

Discourse 13

“*Natata L’Yerei’echa Neis LeHitnoseis* -

You have given those who fear You a banner to be
raised”

Delivered on the 12th of Tammuz, 5711

By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

The verse states,⁸⁶⁵ “You have given those who fear You a banner to be raised (*Neis LeHitnoseis*-נֵס לְהִתְנוֹסֵס) for the sake of truth, always!” In his discourse (that he sent to Russia, and has recently been printed),⁸⁶⁶ His honorable holiness, my father-in-law, the Rebbe, cites the Targum translation,⁸⁶⁷ “You have given those who fear You a test by which to be uplifted (*Nisa L’It’nasa’ah Beih*-נִסָּא לְאַתְנַסְאָה בִּיה), because of the eternal truth of Avraham.” He explains that this refers to serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, with self-sacrifice (*Mesirat*

⁸⁶⁵ Psalms 60:6

⁸⁶⁶ The discourse entitled “*Natata L’Yerei’echa*” 12 Tammuz 5693 (that was printed with additional citations and notes by the Rebbe) in the pamphlet that was given out for 12-13 Tammuz 5711 (Kuntres 93). It was subsequently printed in *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5711, p. 289 and on; *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5693, p. 532 and on. (It was sent to Russia to be studied during the days of 12-13 Tammuz. Due to the fact that the substance of this discourse discusses the matter of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) in the face of tests-*Nisyonot*, and the manner of their refinement etc., this fact was thus mentioned in the beginning of this discourse. (See the notes of the Rebbe in the aforementioned pamphlet.)

⁸⁶⁷ Targum to Psalms 60:6

Nefesh), specifically in matters that one is challenged and tested by (*Nisyonot*-נסיינות). (These tests and challenges were given to the Jewish people specifically to uplift them-*Hitnoses*-התנוסס)⁸⁶⁸ and it is specifically in this, that there is a distinction between this final exile and the exiles that preceded it. Namely, now, there are many more concealments, challenges and tests. However, in truth, this itself indicates the additional strength and might given to each and every Jew from Above, to be able to withstand the test and overcome it.

Moreover, this is the advantage of the strength and might given to the Jewish people in this final exile, over and above the other exiles, including the exile of Egypt (which was the root of all exiles).⁸⁶⁹ For, regarding the exile of Egypt, it states,⁸⁷⁰ “They did not listen to Moshe, because of distraction and hard work.” (In other words, the challenges and tests of their hard labor distracted and confused them.) In contrast, in the current exile, we have been granted the strength and might to recognize the reality that these are merely tests and challenges (*Nisyonot*).

He continues and further explains⁸⁷¹ that the test (*Nisayon*) is that the spark of Godliness is very hidden and concealed.⁸⁷² For, the matter of a test or challenge (*Nisayon*) is

⁸⁶⁸ See discourse entitled “*Natata L’Yerei’echa*” 5680 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5680, p. 105, p. 113); Sefer HaMaamarim 5689 p. 285.

⁸⁶⁹ Midrash Bereishit Rabba 16:4; Likkutei Torah of the Arizal, VaYetzei; Sefer HaMaamarim 5684, p. 279; 5709 p. 107, and elsewhere.

⁸⁷⁰ Exodus 6:9

⁸⁷¹ Sefer HaMaamarim 5680 *ibid.* p. 107, 5689 p. 288 and on; 5700 p. 22 and on; 5708 p. 94 and on; Discourse entitled “*Natata L’Yerei’echa*” 5736 Ch. 4.

⁸⁷² See Likkutei Torah, Re’eh, discourse entitled “*Acharei*” and its explanation 19b and on; Sefer HaMitzvot of the Tzemach Tzedek 185b and on.

unlike all other physical matters that become refined. That is, in regard to other physical matters, the refinement is through working with them, through which the Godly element in them becomes refined and included in Godliness. However, such is not the case with challenges and tests (*Nisayon*), wherein the manner of refinement is not through working with the thing, but rather, is through working on oneself.

