

Shaar HaYichud The Gate of Unity

By
The Holy Rabbi Dov Ber of Lubavitch

Translated and Annotated by Shimon Markel
Edited by Rabbi A. Markel
Copyright © 2004

Chapter Thirty Eight

We must now understand the matter of the garments of thought, speech and action, in a more particular manner, as it states,¹ “You have fashioned garments for them etc.” However, in order to understand this we must precede with the explanations of the source and root of the aspect of the letters, and why at times they are called by the term “Vessels – *Kelim*”² and at times by the term “Garments – *Levooshin*.”³ We will afterwards explain, in a particular manner, the aspects of *Rachel*, *Leah*, *Malchut* of *Tevunah* and *Binah* all the way until the highest of levels etc.

Now, as is known, the source of the letters is literally in the essence of the soul,⁴ for “the soul is filled with letters,” i.e. at the very beginning and essence of its coming into being.⁵

¹ See Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar* 17a.

² See *Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah*, end of Ch. 4. Also see *Etz Chaim*, *Shaar* 6 (*Shaar HaAkudim*), Ch. 1. Also see *Shaarei Teshuvah*, Vol. 1, pg. 38b.

³ See *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5562, Vol. 2, pg. 391; and *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5563, Vol. 1, pg. 249, and 261.

⁴ See *Etz Chaim (Shaar TaNT" A)* *Shaar* 5, Ch. 3. Also see *Ma'amarei Admor HaZaken*, *Parshiyot HaTorah*, Vol. 2, pg. 639 and pg. 730. Also see *Ma'amarei Admor HaEmtza'ee*, *Bamidbar*, Vol. 1, pg. 309.

⁵ Though the letters of speech are **revealed** through the mouth, nonetheless, their existence is not dependent on the five organs of the mouth from which they issue. In other words, though the mouth and larynx share a certain similarity to string instruments, however, the letters of speech do not receive their essential existence through the vibration of the larynx and the formations of the lips, teeth, tongue, palate and throat, similar to how the sounds of a string instrument are totally dependent on and come about as a result of strumming the strings of the instrument. Actually, the opposite is true. The physical sounds of the letters which issue from the mouth are dependent on **preexisting** letters. In other words, the letters **precede** the physical sounds of speech and are their source, rather than vice versa.

This is evidenced by the fact that when a person desires to speak, such as to say the letter Beit (ב) or the letter Peh (פ), through our observations we find that the lips move **in response** to the expression of the letters and that it is specifically the expression of these letters which causes the movement of the pursing of the lips. If the reverse was true, that the existence of the letters comes about from the lips, then the pursing of the lips would precede. However, such is not the case. Rather, the Beit (ב) and the Peh (פ) were already prepared to come out, and it is this which causes the lips to move, thus bringing out the **revealed** letters of speech.

This principle applies to all the letters of speech. The letters activate the five organs of the mouth, like an axe in the hand of the woodchopper or like a pen in the hand of the writer. This is because, unlike the eyes, which, by nature, are prepared to receive the spiritual power of sight, or the ears, which, by nature, are prepared to receive the spiritual power of hearing, the nature of the mouth does not necessarily to bring out the power of speech. In other words, by their very nature, healthy eyes see and healthy ears hear etc. However, this does not hold true of the mouth. A healthy mouth does not by nature have to speak.

A further proof of this is that if the origin of the letters of speech was in the organs of the mouth themselves, like the sounds of a musical instrument, such as a violin or a piano, then the primary focus in learning how to speak would be to concentrate on how to properly purse the lips to bring out the letters Beit (ב) Vav (ו) Mem (מ) and Peh (פ) or how to properly move the tongue to bring out the letters Dalet (ד) Tet (ט) Lamed (ל) Nun (נ) and Tav (ת) etc. This would be similar to how one learns to play a piano, in which the primary focus is on how to hit the proper notes on the keyboard to achieve the desired sounds. However, as known, this is **not** how a child learns to speak. He does not focus on how to move his lips, tongue or palate, **at all**. Rather, he concentrates on **what he wants to say**, without giving thought to how to move his lips or tongue, and the combinations of the letters come out by themselves, automatically.

