

Discourse 13

*“Adona”y Sefatai Tiftach uFiy Yagid Tehilatecha -
Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your
praises”*⁹⁶⁹

Delivered on the 11th of Nissan, 5712
By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

The verse states,⁹⁷⁰ “My Lord-*Adona”y*-יְיָ, open my lips and my mouth will declare Your praises.” Now, this verse is the request of King David, as well as that of the community of Israel and each and every Jew. It therefore was instituted to be recited before the *Amidah* prayer, as stated in Talmud,⁹⁷¹ “Rabbi Yochanan said: At the beginning of prayer, one says: ‘My Lord-*Adona”y*-יְיָ, open my lips and my mouth will declare Your praises.’”

Now, we must understand⁹⁷² why they specifically established the recital of this verse before the *Amidah* prayer and not before all the prayers. (For example, it is not recited

⁹⁶⁹ This discourse is founded upon the discourse by the same title of the Rebbe Maharash, from the year 5627. (See Igrot Kodesh of the Rebbe, Vol. 9, p. 238.) That discourse is printed in Sefer HaMaamarim 5626 (Kehot 5749), p. 278 and on, and 5627 p. 436 and on; (Also see the discourse entitled “*Vayigash*” 5658 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5658 p. 67 and on)).

⁹⁷⁰ Psalms 51:17 – This is the section of Psalms that began to be recited on the 11th of Nissan 5712 (See Sefer HaMaamarim 11 Nissan, p. 1 and on).

⁹⁷¹ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 9b

⁹⁷² See Sefer HaMaamarim 5626, 5627, and 5658 *ibid*.

before the recital of *Shema* and its blessings or before the verses of song – *Pesukei D’Zimra*.) Even more perplexing is that Talmud states there that, “Rav Beruna once juxtaposed the mention of the redemption (*Ge’ulah*) to the *Amidah* prayer and laughter did not cease from his mouth for that entire day.” The Talmud then asks, “How can the mention of the redemption be juxtaposed to the *Amidah* prayer? Did not Rabbi Yochanan state that one must first recite the verse, ‘My Lord-*Adona’y*”-”יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, open my lips and my mouth will declare Your praises?’” The Talmud concludes with the answer, “Since the Sages instituted it, it is considered to be one extended prayer.” Now, at first glance, if juxtaposing the mention of the redemption (*Ge’ulah*) to the *Amidah* prayer is of such great importance, why then did they institute the recital of this verse before the eighteen blessings⁹⁷³ of the *Amidah* prayer? That is, why must we rely on the answer that it is considered to be one extended prayer? Why was it not instead instituted to be recited before all the prayers, thus allowing for the mention of the redemption (*Ge’ulah*) to be immediately juxtaposed to the *Amidah* prayer in a literal and simple manner?

Now, as known,⁹⁷⁴ the matter of juxtaposing the mention of the redemption (*Ge’ulah*) to the *Amidah* prayer, corresponds to the matter of Yehudah approaching Yosef.⁹⁷⁵

⁹⁷³ In actuality, there are nineteen blessings in the *Amidah* prayer. This is because the blessing, “Let there be no hope for the informers,” was added later.

⁹⁷⁴ See Zohar Vayigash 205b; Discourse entitled “*Vayigash*” *ibid*; Discourse entitled “*Vayigash*” in *Hemshech* 5666 p. 119, 126 and on, 487 and on.

⁹⁷⁵ Genesis 44:18

That is, Yehudah corresponds to the matter of prayer. This is why he was named Yehudah, as the verse states,⁹⁷⁶ “This time I shall thank *HaShem-HaPa’am Odeh et HaShem-* הפעם אודה את יהוה.” In the *Sefirot*, this corresponds to the *Sefirah* of kingship-*Malchut* as it descends to the worlds of Creation-*Briyah*, Formation-*Yetzirah*, and Action-*Asiyah*, in order to refine them, as indicated by the verse,⁹⁷⁷ “She rises while it still is night and gives food to her household etc.”