In other words, the test (*Nisayon*) has no independent existence of its own. Rather, it is just that something has been placed in his way, to conceal and obstruct. Thus, one's entire engagement when dealing with such tests and challenges (*Nisyonot*) is to work on himself, to awaken the essential strength he has within himself. This must be done until he utterly nullifies all obstructions and obstacles. (The above are the words of his honorable holiness, my father-in-law, the Rebbe, at the beginning of his discourse, albeit in a very short summary.)

The essential point is that it is specifically in this final exile, in the doubled and quadrupled darkness of the "heels of Moshiach," at the very end of the hiddenness and concealment, that the Jewish people have been bestowed with even greater strength not to become confounded by the tests and challenges. In other words, through awakening the essential strength that we have within ourselves, which is an essential strength, and more so, is an essential nullification of awareness of self,⁸⁷³ the obstacle and challenge automatically becomes nullified of itself

⁸⁷³ Sefer HaMaamarim 5680 p. 108

(and it can be said that this is why specifically tests and challenges (*Nisyonot*), cause much greater ascension).

2.

The explanation of the matter is as follows: In every type of service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, be it the service of refinement (*Birurim*) or the service of overcoming tests (*Nisyonot*), there are three matters. The first is the thing with which the service must be performed. The second is the Jew himself, whose responsibility is to perform the service. The third, is the manner in which the service should be performed, whether it is with the thing that requires refinement (*Birur*), or whether it is the thing within which the test (*Nisayon*) is garbed. However, in each of these matters, there is a difference between service that is called, "the service of refinement" (*Avodat HaBirurim*) and service that is called, "the service of tests" (*Avodat HaNisyonot*).

Now, the explanation is that, "the service of refinement" (*Avodat HaBirurim*) is such, that there is a refinement of the spark of Godliness that exists in the thing being refined itself, which is not the case with "the service of tests," (*Avodat HaNisyonot*), in which, that through which the test (*Nisayon*) is made, has no actual existence.⁸⁷⁴ (As mentioned above, the test (*Nisayon*) itself, has no independent existence, in and of itself, but is only there to conceal and obstruct.) Nevertheless, since

⁸⁷⁴ See *Hemshech* 5672 Vol. 2, p. 681; *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5689, 5700, 5708 *ibid.*; Discourse entitled "*Natata L'Yerei'echa*" 5736, Ch. 4.

there indeed is a matter of a test (*Nisayon*), it must be said that there is a spark of holiness there. For, without the spark of holiness, there could not even be an imaginary existence that conceals and obstructs.

This is further understood from the abovementioned discourse regarding the matter of tests (*Nisyonot*), in that it states about the Egyptian exile,⁸⁷⁵ “They did not listen to Moshe, because of distraction and hard work.” For, in the hard labor of the Jewish people in Egypt, there certainly were many sparks of holiness, that were refined and subsequently elevated when they left Egypt.⁸⁷⁶ As known⁸⁷⁷ about of the teaching of our sages, regarding the verse,⁸⁷⁸ “And they emptied Egypt,” that,⁸⁷⁹ “They made Egypt like a trap with no bait and like a deep sea with no fish.” In other words, they utterly emptied it of all sparks of holiness.

However, the spark of holiness that exists in a test (*Nisayon*) is in a much greater state of concealment and hiddenness. This is why the primary matter of tests and challenges (*Nisyonot*) is mainly during the time of the, “heels of Moshiach,” of this final exile. That is, toward the very end of this exile. For, it is at this time that refinement of even the minutest and final sparks of holiness is necessary, as the concealment and hiddenness in them is to a much greater

⁸⁷⁵ Exodus 6:9

⁸⁷⁶ See Kanfei Yonah Vol. 3, Siman 58; Megaleh Amukot, Ophan 58, and elsewhere. Also see Sefer HaMaamarim 5689 p. 287.

⁸⁷⁷ Torah Ohr, Bo 60c and elsewhere.