All this is ample proof that the five organs of the mouth from which the letters issue, are not the source and origin of the letters, but are only the vehicle by which the letters of speech **are revealed**. Rather, we are forced to say that the letters are drawn from the spiritual essence of the soul and that the letters are embedded in the soul, which is full of letters in a *heyulie* way. Because of this the human soul is called *Ruach Memalelah*-The Articulate Spirit, or *Nefesh HaMedaberet*-The Speaking Soul. Furthermore, it is called by these terms even when it is disembodied and does not possess a mouth or a larynx (as will be explained later in the chapter).

A further proof to all of the above may be understood as follows. Although the letters of speech come out from the five organs of the mouth (throat, tongue, palate, teeth, and lips), nonetheless, their actual source is not in these organs. For, after all, an infant and a mute person also have these organs, yet they are nevertheless incapable of speech. Likewise, an animal also has a tongue and lips, yet it too cannot speak. Rather, the source of the letters is that they are embedded in the soul in the way of a *heyulie*. It is not merely from the revelation of the soul, for then you would have to say that each thought has its letters which are specific to it. However, we find that this is not the case, for we see that two Sages can express the same concept and thought using different letters. Rather, the source of the letters is in the essence of the soul, that “the soul is filled with letters.” This refers to the *Heyulie* power to speak itself, as it is in the essence of the soul (similar to how the *Heyulie* power for all the particular movements is in the power of movement of the essence of the soul, as explained in chapters 10 and 11 etc).

This is also evidenced by the terminology of *Sefer Yetzirah* 2:2 where it states about the letters, “He set them in the mouth.” That is, their source is in the essence of the soul and they were merely “set in the mouth,” and become invested in these five organs of speech. It is through this that the letters become concrete and tangible letters of speech. It is self understood that the letters that issue from these five organs of speech are not comparable to the letters as they exist in the soul, just as the physical movements of the body are not comparable to the *Heyulie* power of movement, as it exists in the soul. Nonetheless, these are the very same letters that are in the soul. They are drawn down from level to level, until they become invested in these five organs and become tangible letters of speech. From the above we may understand how it is in G-dliness, in the upper speech of *Malchut* of Atzilut, that the source of the letters is in the Essence of the Infinite Light that preceded the first *Tzimtzum* lessening.

Now, as the letters are in the Essence they are *heyulies* and are not “tangible” or “felt” letters whatsoever. For, wherever there is a revelation of Light (*Ohr*) there is a diminishment of the sense of “something-ness” (*Yeshut*). However, when there is concealment and *Tzimtzum* of the light then the aspect of the “something-ness” (*Yeshut*) becomes more apparent and felt.

In relation to the letters this can be understood by the letters of speech which are much more apparent and tangible than the letters of thought, to the point that they are perceivable by others. In contrast to the letters of speech, the letters of thought are much more refined and spiritual, so that they are not apparent or perceivable by others at all. One is able to think all sorts of thoughts in his mind and his fellow will not be aware of these thoughts at all. It is possible that he will not even be aware that his friend is even engrossed in thought. Nevertheless, he himself “feels” and is aware of these letters of thought. However, there are letters that are even higher than the letters of thought. For, even in thought itself there are two aspects. There is the externality of thought, which is when he is thinking in letters and they are tangible and felt by

him in a manner of “something-ness”. However, there is also the aspect of the innerness or depth of thought, which is when he is thinking into the actual depth of the concept itself and there is a revelation of the light of the intellect in a much stronger and more revealed way – so that the “letters” of the thoughts are not felt at all. Nonetheless, they are still there. An example of this is when a person has a flash of insight from the aspect of *Chochmah*, in which he is focused and aware only of the light of the concept that radiates in his mind. During this time he is completely focused on the intellectual light of the concept, and the letters of the concept are not felt at all.