Yosef, on the other hand, corresponds to the matter of redemption and salvation. That is, Yosef corresponds to the *Sefirah* of foundation-*Yesod*, which bestows influence to the *Sefirah* of kingship-*Malchut*. This is indicated by the verse,⁹⁷⁸ “Now, Yosef was the ruler over the land, he was the provider to all the people of the land.” This influence is even bestowed when the *Sefirah* of kingship-*Malchut* is in a state of descent to the worlds of Creation-*Briyah*, Formation-*Yetzirah*, and Action-*Asiyah*. This is similar to what we find regarding Yosef, that during the years of abundance, he also prepared and set aside food and grain for the years of famine.⁹⁷⁹ In other words, his bestowal of influence also took place during the years of famine.

Thus, the matter of juxtaposing the mention of the redemption (*Ge’ulah*) to the *Amidah* prayer constitutes the bond between *Yesod* (*Zeir Anpin*) and *Malchut*. We may

⁹⁷⁶ Genesis 29:35

⁹⁷⁷ Proverbs 31:15; Also see Torah Ohr, Bereishit 8a; Ohr HaTorah Bereishit (Vol. 6), p. 1,058b and on, and elsewhere.

⁹⁷⁸ Genesis 42:6

⁹⁷⁹ Genesis 41:47-49

therefore understand why the mention of redemption (*Ge'ulah*) is juxtaposed to prayer specifically before the *Amidah* prayer. For, the novelty introduced in the *Amidah* prayer, over and above the prayers that precede it, is that the *Amidah* prayer constitutes the union of *Zeir Anpin* and *Nukvah*. This is as explained in various places,⁹⁸⁰ that the *Shema* recital is the matter of the union of *Abba* and *Imma*, whereas the *Amidah* is the matter of the union of *Zeir Anpin* and *Nukvah*.

This also is the reason why the eighteen blessings of the *Amidah* prayer are recited while standing,⁹⁸¹ since it is in the world of Emanation-*Atzilut*, which is the world of standing. In contrast, the *Shema* recital is specifically recited while seated (*Yeshivah*-ישיבה), since it is the aspect of,⁹⁸² “your dwelling places-*Moshvoteychem*-מושבתיכם,” referring to the worlds of Creation-*Briyah*, Formation-*Yetzirah*, and Action-*Asiyah*. However, is not the *Shema* recital loftier than the eighteen blessings of the *Amidah*? For, the *Shema* recital is the union of *Abba* and *Imma*, whereas the *Amidah* is the union of *Zeir Anpin* and *Nukvah*. However, this itself is the reason for it, since it is specifically in the worlds of Creation-*Briyah*, Formation-*Yetzirah*, and Action-*Asiyah*, which are the aspect of, “your dwelling places-*Moshvoteychem*-מושבתיכם,” wherein the revelations of Godliness are in a state of descent

⁹⁸⁰ Pri Etz Chaim, Shaar HaKriyat Shema, Ch. 4, and elsewhere.

⁹⁸¹ See Pri Etz Chaim, *ibid.*; Likkutei Torah Bamidbar 20a-b; Sefer HaMitzvot of the Tzemach Tzedek, Shores Mitzvat HaTefillah, Ch. 2 (Derech Mitzvotcha, 115a).

⁹⁸² Leviticus 23:17; See Likkutei Torah and Derech Mitzvotcha *ibid.*

and lowliness (and are not in their ultimate strength), that it is specifically possible for there to be a union of *Abba* and *Imma* without one's existence becoming totally nullified. Such is not the case, however, when it comes to the *Amidah* prayer.

