

## LIKUTEY MOHARAN #260<sup>1</sup>

The name is the soul, as has been explained in the lesson “A Chamber of Holiness”; see there.<sup>2</sup> This is the aspect of “a living soul is its name” (Genesis 2:19);<sup>3</sup> see the aforementioned lesson.

Self-sacrifice is in this category,<sup>4</sup> as in the case of the Ten Martyrs who sacrificed their souls<sup>5</sup> sanctifying God’s Name in order to unite the Holy One and His *Shekhinah* (Divine Presence). As is known,<sup>6</sup> the main unification is by means of self-sacrifice. And in those generations<sup>7</sup> they saw that it was impossible to rectify and perform unifications Above except by means of their souls. They therefore sacrificed their souls sanctifying God’s Name.<sup>8</sup>

The reason is that when the souls ascend above by means of self-sacrifice, they return to the *Shekhinah* whence they came.<sup>9</sup> This is because Israel is literally “a portion of God from above” (Job 31:2),<sup>10</sup> for they are literally portions of the *Shekhinah*, in the aspect of “who have been carried since the belly” (Isaiah 46:3).<sup>11</sup> And when they return to the *Shekhinah*, the *Shekhinah* then takes pride [in them]: “See what a child I have come to You with” (*Zohar* III, 13a). Then, supernal yearning is aroused and a unification transpires, as is known.<sup>12</sup> Occasionally, this necessitates that people die, God forbid; a considerable number of Jewish souls are killed, God forbid, so that there can be a unification by means of their souls ascending above. For, occasionally, very many souls are required, God forbid, and as a result it happens that people die, God forbid.<sup>13</sup>

2. The same is accomplished as a result of losing one’s name<sup>14</sup>—i.e., prestige. In other words, there is a person who is prestigious and not prestigious—i.e., he is well-known by everyone and everyone talks about him, and even so he is not a prestigious personage, because he is not considered important. And there is another person who has no desire for this, yet has lost prestige—i.e., a loss of the name, which is the soul. That is, even though he has no desire not to be prestigious, he still loses it, like someone who loses something against his will. In other words, he loses the name, the aspect of prestige, which is his name in the world.<sup>15</sup>

Yet, there is a person who does this willingly and knowingly. To sanctify God’s Name, he sacrifices his own name—i.e., his prestige, which is the aspect of name/soul, as explained above. As a result of this, even though he is prestigious, he is still not at all prestigious. On the contrary, he is quite the reverse. Everyone speaks about him and fabricates lies about him [of things] that never crossed his mind, so that, quite literally, his blood is shed by this.<sup>16</sup>

Yet he does this intentionally, because it is an aspect of bona fide self-sacrifice—for the name is the soul, as explained above—and from this too his blood is shed, as explained above. With this, he saves the Jewish people from what they deserved to have happen to them, God forbid, for the purpose of a unification, as explained above.<sup>17</sup> However by sacrificing his name, which is his soul, he saves them, as explained above.<sup>18</sup>