We find that this is similarly the case with the power of desire (*Ratzon*) and the power of pleasure (*Taanug*). There are letters there as well. However, because of the great strength of the light of the pleasure, the letters are not felt at all. Nevertheless, we must say that there are letters there. However, they are very refined and not felt. Similarly, there are letters in the essence of the soul, in that the “soul is filled with letters”. For, as previously explained, although the revelation of the letters comes from the five organs of speech etc, nevertheless, their primary source is in the light of the soul itself. Thus, even though it is possible that one is lacking in his ability to bring forth these letters into revelation (like a mute or an infant etc), nevertheless, he still has these letters in the essence of his soul (which is why he is able to give birth to a child who will be capable of speech, as explained previously in regard to a blind person and his ability to give birth to a sighted child. This is because the blind person possesses the *heyulie* of the power of sight and can therefore transfer it to his child).

Another proof for this is from the fact that, as mentioned above, two individuals can express the very same intellectual concept or thought in different manners, with different “letters”. If we were to say that the source of the letters is in the revelation of the soul itself (i.e. in the intellectual concept) then the expression of this concept should be equal in both individuals, and they would, of necessity, express the concept in exactly the same “letters”. However, we observe that this is not the case, and that two individuals can express the same concept in different letters. For example, in the Talmudic commentaries of the *Tosefot*, the *Ro”Sh* and the *Ra”N* etc, they often are all expressing the same matter through different letters.

It is therefore necessary to say that the source of the letters is not from the **revelation** of the soul, but is in the essence of the soul itself. Now, just as the light of the concept becomes revealed from the soul, so likewise the letters become revealed from the soul. We therefore find that there is an existence of “letters” in the essence of the soul, and in the revelation of the powers of the soul etc, and even in the powers themselves, such as pleasure, desire etc, all the way until the aspect of speech. However, we find that the more essential the letters are, the more refined they are, and that as they descend and are drawn down from level to level into revelation, the more tangible and physical they become.

In the essence of the soul the letters are not felt to have any existence whatsoever, until their descent into the faculties of the insight of *Chochmah* and the comprehension of *Binah*, wherein they become more tangible compared to their previous state. Nevertheless, as the letters exist in *Chochmah* and *Binah* they are still very refined and spiritual, and are only felt by oneself, but not by others, until they finally issue forth into revelation through the power of speech etc. That is, the letters become more and more tangible and physical as they descend to lower and lower levels. The reason for this is as stated above, that commensurate to the degree of revelation of the light of the soul, to that degree is the concealment of the tangibility of the letters, so that they are not felt and perceived, and commensurate to the degree of concealment of the light of the soul, as it descends from level to level, to that degree is the revelation of the tangibility of the letters, so that they are more felt and perceived. Thus, in thought, where there is more of a revelation of the soul, the letters are more refined and spiritual. In the depth of the thought (or the flash of insight mentioned previously) the “something-ness” of the letters is felt less, as there is a greater revelation of the light of the soul. In the very essence of the soul where the essential light of the soul radiates in a totally revealed way, there is no revelation of the letters whatsoever and they are not tangibly felt in at all.

(See *Ma’amarei Admor HaEmtza’ee, VaYikrah*, Vol. 2, pg. 922-924. Also see *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5665, pg. 194. Also see *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5665, *Hosafot* pg. 309-310.)

They [the letters] are there in two ways; the letters of thought, and the letters of speech.⁶ In other words, immediately upon the existence of the essence of the soul, bound up within it are the letters of thought. They are included within it essentially, just as the power of movement is included in the animal etc.⁷

Now, they come out and burst forth into revealed thought on three levels. There is imagination and imagery with no letters whatsoever.⁸ There are simple letters that are disordered [and jumbled,] not forming combinations or connecting to any particular matter. Then there are the letters that are combined according to [organized] analytical thought.⁹

Likewise, in the essence of the soul there is [also] the aspect of the letters of speech. It is thus called,¹⁰ “The Articulate Soul – *Nefesh HaMedaberet*” or “The Speaking Spirit – *Ruach Memalela*.” They [too] are included there in an essential manner, and come out into revelation like the movement of an animal, or the like. This is like the speech of the Angels¹¹, about which it is stated,¹² “They call one to another [and say] etc.”