⁸⁷⁸ Exodus 12:36

⁸⁷⁹ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 9b

extent.⁸⁸⁰ In other words, the sparks of holiness found in the challenges and tests (*Nisyonot*) are garbed and consumed in concealment and hiddenness, to such an extent that they do not illuminate at all. Because of this, they cannot even be called “light-*Ohr*-אור.” Thus, at times, we find that it states⁸⁸¹ that the spark of holiness can itself become “darkness-*Choshech*-חושך,” similar to the Halachic principle that,⁸⁸² “once milk imparts flavor to a piece of meat, the meat becomes non-kosher, in and of itself.”⁸⁸³

Thus, the difference between something that needs refinement (*Birur*) and something that is a test (*Nisayon*), is that the spark of holiness in the thing being refined, can be called a spark of “light-*Ohr*-אור,” since it possesses an element of illumination and light. In contrast, in a test (*Nisayon*), nothing remains of the spark of holiness except that it exists, being that all its other aspects (other than its essential existence) have become “non-kosher, in and of themselves.”

Now, based on the above distinction between something that is being refined (*Birur*) and something that is a test (*Nisayon*), there likewise is a difference in the person performing the service and in the manner of his service. For, in regard to the matter of tests (*Nisyonot*), a person must grapple with himself, meaning with his own essential being, and not

⁸⁸⁰ See Sefer HaMaamarim 5680, p. 107

⁸⁸¹ Sefer HaMaamarim 5665 p. 104; Sefer HaMaamarim 5670 p. 104; *Hemshech* 5672 Vol. 2, p. 477; Sefer HaMaamarim 5680 p. 108.

⁸⁸² Talmud Bavli 108a

⁸⁸³ And can then render other meat that it is mixed with it, as non-kosher. This is known as “*Chatichah Atzmah Na’aseit Neveilah*-בחתיכה עצמה נעשית בביילה-.”

with other matters that are only external expressions of himself. (This is similar to the spark of holiness in the thing that is a test (*Nisayon*), in which only its essential being remains intact.) Moreover, the way of this service is not one of battle, nor is it the give and take of question and answer, through which refinement and ascension are affected. Rather, the approach is specifically an awakening of one's inner essential strength and inner essential sublimation to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

3.

Now, in greater detail, the beginning of the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in a way of refinement (*Birurim*), is during prayer. This is as stated,⁸⁸⁴ "The time of prayer is a time of battle." In other words, although, generally speaking, the service of refinement (*Avodat HaBirurim*) is while eating, drinking and involvement with all other physical aspects of one's being, nevertheless, for a person not to be pulled down by these involvements, but on the contrary, to cause an ascent of the physical things, to refine and elevate the sparks of Godliness manifest within them, he must first cause a general weakening, both in himself, meaning in his body and animalistic soul, as well as in the physicality and materiality of the world.

This is accomplished through the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, during prayer, which is, "a time of battle," by which he causes a general weakening of his body and

⁸⁸⁴ Zohar as cited in Likkutei Torah Teitzei 34c, 35c

animalistic soul. This is accomplished through contemplation (*Hitbonenut*) that precedes prayer and the subsequent contemplation (*Hitbonenut*) during prayer itself. For example, when he contemplates the manner in which the *Ophanim* and *Chayot* angels are utterly nullified to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, and are entirely in His service and that they are the root of the animalistic soul, this causes a general weakening of his body and animalistic soul, and thus automatically also affects his portion of the world at large.

This is the reason⁸⁸⁵ why it is forbidden to eat and tend to one's own affairs before praying.⁸⁸⁶ For, before he has caused this general weakening in himself and in his portion in the world, there is room for concern that not only will he not be able to elevate the physical matters he engages in, but more so, the physical matters will lower him and pull him down. Thus, only after one has served *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in prayer, is it followed by serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה through the morning meal of bread⁸⁸⁷ and all other matters that pertain to the service of refinement (*Avodat HaBirurim*). For, after he has caused the general weakening of the body and animalistic soul, which is the beginning of the battle, he then is able to continue to the second stage of the battle, this being,⁸⁸⁸ "one who wishes to eat bread must do so by the blade of the sword." This refers

⁸⁸⁵ See Likkutei Torah, Pinchas 79d and on; Maamarei Admor HaZaken al Parshiot HaTorah Vol. 2, p. 747; Ohr HaTorah Bereishit Vol. 6, p. 1,020a and on; Sefer HaMaamarim 5689 p. 126 and on, and elsewhere.