1. **Likutey Moharan #260.** The main theme of this lesson is *mesirat nefesh*, self-sacrifice for God. Rebbe Nachman speaks as well of a name, the soul, the Ten Martyrs, a unification, sanctifying God's Name, and prestige—all in the context of self-sacrifice. See also *Likutey Moharan* I, 193, where, too, *mesirat nefesh* is the main theme.
2. **see there.** *Likutey Moharan* I, 59:5 and note 83.
3. **a living soul is its name.** Scripture relates that God brought all the animals and birds to Adam to see what he would name each one. Rebbe Nachman reads the phrase “whatever the man called each living soul, that is its name” as “a living soul is its name.” That is, the soul of each thing—its inner and outer qualities, its life-force, and all that it represents and signifies—is encompassed in its name. Imagine the lengths we would have to go to if we could not refer to a person by his name. Conversely, referring to someone by his name includes everything about that person (cf. *Likutey Halakhot*, *Birkhot HaShachar* 3:34).
4. **Self-sacrifice is in this category.** It corresponds to a name. That is, there are times when sacrificing one's good name for God is considered as having sacrificed one's life. Rebbe Nachman will first relate this to physical self-sacrifice, which is the sacrifice of one's “living soul,” and afterwards show how this applies also to sacrificing one's name.
5. **the Ten Martyrs who sacrificed their souls.** The Ten Martyrs were: Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, Rabbi Yishmael the High Priest, Rabbi Akiva, Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon, Rabbi Yehudah ben Bava, Rabbi Yehudah ben Dama, Rabbi Chutzpit HaMeturgaman, Rabbi Yesheav HaSofer, Rabbi Elazar ben Shamua and Rabbi Chaninah ben Chakhinai. The Roman Emperor, Hadrian, issued a death sentence against these tzaddikim, to avenge the sin of Yosef's ten brothers when they sold him into slavery. (The Ari explains that these Ten Martyrs were the reincarnations of the ten brothers.) After ascertaining that this was indeed Heaven's will, each martyr gave himself over to a horrible and tortuous death (*Yom Kippur Mussaf Liturgy*, s.v. *Eileh Ezkera*; *Eikhah Rabbah* 2:4; *Tisha b'Av Dirges*, s.v. *Arzei HaLevanon*). The self-sacrifice of the Ten Martyrs effected forgiveness for all of Israel and helped mitigate many of the other decrees the Romans wished to enact against the Jews (*Likutey Tefilot* I, 144).
6. **to unite the Holy One and His Shekhinah. As is known....** The Holy One is united with His Divine Presence by means of a *yichud* (“unification”). In the language of the Kabbalah, effecting a *yichud* refers to bringing about a union between the Divine personas (see Appendix: The Divine Personas; see also below, note 12). The purpose of these unifications is to facilitate the flow of spiritual bounty, or *shefa*, from Above into this world. When the Divine personas are aligned—and in particular when *Malkhut*, which corresponds to the Divine Presence, unites with *Z'er Anpin*, which corresponds to the Holy One—*shefa* descends through *Malkhut* into this world. This alignment of the Divine personas is achieved through the ascent of spiritual energy from below by means of our prayers, Torah study, and fulfillment of mitzvot. The enthusiasm and vitality we put into our devotions arouses God's reciprocal energy from Above, this being the *shefa* that descends through the aligned personas. If we perform these devotions and mitzvot halfheartedly, then the spiritual energy from below is incapable of arousing a full measure of bounty from Above. But if, on the other hand, we perform these devotions and mitzvot wholeheartedly, committing all our strength and vitality to their performance, then our self-sacrifice effects a unification between the Holy One and the Divine Presence, and an unimpeded flow of *shefa* descends into this world. Thus, each person effects a unification and draws *shefa* commensurate with his spiritual level. However, the Ari teaches that there are times when, due to people's sins, all our attempts to effect a unification through devotions and mitzvot prove futile. This prevalence of sin and inability to align the Divine personas results, rather, in a world beset by harsh decrees, or “judgments.” Then, the only way to effect a unification is by ultimate self-sacrifice: the Jewish people are required to accept judgment upon themselves—to give up their lives for God. One such time was when the Holy Temple was destroyed. Sin abounded then, and many souls and sparks of holiness became trapped in the *kelipah*, the realm of impurity and evil. The only possibility of releasing those souls and sparks was by entering the realm of impurity itself. The Ten Martyrs, all very great and pure tzaddikim, undertook to do this. Accepting the judgment upon themselves, the Ten Martyrs made the ultimate self-sacrifice, submitting their physical bodies to realm of the *kelipah*—the Romans, who tortured and murdered them. Through this “exchange” (for the bodies of these tzaddikim were so holy, they were equivalent to the souls of most other people), the Ten Martyrs rescued the trapped souls and sparks of holiness, whose elevation, an arousal of energy from below, brought about a unification of the Holy One and His *Shekhinah* in the Upper Worlds (see *Etz Chaim* 39:1, pp.224-226).
7. **those generations.** Although in our lesson this refers to the generation of the destruction of the Temple and the period in which the Ten Martyrs lived, Reb Noson explains that this applies as well to all the generations in which Jews were called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice, giving their lives up for their belief in God, such as during the Crusades, the Inquisition, and the Chmelnitzky massacres of 1648-49 (*Likutey Halakhot*, *Chovel b'Chaveiro* 3:8).
8. **sacrificed their souls sanctifying God's Name.** To effect a unification that would mitigate judgment, effect forgiveness for the Jewish people, and restore the flow of *shefa* to the world.
9. **they return to the Shekhinah whence they came.** They are united with their source in the Upper Worlds, as Rebbe Nachman now explains.
10. **a portion of God from above.** Since the soul of a Jew emanates from the *Shekhinah* Herself.
11. **been carried since the belly.** The source of this teaching is the *Zohar*: Israel is therefore “a precious child”; *Malkhut* yearns for him in Her insides (cf. Jeremiah 31:19). And they are called “who have been carried since the belly”—as when they were still in Her belly (*Zohar* I, 13a, and see *Matok Midvash* there). Likewise, the Ari teaches that each soul goes through an aspect of pregnancy within *Malkhut*/the *Shekhinah* before it descends into this world (*Shaar HaGilgulim* #12, p.43; see also *Likutey Moharan* I, 36:1, n.11). Thus, just as the embryo is part of the womb, the soul is a part of the *Shekhinah*.
12. **See what a child...supernal yearning...unification....** Earlier, in note 6, we saw that there are two corresponding forms of spiritual energy, one descending from Above, the other ascending from below. The Kabbalah speaks of these complementary energies as *mayin dukhrin* and *mayin nukvin* (literally, “masculine waters” and “feminine waters”). Essentially, *mayin dukhrin* symbolizes the flow of *shefa* that God benevolently provides for mankind and the world from Above. *Mayin nukvin*, on the other hand, symbolizes man's fulfillment of God's will