In this there are likewise three levels. There is the simple substance of each particular letter. This is called the breath of the spirit of speech. Then there are the individual uncombined letters of *Aleph* (א), *Bet* (ב), *Gimel* (ג), *Dalet* (ד) etc. Then there is the combination of the letters which is called the form of the speech in the “speaking spirit”.¹³ This is similar to,¹⁴ “Two spirits conversing,” and to the speech of the Angels etc.¹⁵

⁶ This is to say that just as we explained that the source of the letters of speech are in the essence of the soul, so likewise the source of the letters of thought are also in the essence of the soul. The general difference between thought and speech is that thoughts are to oneself, while speech is expressed to another. Therefore, just as these two aspects exist in their revelation, it is necessary to state that this is likewise the case in their source. That is, the matter of the letters of thought is that which is unto himself while the letters of speech, even while still in their source, is that which is to be revealed to others. (See *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5666, p. 483. Also see *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5665 pg. 195. Also see *Maamarei Admor HaEmtza'ee, Vayikra*, Vol. 2, pg. 922-924.)

⁷ In other words, as the Rebbe explained in above in Chapter Ten, even though in the soul of an animal there is no **actual** movement, nonetheless, in a way of a *heyulie* it contains the *heyulie* power for all possible movement. It could, therefore, be said of the soul of the animal that it contains all possible movements within itself. Now, in the same way, the human soul possesses additional *heyulie* abilities over and above what all other creatures possess. These are the *heyulie* for the letters of thought and the *heyulie* for the letters of speech. It may, therefore, be said of the human soul that it is filled with letters. Even though no **actual** letters exist there, nonetheless, it contains the *heyulie* powers for all possible letters of thought and all possible letters of speech to come out.

⁸ It was just stated that the letters come out and burst forth into revealed thought on three levels. This being the case the statement that the level of imagination and imagery has no letters, whatsoever, makes no sense. However, it must be understood that even on the level of imagination there most certainly are letters. Otherwise, it would be impossible to bring out the imagination from its *heyulie* state into a revealed state, since it is specifically the function of the letters to reveal. However, on this level all that is perceived is the imagery of the imagination, rather than the letters which reveal it. Therefore, on the level of the imagination it is **as if** there are no letters whatsoever.

⁹ These three levels will be expounded upon at greater length in chapter forty-one.

¹⁰ See Genesis 2:7; and *Targum Unkelos* there.

¹¹ See note 15 below.

¹² Isaiah 6:3

¹³ In *Tanya, Igeret HaKodesh*, Epistle Five this is explained as follows: The letters have two (general) aspects of form (*Tzurah*) and substance (*Chomer*), which are the inner and external aspects of the letters. The source of the letters in originating source of the intellect and will of the soul (קדמות השכל ורצון הנפש), is

Now, even prior to the coming into being of the source of the simple desire and the simple pleasure, there are already letters included in the essence of the soul. However, only after the coming into being of the desire do [these letters] come out to be the aspect of the revelation of the desire. They are then called “the letters of the desire”. This is the aspect of the revelation of the desire as a “something” with a tangible existence as a desire, this being the principal matter of the letters of the essence of the soul. That is, they only are the aspect of the revelation [and expression] of the light of the essence of the soul in every aspect and manner of “something-ness” and tangible existence. [In other words,] it is through the letters that it comes forth into revelation from the aspect of the concealed *Heyulie* etc. (This is in accordance with what is written in *Likkutei Amarim*,¹⁶ regarding the twenty-two letters which are embedded in the soul, that they are the twenty-two powers or twenty-two movements of the soul etc.)

only the “form” (*Tzurah*) of the change in pronunciation of the twenty-two letters. However, the aspect of the “matter” (*Chomer*) and “body” of their formation, which is their externality, is the breath.