⁸⁸⁶ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 10b; 14a

⁸⁸⁷ See Talmud Bavli, Bava Metzia 107b

⁸⁸⁸ Zohar III 188b (Parshat Balak, Yenuka)

to the involvement and refinement of physical matters (*Birurim*).

Now, the beginning of the service of refinement (*Avodat HaBirurim*), which is the (aforementioned) service of prayer, is by way of contemplation (*Hitbonenut*).⁸⁸⁹ The reason is that since the sparks of holiness in the things being refined are such, that besides their essential state of existence, all their other aspects also have an element of light and holiness, it therefore is possible to wage battle with them, through the give and take of questions and answers, until they are refined and elevated.

This is not the case, however, with the service of tests (*Avodat HaNisyonot*), since in this case, the spark of holiness in the test (*Nisayon*) is in such a way that it has “become non-kosher, in and of itself.” That is, the spark itself has become dark, like the darkness of the three completely impure husks of evil (*Shalosh Kelipot HaTmei’ot*), God forbid. In this case, it is impossible to approach the test in a manner of the battle of give and take, since there is no element in it by which to take hold, to even begin waging battle. Rather, this way of service requires that one awaken his innermost essential strength and sublimation to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, with the realization that there is no other way at all but to stand up to the test, since no path is open before him, except to overcome it.

However, because his service in this is from his innermost essential strength and sublimation to *HaShem*-יהו"ה,

⁸⁸⁹ Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah 2:2; For the explanation of the methodology of *Hitbonenut* contemplation, see Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, known as a Tract on *Hitbonenut*-contemplation, Chapters 1-6.

blessed is He, and not because of other, more limited expressions of the soul, such as illuminations and revelations, or even service that accords to reason and intellect, but instead, is only because of his essential self, it therefore is within the power and ability of the essence to extract the spark of holiness in the thing that he is tested with. This is because essentially, the spark that is within it is indeed whole, as explained above.

4.

Now, it is for these reasons that the service of tests (*Avodat HaNisyonot*) is tied to the aspect of the singular *Yechidah*-essence of the soul.⁸⁹⁰ That is, it is within the power of the singular *Yechidah*-essence of the soul to even transform the singular *Yechidah*-essence of the opposing side, that is, the singular *Yechidah*-essence of the animalistic soul. It is sometimes explained⁸⁹¹ that with the illumination of the singular *Yechidah*-essence of the soul, there no longer is an aspect of a test (*Nisayon*) whatsoever. Thus, the only element of a test (*Nisayon*) that remains, is to awaken and come to serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, with the singular *Yechidah*-essence of his soul. However, once he, in fact, reveals the singular *Yechidah*-essence of his soul, his service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, no longer is in the way of a test whatsoever.

⁸⁹⁰ Sefer HaMaamarim 5680 p. 109 and on; Also see the discourse entitled "*Natata L'Yerei'echa*" 5736, Ch. 2.

⁸⁹¹ See discourse entitled "*Padah BeShalom*" of the Mittler Rebbe, Ch. 9 (Shaarei Teshuvah 54c and on), cited in Sefer HaMaamarim 5680 p. 110; Sefer HaMaamarim 5700, p. 41.

The explanation is that the *Nefesh*, *Ru'ach* and *Neshamah* levels of the soul, are the inner powers of the soul and are the aspects of the intellect and below.⁸⁹² Above them, however, are the aspects of the encompassing light of the *Chayah* level of the soul and the encompassing light of the singular *Yechidah*-essence of the soul. The encompassing light of the *Chayah* of the soul, is the aspect of desire (*Ratzon*), whereas the encompassing light of the singular *Yechidah* of the soul, is the aspect of pleasure (*Ta'anug*).