Thus, it is for the following reason that we juxtapose the mention of the redemption (*Ge'ulah*) to the *Amidah* prayer. Namely, it is in order to draw the matter of the union of *Abba* and *Imma* of the blessings of the *Shema* recital (that is, the redemption) into the matter of the union of *Zeir Anpin* and *Nukvah* of the *Amidah* prayer, so that the ascension of the *Amidah* prayer will be as it should be.⁹⁸³

This being the case, this matter is even more astonishing. That is, why did they institute the recital of the verse, "My Lord-*Adona*" *יְיָ-אֲדֹנָי*, open my lips" between the mention of the redemption (*Ge'ulah*) and the *Amidah* prayer? For, by doing so, it then becomes necessary to answer that, "it is considered to be one extended prayer." Why did they not instead institute saying it at the very beginning of the prayers (before *Hodu*)?

2.

All this may be understood by prefacing with an explanation of the matter of prayer. For, the general difference between Torah study and prayer,⁹⁸⁴ is that the

⁹⁸³ For a lengthy discourse that explains the *Shema* recital and the *Amidah* prayer, see the Opening Gateway (*Petach HaShaar*) to Imrei Binah, translated as The Gateway to Understanding.

⁹⁸⁴ See *Hemshech* 5672 Vol. 2, p. 785 and on, and elsewhere.

matter of Torah is from Above to below. This is to say that the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, of the lower beings, does not affect Torah. All that is necessary is to make one's receptacle fitting, so that the vessel does not cause confusions in the light that is drawn forth. Prayer, in contrast, is from below to Above, and the drawing forth is thus commensurate to one's service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. For, the drawing forth from Above is through the aspect of the emotions, as stated,⁹⁸⁵ "six days *HaShem*-יהו"ה made." The verse is precise in saying "six days *HaShem*-יהו"ה made," rather than, "**in** six days *HaShem*-יהו"ה made." That is, it is referring to the six Supernal emotive attributes with which the world is constructed.⁹⁸⁶

This drawing forth is affected through man's service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in refining his emotions and in his service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in thought, speech, and action, all of which affect a refinement of his emotive attributes.⁹⁸⁷ The same is true on an even loftier level, which is that through praying, "Let it be desirable before You," we affect a drawing forth of a new desire from Above.⁹⁸⁸ What is generally understood from this, is that the matter of prayer is specifically in a way of ascension from below to Above.

⁹⁸⁵ Exodus 20:11; 31:17

⁹⁸⁶ Zohar I 247a; Zohar III 298b, and elsewhere.

⁹⁸⁷ See Sefer HaMaamarim 5626 *ibid.* p. 280; 5627 *ibid.* p. 438; 5658 *ibid.* p.

⁹⁸⁸ See Sefer HaMaamarim 5629 p. 2 and elsewhere.

However,⁹⁸⁹ there is an even loftier level in prayer, which is similar to Torah. This is called, “an extended prayer” (*Tefilah Arichta*), wherein the drawing forth that is affected by such a prayer is from Above to below. It is similar to Torah in that, although in general, the matter of Torah is from Above to below, nevertheless, in Torah itself there are two levels.⁹⁹⁰ There is the aspect of the “dew-*Tal*-טל” of Torah, which is from Above to below, as we are taught,⁹⁹¹ “The dew-*Tal*-טל is never withheld.”⁹⁹² That is, dew-*Tal*-טל does not depend on man’s service of *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, from below. Then there is the aspect of the “rain-*Matar*-מטר” of Torah, which is from below to Above. For, rain is drawn down after being preceded by an ascension from below to Above, as it states,⁹⁹³ “A mist ascended from the earth and watered the whole surface of the soil.”

The same is also true of prayer. It too possesses two levels. That is, although the general matter of prayer is that it

⁹⁸⁹ See Sefer HaMaamarim 5626 *ibid.* p. 285; 5627 *ibid.* p. 443; 5658 *ibid.* p. 76.

⁹⁹⁰ See Likkutei Torah Eikev 14b; Ha’azinu 73b and on.

