיבותא לשקיי'" אלא כגרזן ביד החוצב.

כה) להעיר מסה"מ תרע"ח ע' שנז "נבראים השפלים שאין דעת ותבונה להם ישפטו רק למראה עיניהם ומחשבים את הממוצעים".

כו) להעיר מסה"מ תרפ"ו ע' קלז, שמדבר שם בענין ההתחכמות בעסק, שהוא דוגמת המשתחוה לפו"מ כי恤, שהכו"מ אינם כותיב, אלא כותיב, "כבר נהג_available". דמזה משמע, שלא רק המחשבת בנווג סיבות הפרנס, אלא גם המחשבות "כבר냐"服役, אך huyệnב בו כרמה כו"ה.

כן, עד"ז רמב"ם הל' ע"ז בתחלתו. וראה לקמן הערה.

כז) בהערה סה"מ תר"ס ע' יא ואילך). וראה גם סידור (עם דא"ח) קמב, ג. סהמ"צ להצ"צ ו, א. ובכ"מ.

כח) ח"ב קכח, א. וראה בארוכה סידור (עם דא"ח) עה"פ אל תבטחו בנדיבים (נו, ד).

כט) בהעלותך יא, ה. ולהעיר מספרי (הובא בפרש"י) עה"פ: חנם מן המצוות.

ל) כ"ה להדיא בביאוה"ז להצ"צ שם (ע' רמט).

לא) ראה בארока תו"א ר"פ בשלח (סא, א). קונטרס ומעין מאמר ח' פ"ב ואילך.
ביום אסתר תשכ״א

(ל) ראו אנכי"ת, עם טענים ומאמרים, ו‧.

(ל) ראו סדר, ד(ז), ע. ר"א א"ד ו. ד(ז) של יד בני עולם, ו(鍪) תהלים, כי דרשו (פמ) ואשת ות Blackhawks בסדר.

(ל) ראו בתוספותria ננו ישודק ששלל בה הוא רברב. ו(ה) בהך שלף, ו(ז) בלך שלף, ו(ז) בלך שלף.

(ל) ראו בתוספותria ננו ישודק ששלל בה הוא רברב. ו(ה) בהך שלף, ו(ז) בלך שלף, ו(ז) בלך שלף.

(ל) ראו אנכי"ת, עם טענים ומאמרים, ו‧.

(ל) ראו אנכי"ת, עם טענים ומאמרים, ו‧.
ביום עשתי עשר יום, ה'תשנ"א

(ס) תאר י"ב (ט), (ט) תאר י"א (ט), (עז) תהלים מזמור ע*. ע"פ המנהג לומר הקאפיטל תהלים המתאים למספר שנותיו (מכתב כ"ק מגדים גודיר, נדפס בקובץ מכתבים כ"ק מגדים גודיר). (ע' עח) – התחילו בי"א ניסן שנה זו (תשנ"א) לומר מזמור ע שבתהלים.

(עח) סוף מזמור סט.

(עת)_TASK_NOT_GIVEN

(עט)_TASK_NOT_GIVEN

(פ) קה"ר פי"א. (ע"פ המנהג) גודיר ע"א. ע"פ המנהג לחזור על רמזי התפילה, מתחדשים...

(fad) לקו"ת תזריע כ, סע"א ואילך. שרש מצות התפלה למשה: "וזה שטעו...," כמובא לעיל, אלא...) ממית את ה' (!) כתוב (ע"פ המנהג)...