Now, the way of service in a manner of the give and take of battle, is only applicable in service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in the aspects of the intellect and below. However, this is not so with service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה from the aspects of desire (*Ratzon*) and pleasure (*Ta'anug*), in which case, the give and take of the intellect is altogether not applicable. For, this is a matter of either-or, that is, either he takes pleasure in it or not. In other words, if one's service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is from the *Yechidah*-essence of his soul, which is the power of pleasure, because he has great delight in this, there is no room for the give and take of questions and answers, which is the matter of battle.

Thus, when one's service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה is from the aspect of the *Yechidah*-essence of his soul, it even transforms the *Yechidah*-essence of the animalistic soul into holiness. In other words, it pulls the pleasure of the animalistic soul out of physical matters, and it goes without saying, that it pulls it away

⁸⁹² See Sefer HaMaamarim 5680 p. 279 and on; Discourse entitled "*Ka'asher Yarim Moshe*" 5730, and elsewhere.

from coarse materiality. He then has total equanimity (*Hishtavut*) towards all physical and material matters, and thus all matters that he is tested by, become entirely nullified. This is explained by the Alter Rebbe in Iggeret HaKodesh of Tanya,⁸⁹³ that “the truly faithful is not perturbed by any sufferings in the world, and regarding all matters of the world, ‘yes’ and ‘no’ are equal to him, with true equanimity.”

In other words, the reason that a person is pained and worried over any lacking in matters relating to his children, health and livelihood, is only because these matters are not in a state of equanimity for him. However, if he has attained a state of total equanimity towards these matters this is not the case. For, he is concerned only with matters that relate to Torah and *mitzvot*, and from the perspective of Torah,⁸⁹⁴ “Whatever the Merciful One does, He does for the best!” Therefore, he has total equanimity towards everything that he might be tested with, and thus, the test (*Nisayon*) is automatically nullified completely.

This then, clarifies and explains the above statement, that if the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is from the aspect of the *Yechidah*-essence of the soul, it is not in a way of a test at all. This is because he has brought himself to total and complete equanimity toward everything that happens to him.

⁸⁹³ Tanya, Iggeret HaKodesh, Epistle 11

⁸⁹⁴ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 60b

Now, although we explained before that the spark of holiness that exists within the test (*Nisayon*) is in a state of utter concealment, to the point that all that remains of the spark is its essential existence alone (and as mentioned, this is the general distinction between tests (*Nisyonot*) and refinements (*Birurim*), from which all the other differences between them stem), on the other hand, it is known⁸⁹⁵ that the loftier something is, the greater its descent below. Thus, because this spark descended below to such a degree that nothing remains of it except for its existence, it is therefore understood that in this itself, the Highest of the high can be found.

By way of example, this may be compared to the explanation given regarding to the matter of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) in these latter generations. In earlier generations, matters of intellect were openly revealed, and the effect of intellect is that it conceals the matter of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*). The latter generations, however, do not fall into this category. Thus, just as it is much easier to have self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) in one's heels, than to have self-sacrifice in one's head, so likewise, it is easier to affect self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) in the generation of the, "heels of Moshiach," than it was in earlier generations, who were on a much loftier level.

⁸⁹⁵ See Likkutei Torah, Re'eh, discourse entitled "*Acharei*" and its explanation 19b and on; Sefer HaMitzvot of the Tzemach Tzedek 185b and on.

The same can be said of the spark of holiness in the test (*Nisayon*). That is, because nothing remains of it, but its existence alone, therefore, the Highest of the high can be found in it to an even greater extent.

6.

With all the above, we may now understand the verse,⁸⁹⁶ “for *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God, is testing you, to know whether you love *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” In other words, in order for a person to attain knowledge-*Da'at* and perception-*Re'iyah* of Godliness (“to know-*LaDa'at* לדעת”), which is the ultimate intention in the coming of Moshiach, this is attained specifically through the matter of tests (“*HaShem*-יהו"ה your God is testing-*MeNaseh*-מנסה you”).