below, in this world, through prayer, Torah study, and fulfillment of the mitzvot. As explained there, it is the ascent of the energy from below that arouses the reciprocal energy from Above (see *Likutey Moharan* I, 185, n.12, for the meaning of “waters” in this connection).

The *Zohar* metaphorically depicts the raising of *mayin nukvin* and the reciprocal descent of *mayin dukhrin* as a mother who displays her well-tended children to her husband, proudly demonstrating how she has nurtured and developed the treasure he entrusted to her. “See what a child I have come with,” she says. This naturally gains her husband’s favor, and he is encouraged to entrust her with more of his bounty. In a similar fashion, one spiritual level displays that it has guarded and developed the *shefa* it received from the level that precedes it. The higher level, seeing that what it gave bore fruit, is inclined to bestow more (*Rabbi Yaakov Meir Shechter*). In the context of our lesson, the raising of *mayin nukvin* is the *Shekhinah* taking pride in Her “children,” the Jewish souls, whose great devotion to Her is attested to by the ultimate self-sacrifice they willingly make for Her benefit. She displays Her children to the Holy One, as it were, and the supernal yearning that this arouses occasions their unification and the subsequent flow of *mayin dukhrin/shefa* into her care.

**13. it happens that people die, God forbid.** As explained above, note 6.

**14. losing one’s name.** The lesson now returns to its opening statement: “The name is the soul.” Rebbe Nachman will now equate the sacrifice of one’s name and prestige with the ultimate self-sacrifice, the sacrifice of one’s soul, showing that it, too, brings about a unification Above.

**15. he is not considered important...has lost prestige....** Rebbe Nachman begins with two instances of sacrificing, or losing, one’s name. The first is a person whose name is on everyone’s lips, yet no one respects him. He would rather sacrifice the name he has; lose it, if he could. The second is a person who was respected or had a prestigious position, but, against his will, lost it. The sacrifice of his name was not of his own doing. Neither of these is a true example of sacrificing one’s name.

**16. Yet, there is a person....his blood is shed by this.** Our Sages teach: When one person embarrasses another in public, it is as if he shed his blood—his face flushes and becomes bright red, but then grows pale and turns white (*Bava Metzia* 58b).