⁹⁹¹ Talmud Bavli, Taanit 3a-b

⁹⁹² Talmud Bavli, Taanit 4a, relates that the Jewish people entreated *HaShem* to be a blessing as the rain as in the verse (Hosea 6:3) “And let us know, eagerly strive to know *HaShem*. His going forth is sure as the morning, and He will come to us as the rain.” To this *HaShem* responded, “My daughter, you request [my manifestation by comparing me to] the matter [of rain] which is sometimes desired and sometimes not desired. However, I will be for you like that which is always desired as stated (Hosea 14:6) ‘I will be as the dew-*Tal*-טל’ to Israel.” In other words, dew is constant and unchanging, just as *HaShem* is One-*HaShem Echad*-יהוה אחד is constant and unchanging. Thus, the dew-*Tal*-טל has a numerical value of 39 which is the same as *HaShem* is One-*HaShem Echad*-יהוה אחד-39. See Ginat Egoz of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as *HaShem Is One*, Volume 1, The Gate of Intrinsic Being.

⁹⁹³ Genesis 2:6

is from below to Above, nonetheless, prayer also possesses a level of drawing forth from Above to below.⁹⁹⁴

3.

The explanation⁹⁹⁵ of the matter is as our sages, of blessed memory, taught,⁹⁹⁶ “Whoever sits and studies Torah, the Holy One, blessed is He, reads and studies opposite him.” In another place it states,⁹⁹⁷ “During the first three hours of the day, the Holy One, blessed is He, sits and engages in Torah study.” It is explained elsewhere⁹⁹⁸ that when they stated, “Whoever sits and studies Torah, the Holy One, blessed is He, reads and studies opposite him,” this refers to the drawing forth of the level of Torah in a way of ascension, from below to Above. That is, this drawing forth of Torah is accomplished through man’s study of Torah below and thus depends on man’s efforts. In contrast, when they stated, “During the first three hours of the day, the Holy One, blessed is He, sits and engages in Torah study,” this is a matter of drawing forth from Above to below, which is an awakening from Above that is not dependent on the actions of the lower beings.

⁹⁹⁴ See Ohr HaTorah Tehillim (Yahal Ohr) p. 198.

⁹⁹⁵ See Sefer HaMaamarim 5626 *ibid.* p. 283 and on; 5627 *ibid.* p. 441 and on; 5658 *ibid.* p. 73 and on.

⁹⁹⁶ Tana D’Vei Eliyahu Rabba, Ch. 18; Yalkut Shimoni Eicha, Remez 1,034.

⁹⁹⁷ Talmud Bavli, Avoda Zarah 3b

⁹⁹⁸ Sefer HaMaamarim 5630 p. 87 and on; *Hemshech “V’Kachah”* 5637 Ch. 66 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5637 Vol. 2, p. 552 and on); Sefer HaMaamarim 5697 p. 266 and on.

Now, just as it is so with the Supernal Torah, so is it this way with Torah as it is below. That is, there are two types of Torah study. There is Torah study that is not for the sake of the Name of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, and there is Torah study for the sake of the Name of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.⁹⁹⁹ For, even regarding Torah study that is not for the sake of the Name of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, our sages of blessed memory, stated,¹⁰⁰⁰ "A person should always engage in the study of Torah, even if he does not do so for the sake of the Name of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, since through doing so not for the sake of the Name of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, he will come to do so for the sake of the Name of *HaShem*-יהו"ה."

Now, the explanation of study for the sake of the Name of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is that one has no sense of self existence whatsoever. Rather, his study is like one who repeats after the reader,¹⁰⁰¹ in that he simply is stating the word of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. (That is, he says what is said Above.) The same is true in regard to prayer, that although, in general, it is a matter that depends on the actions of the lower beings, nevertheless, there is a level of prayer that does not depend on the actions of the lower beings. In this level of prayer, a person is in a state of utter nullification of sense of self and his prayer is solely like one who repeats after the reader.