The reason is because, in the matter of tests (*Nisyonot*), the spark of Godliness is concealed and hidden to a much greater extent, and it thus is impossible to refine it by way of the give and take of battle. Rather, one's service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה must be with the full strength of his essential self and with the sublimation of his essential self to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, through which he comes to reveal the singular *Yechidah*-essence of his soul.

When there then is a revelation of the *Yechidah*-essence of his Godly soul, this likewise transforms the *Yechidah*-

⁸⁹⁶ Deuteronomy 13:4

essence of his animalistic soul. The automatic effect is that he will have absolute equanimity towards all matters that pertain to his children, his health, and his livelihood, through which the test is utterly nullified (as explained above). It is at this point that the Godly spark within the test becomes revealed and returns to holiness. Moreover, it actually is elevated to a much loftier level, in that whatever descended lower is, in fact, much loftier.

7.

Now, this is also the reason that specifically following the tests of the doubled and quadrupled darkness of this final exile (after which, the prophecy,⁸⁹⁷ “I will remove the spirit of impurity from the land” will be fulfilled), during which time we refine the most final sparks that are in the greatest state of concealment and hiddenness, we will subsequently arrive at the fulfillment of the prophecy that,⁸⁹⁸ “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of *HaShem*-יהו"ה as the water covers the ocean floor.” That is, the promise of Torah will be revealed, namely, that, “*HaShem*-יהו"ה your God is testing you, **to know**.” In other words, the ultimate purpose of the tests (*Nisayon*) is to reveal the knowledge of *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Godliness, as in the verse,⁸⁹⁹ “**know** the God of your father.”

⁸⁹⁷ Zachariah 13:2

⁸⁹⁸ Isaiah 11:9

⁸⁹⁹ Chronicles I 28:9

We therefore were given this service of tests (*Avodat HaNisyonot*) – not as it was in the time of the Egyptian exile, which was only a manner of confusion. Rather, it will be as explained by his honorable holiness, my father-in-law, the Rebbe, in his discourse, that in this exile we have been given the strength to recognize the reality that they are nothing but tests (*Nisyonot*).” In other words, we have the ability to stand up to the test (*Nisayon*) through an essential awakening and the arousal of our essential strength and sublimation to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. We therefore can stand up to the test (*Nisayon*) in such a way that we actually can extract the sparks of holiness in them, through which we merit to come to, “know *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God!”

In other words, the test (*Nisayon*) has no independent existence in and of itself. Rather, the whole reason that “*HaShem*-יהו"ה your God, is testing you” is specifically so that you should come “to know-*LaDa'at*,” and to come to the state and standing of, “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of *HaShem*-יהו"ה!”

Therefore, if we stand up against all concealment and hiddenness, and if our service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is not in the way of the give and take of battle, but we instead approach every matter with our essential strength and our essential sublimation to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, that is, that we recognize the reality that, “In and of myself I have no existence whatsoever (I truly am nothing), nonetheless, since I am engaged in the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, I will not be shaken or moved by anything. I know that it is

impossible to do otherwise and that this matter must be carried out!” If this is the approach, then the test (*Nisayon*) becomes nullified and the spark of holiness that was concealed in it, becomes refined and elevated.

Through this, we bring about revelation of Godliness in the world at large, so that speedily in our days, this revelation will come about in the most literal sense, through the coming of our righteous Moshiach. The preparation for this must be carried out by every single one of us during the time of exile, particularly during this final exile, and more particularly, during the “heels of Moshiach,” which is the very end of the exile. In other words, when each and every one will carry out his service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, with essential strength, and with essential sublimation to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, then we all will speedily merit, that in our times, all the revelations and illuminations of the Singular Essential Being of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, the Unlimited One Himself, blessed is He, will be revealed, through our righteous Moshiach! May this be speedily in our days, Amen!