The list of those who sacrificed their names for God includes the Ari, the Baal Shem Tov, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev and Rebbe Nachman, to mention but a few. Today, everyone recognizes the spiritual greatness of Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, the holy Ari. Yet, when he first began revealing his Kabbalistic teachings, the Ari faced serious opposition and was nearly excommunicated. Initially, the Baal Shem Tov kept his greatness hidden by masquerading as a simpleton. When, at the age of thirty-six, he began to reveal his amazing pathways in devotion to God, people refused to accept his teachings. To convince them that these were not the ramblings of a boor and a simpleton, the Baal Shem Tov was obliged to openly demonstrate his awesome knowledge of Torah. However, because he did this selectively, some of the fierce opposition mounted against him remained. Preferring to sacrifice his own name in order to sanctify God’s Name, the Baal Shem Tov submitted himself to their abuse and did not seek the fame and prestige due him. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev was the renowned official rabbi in Ríchtvol. Yet as soon as he embraced the Baal Shem Tov’s teachings, the city’s *mitnagdim*, opponents of chassidism, began to harass him. They did not relent, until they had run Rabbi Levi Yitzchak out of town. Although dearly loved and respected by the common people, he was hounded by the *mitnagdim*, who chased him from every city that hired him as its rabbi. Eventually, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak settled in Berdichev. Although he could have abandoned chassidic teaching and retained his fame and prestige, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak sacrificed his own name in order to sanctify God’s Name. The same was, and continues to be, true of Rebbe Nachman. To sanctify God’s Name, the Rebbe intentionally sacrificed his own name and allowed himself to be ridiculed by his many detractors. His intention, as well as that of the other great tzaddikim who willingly sacrificed their names/souls for God, was to save the Jewish people from death, as he explains next.

And in our time, while we have no understanding of the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust, it is worthwhile recalling what the Rebbe teaches above: “Occasionally, this necessitates that people die, God forbid; a considerable number of Jewish souls are killed... very many souls are required, God forbid....” For there are times when the decrees are so severe, that only the ascent of a very great number of souls in the sanctification of God’s Name can effect a unification Above.

Reb Noson writes: From this lesson we learn that anyone who would draw close to the tzaddik—to learn from him how to truly serve God, and for the tzaddik to rectify his soul— must be willing to sacrifice his good name. For the only way to draw close to the true tzaddik is through self-sacrifice—i.e., to sacrifice one’s honor and name, which are one’s soul. Such a person must be ready to forfeit prestige and standing in his family and community, and be willing to suffer the humiliation and ridicule heaped upon him by others—this being quite literally the shedding of his blood. For someone who seeks to fill his belly, who pursues honor and wealth and spends more than he can afford on the latest fashions and jewelry, will never attain the truth. Only someone who is willing to sacrifice his name and prestige for God can hope to attain the truth, and so come closer to God and to the true tzaddik (*Likutey Halakhot, Shluchin* 5:36; *Torat Natan* #1).

**17. deserved to have happen to them, God forbid....** Because “the name is the soul,” a prestigious person’s sacrificing his name is as efficacious as one’s sacrificing his soul. Thus, when for the purpose of effecting a unification many Jews will have to lose their lives, as explained above (see §1: end and n.6), the tzaddik is able to save them by sacrificing his own name/soul. Through this “exchange” he mitigates the decrees and judgments against the Jews, and, as *mayin nukvin*, brings about a unification to restore bounty to the world.

**18. he saves them....** Reb Avraham Chazan writes: Until the Ari (d.1572), forced conversion imposed by the church, as during the Spanish Inquisition, was widespread. The Ari mitigated these judgments, so that afterwards there have been only isolated cases of such coercion. Throughout the 15th and 16th centuries, there were numerous blood libels against the Jews. The Baal Shem Tov (d. 1760) mitigated these judgments, so that afterwards such charges of ritual murder have been relatively few. Likewise, Rebbe Nachman mitigated the judgments that produced the Cossack and Haidemack pogroms of the 17th century, which decimated hundreds of Jewish communities in Eastern Europe (*Biur HaLikutim*, first edition, p.3b). From then until the Holocaust, there were no organized pogroms in which thousands were massacred at a time. Each of these tzaddikim succeeded in mitigating the judgments and harsh decrees of his time by sacrificing his name, which was as if he had made the ultimate self-sacrifice.