⁹⁹⁹ Also see Sefer HaMaamarim 5665 p. 123 and on; Discourse entitled "Livyatan Zeh Yatzarta" of Shabbat Parshat Shmini of this year 5712 (Discourse 15).

¹⁰⁰⁰ Talmud Bavli, Pesachim 50b

¹⁰⁰¹ See Talmud Bavli, Sukkah 38a; Also see Torah Ohr Yitro 67b; Likkutei Torah Shir HaShirim 44b and elsewhere.

This then, is the substance of the request,¹⁰⁰² “My Lord-*Adona*” יְיָ-אֲדֹנָי, open my lips and my mouth will declare Your praises,” which is the matter of, “the extended prayer” (*Tefilah Arichta*). Namely, it is a simple and literal request that the Holy One, blessed is He, should “open my lips and my mouth will declare Your praises.” The term “declare-*Yagid*” יַגִּיד is of the same root as “relate-*Haggadah*” הִגִּידָה, and is a term that means, “to draw forth” (*Hamshachah*).¹⁰⁰³ For, it is through one’s utter nullification of sense of self (*Bitul*), that he reaches a level and state in which this prayer is not his own (that is, of the one who is praying), but rather, “my mouth will declare **Your** praises,” meaning that it is **Your** prayer and praise.

When a person prays in this manner, then the drawing forth from Above is likewise in a manner in which nothing can possibly obstruct the bestowal of influence and it is drawn down exactly as it is above. In contrast, in the first level of prayer, which is in a way of ascension from below to Above, it is possible for there to be an obstruction to the drawing forth of influence affected by prayer.¹⁰⁰⁴ Such is not the case, however, in regard to this level of prayer, which is the “extended prayer” (*Tefilah Arichta*). For, in this type of

¹⁰⁰² Psalms 51:17 – This is the section of Psalms that began to be recited on the 11th of Nissan 5712 (See Sefer HaMaamarim 11 Nissan, p. 1 and on).

¹⁰⁰³ Pri Etz Chayim, Shaar HaAmidah Ch. 2, and elsewhere.

¹⁰⁰⁴ See Likkutei Torah Korach 55d and on, and elsewhere.

prayer, the influence is drawn forth and comes down in that time and place, immediately.

5.

With the above in mind, we can now understand why the recital of the verse, “My Lord-*Adona*”^{י-י-י}, open my lips,” is specifically said before the *Amidah* prayer. This is because the twelve intermediate blessings of the *Amidah* prayer are supplications for the bestowal of physical influence. That is, we request that *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, bless our year and heal the sick etc. However, in order for the influence to come forth, as it is, and be bestowed to manifest physically, the aspect of the “extended prayer” (*Tefilah Arichta*), is necessary, as explained before.

In terms of the received knowledge of Kabbalah, this is explained as follows: At the beginning of the *Amidah* we recite, “The Supernal God-*E*”^{ל עליון-י} *Elyon*... and who brings a redeemer to their children’s children...” It is explained elsewhere¹⁰⁰⁵ that the words, “and who brings a redeemer to their children’s children,” refer to a drawing forth of a new issuance of influence to the *Sefirot* of *Netzach*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*. This is drawn forth by the Supernal God-*E*”^{ל עליון-י} *Elyon*, which is a drawing forth from the aspect of crown-*Keter*.¹⁰⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰⁵ Pri Etz Chayim, Shaar HaAmidah Ch. 14-15; Likkutei Torah Masei 90c; Shir HaShirim 27c.

¹⁰⁰⁶ For a lengthier explanation of this, see Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 26.