¹⁴ The Talmud (*Brachot* 18b) relates the following incident: It happened that a certain Chassid (pious man) gave a dinar of charity to a poor man on the eve of Rosh Hashanah during a year of famine. His wife was angered over this, so he went and spent the night in the cemetery. While he was there he heard two spirits of two deceased children conversing with each other. One said to the other, “My friend let us roam the world and hear from behind the curtain what misfortune is to come upon the world this year.” Her friend replied, “I cannot come with you, as I am buried in a reed mat. You go, however, and come back and tell me whatever you hear.” So she went and roamed and returned. Her friend said to her, “What have you heard from behind the curtain?” She replied, “I heard that the crops of anyone who plants this year at the time of the first rains will be destroyed by hail.” Hearing this, the Chassid went and planted at the time of the second rain. Everyone’s crops were destroyed except for his. The next year he again went and spent the night in the cemetery, and he heard the same two spirits talking with each other. One said to the other, “Let us roam the world and hear from behind the curtain what misfortune is to come to the world this year.” She replied, “My friend, did I not already tell you that I cannot come with you because I am buried in a reed mat? You go and come back and tell me whatever you hear.” So she went and roamed and returned, and her friend said to her, “My friend, what have you heard from behind the curtain?” She replied, “I have heard that the crops of anyone who plants this winter at the time of the second rain will be blasted by a dry wind.” Hearing this, the Chassid went and planted at the time of the first rains. Everyone else’s crops were blasted except for his. His wife said to him, “Why is it that last year everyone else’s crops were destroyed by hail except for yours? And why is it that this year everyone’s crops were blasted except for yours?” So he told her the whole story. It was not more than a few days later when a quarrel broke out between the wife of the Chassid and the mother of the child whose spirit was overheard in the cemetery. In the course of that quarrel his wife said to the mother, “come I will show you your daughter buried in a reed mat etc.” The next year he again went to spend the night in the cemetery, and heard the same two spirits conversing. The one said to the other, “My friend let us roam the world and hear from behind the curtain what misfortune is to come to the world this year.” She replied, “My friend, leave me be. The words that we spoke between ourselves in the past few years have already been heard amongst the living.”

¹⁵ This is a further proof that it is the soul that is the source of the letters. For, the soul is full of the letters that are embedded in it in a spiritual manner. It is for this reason that it is called a “speaking spirit” (*Ruach Memallela*). This is true even while it is not invested in a body and is lacking the five organs of the mouth. Nevertheless, since the power of speech is an essential power of the soul, we therefore find that it is present even in disembodied souls, such as the example given in note 14, or in angels. (*Maamarei Admor HaEmtza’ee, Vayikra*, Vol. 2, pg. 923.) (Perhaps it was specifically to make this point that the Rebbe chose to cite an analogy of speech as it exists in spiritual beings, such as disembodied souls and angels, rather than citing an analogy from a living human being.)

¹⁶ See *Tanya, Shaar HaYichud V’HaEmunah*, Ch. 11-12, and *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle 5.

It is through this [the matter of the letters] that it is possible for the desire to come into revelation in the light of the intellect. If not for the revelation of the desire in an aspect of letters, i.e. that [by means of the letters] it appears as a tangible existence of desire, then the essential concealed desire would not come into any other garment, from one state of being to another state of being. [This is to say, there would be no descent into the] aspect of a desire which is felt and revealed in the “intellect and reasoning for the desire”, as is known. This will suffice the understanding.¹⁷

This is similarly the case with the intellect and reasoning for the desire, which is called *Chochmah* of the desire (*Ratzon*). The fact that it appears as a tangible existence of “reasoning for the desire” is from the aspect of the letters that are in it. It is through this [i.e. the matter of the letters] that it descends from [its] state to the state of emotions of the desire. An example of this is [the aspect of] love (*Abavah*) that is within the desire. It too is only the existence of desire, except that it is vested within the existence of love, that because of his desire he loves etc. (*Abavah* – Love (אהבה) shares the same root as *Avah* – Desire (אבה),¹⁸ and the *Heb* (ה) [which is additional to the root, represents] the “Five Kindnesses - *Heb Chassadim*” which spread forth from *Chochmah* and *Binah* etc.)

Now, this desire itself, even as it is in the intellect and reasoning for the desire, still refers [only] to the essence of the desire as it transcends [actual] intellect and reasoning. Nevertheless, it is through the letters that it transforms and is seen as transcending the intellect, to [being] within the intellect, to [being] within the emotions.