This is similarly stated in the writings of the Arizal¹⁰⁰⁷ in explanation of the verse, “My Lord-*Adona*”*ג'דנא*, open my lips and my mouth will declare Your praises.” Namely, it is explained there that *HaShem*’s *יהו"ה* title, My Lord-*Adona*”*ג'דנא*, corresponds to the aspect of His kingship-*Malchut*. The word, “my lips-*Sifatai*”*שפתאי*,” in the plural, correspond to the aspects of His victory-*Netzach* and majesty-*Hod*. The word, “open-*Tiftach*”*תפתח*,” is the aspect of His beauty-*Tiferet*. The continuing word, “and my mouth-*uFi*”*ופי*,” refers to a drawing forth of a new issuance of *Netzach*, *Hod* and *Yesod*. This ability to draw forth a new issuance of beneficence is drawn from the aspect of the crown-*Keter*, which is the *Aleph-א* of the title My Lord-*Adona*”*ג'דנא*. For, as explained in the Siddur,¹⁰⁰⁸ the primary focus is on the *Aleph-א* of the title My Lord-*Adona*”*ג'דנא*. For, the *Aleph-א* is the same letters as wondrous-*Pele*”*פלא*, and refers to the aspect of *HaShem*’s *יהו"ה* Supernal wondrousness-*Pele Elyon*”*פלא עליון*, and is the aspect of the crown-*Keter* that transcends the aspects of wisdom-*Chochmah* and understanding-*Binah*.¹⁰⁰⁹

Nevertheless, it is drawn forth by understanding-*Binah*, as in the teaching,¹⁰¹⁰ “The revelation of the Ancient

¹⁰⁰⁷ See Pri Etz Chayim, Shaar HaAmidah Ch. 1; Also see Mishnat Chassidim, Mesechet Atzilut d’Arvit, 1:4.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Siddur Im Divrei Elokim Chayim, discourse entitled “*Adona*”*y Sifatai Tiftach*” p. 236c and on; cited in Ohr HaTorah to Psalms 51 *ibid*.

¹⁰⁰⁹ See the Opening Gateway (*Petach HaShaar*) to Imrei Binah of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gateway To Understanding, Ch. 1.

¹⁰¹⁰ Zohar III 178b; Torah Ohr Lech Lecha 11b and on.

– it is through this that we draw forth the bestowal of physical influence in the twelve intermediate blessings of the *Amidah* prayer, which is the primary intent of the prayer.¹⁰¹⁸

This then, is the meaning of the recital of the verse, “My Lord-*Adona*” אֲדֹנָיִי, open my lips and my mouth will declare Your praises.” Namely, it refers to the matter of sublimation to *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, and the nullification of sense of self (*Bitul*). That is, he requests that *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, open his lips and then, “My mouth will declare **Your** praises,” meaning, “the praises that are **Yours**.” That is, he is like one who repeats after the reader and is merely drawing forth the praise from Above. It is specifically when he is in a state of utter sublimation to *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, and is nullified of sense of self, that he supplicates from the bitterness of his soul, as the same Psalm states:¹⁰¹⁹ “Create a pure heart for me, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your Presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore the joy of Your salvation to me, and sustain me with a generous spirit.” Then, “I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will return to You.” It is through this that we affect a drawing forth from the Supernal Wonder-*Pele Elyon*-פֶּלֶא עֲלִיּוֹן, which is a drawing forth that does not come in a way of constrictions and limitations, but rather, is drawn forth immediately below.

¹⁰¹⁸ See Mishneh Torah of the Rambam, Hilchot Tefilah 1:2; Also see Likkutei Sichot Vol. 22 p. 117 and elsewhere.

¹⁰¹⁹ Psalms 51:12 and on.

Thus, for this reason we recite the verse, “My Lord-*Adona*”¹⁰²⁰ יְיָ-אֲדֹנָי, open my lips and my mouth will declare Your praises,” before the *Amidah* prayer. For through this, the *Amidah* prayer comes to be in an aspect of an, “extended prayer” (*Tefilah Arichta*), through which we draw forth the beneficence and influence into physicality etc.¹⁰²⁰

¹⁰²⁰ The conclusion of this discourse is missing.