Similarly, there are letters for the emotions as well. This refers to the fact that the love that is within the desire has an apparent tangible existence etc. This continues until the aspects of thought, speech and action of desire. Each of these has the aspect of letters, all the way to the aspect of the desire for action, i.e. when the action arises in his desire.¹⁹ There are specific letters for this.

This is likewise the case with the [actual] intellect that follows the desire. For if the intellect did not have a [tangible] existence in letters of intellect, which is the aspect of the revelation of the intellect as a [tangible] existence, then how would it be possible for the intellect to come forth with a transformation of being to an [emotional] arousal of love which is born of intellect? For, even there [in the emotional arousal] it is the [very] same intellectual [point] that there was prior to the birth [of the emotion] of love. It is only that [now this intellect]

¹⁷ This is to say that if not for the letters there could never be a transition from the state of pure essential desire to the state of the intellect and reasoning for the desire. In other words, there could not be a transition from *Keter* of *Keter* to *Chochmah* of *Keter*. The same principle holds true for all subsequent states of existence, all the way down to our physical world. It is specifically the matter of the letters that makes the tangible revelation of all these states of being possible.

¹⁸ See *Shoresh Yesha*, section on *Avah* (אבה), brought down in *Sefer HaChakirah*, 92a. Also see *Ma'amarei Admor HaEmtza'ee, Hanachot* 5577, pg. 264. Also see *Sefer HaShorashim* of the *RaDa"K*, section on *Avah* (אבה).

¹⁹ In other words, what is spoken of here is not action itself, but rather the desire for the action, which is the action level within desire itself, because, up to this point the Rebbe has only spoken in regard to the different levels in the chaining down (*Hishtalshelut*) of the desire itself. Only in the next paragraph does he begin to talk about the actual level of the intellect, which is the next level after the desire.

vests within the [emotional] existence of love. This is only possible by means of the letters that are within it.

Likewise, it is in this manner that the letters of the emotions [come] into thought. If the emotion did not have a tangible existence of letters, how could it possibly vest within the existence of thought etc.? The same is true of the letters of thought within speech etc.

We find that it is through the letters that there is an aspect of a chaining down from cause to effect, from the essence of the soul until the end action, and that the source of the letters is literally in the essence of the soul. It is also understood from all of the above that in the source from which the letters are hewn, i.e. in the essence of the soul, the letters come into being as one with the essential light of the soul. This is similar to how the power of movement [of an animal] comes into existence with it [i.e. the existence of the self of the animal] etc, and the like. This will suffice those of understanding.

Now, the analogue to all this is automatically understood: That is, the letters of the Upper Purity (*Tebiru Ila'a*) about which it states,²⁰ “He engraved an engraving,” refer to the aspect of the essential letters of thought and speech in the Essence of the Infinite Light (*Ohr Ein Sof*). This is analogous to the letters which are embedded in the essence of the soul, in the *Yechidah*, on the three above mentioned levels. These letters chain down from one state of being to another state of being, such as from the simple desire of “I will rule” which arose in His thought before the *Tzimtzum*, until even the desire, intellect and emotions of *Adam Kadmon*, *Atik Yomin*, *Arich Anpin*, *Abba* and *Imma*, *Zeir Anpin* and *Nukveh* of *Atzilut*. All this is drawn forth and descends from one to the other in a manner of cause and effect with a transformation from one state of being to another state of being, by means of the aspect of the letters of each of these states of being. For, this [i.e. the matter of the letters] is the aspect of the revelation of the “something-ness” [of that state of being,] giving it tangible existence, as explained above. [This continues] until the aspect of the “end action” of *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, which is the aspect of the letters of action of *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, and continues [even further] until *Malchut* of *Malchut* of *Asiyah*, [which is] the root of the existence of our lowly world (as will be explained at the end of this treatise). This is all included in the verse,²¹ “[Everything that the L-rd desired, He has done.” That is,] “Everything that the L-rd desired” in His Essence “He has done” in actuality. This will suffice those of understanding.

End of Chapter Thirty Eight

²⁰ See *Zohar Bereishit* 15a.

²¹ *Psalms* 135:6