

Discourse 23

“*Ani LeDodi V’Dodi Li* -

I am my Beloved’s, and my Beloved is mine”

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Re’eh,
Shabbat Mevarchim Elul, 5712
By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

The verse states,¹⁶⁸⁹ “I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine, He grazes (His flock) amongst the roses.” As known¹⁶⁹⁰ the first letters of the words, “I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine-*Ani Ledodi V’Dodi Li*- אֲנִי לְדוּדִי וְדוּדִי לִי,” form the name of the month “Elul-אֱלּוּל.” The final letters are four *Yod*’s-י-10, corresponding to the forty days starting from the new moon (*Rosh Chodesh*) of Elul to Yom Kippur,¹⁶⁹¹ and the day of Yom Kippur concludes the forgiveness, pardoning and atonement that come about through serving *HaShem*-יְהוָה, blessed is He, in a way of repentance, that is, by returning to *HaShem*-יְהוָה throughout the preceding month of Elul.

¹⁶⁸⁹ Song of Songs 6:3

¹⁶⁹⁰ See Pri Etz Chayim, Shaar Rosh HaShanah, Ch. 1; Shaar HaPsukim, Shir HaShirim to Song of Songs 6:3; Reishit Chochmah, Shaar HaTeshuvah Ch. 4 (section entitled “*Od Yesh*” 115a); Bayit Chadash to Tur Orach Chayim 581, and elsewhere.

¹⁶⁹¹ See Reishit Chochmah and Bayit Chadash *ibid.*; Also see Ohr HaTorah Shir HaShirim Vol. 2, p. 546.

Now, the general service of returning to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in the month of Elul, is by way of ascent from below to Above.¹⁶⁹² This is why the verse states "I am my Beloved's," (and only afterwards states), "and my Beloved is mine." Whereas an earlier verse states,¹⁶⁹³ "My Beloved is mine" (first, and then,) "and I am His," indicating a descent from Above to below,¹⁶⁹⁴ because, in that case, the awakening Above causes an awakening below. However, regarding the service of the month of Elul, it states, "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine," indicating an awakening from below to Above. That is, it is through the awakening to return to *HaShem*-יהו"ה below, that an awakening from Above is drawn down.

The verse then continues and concludes, "He grazes (His flock) amongst the roses." The simple understanding of this phrase is that it comes to describe the aspect of, "my Beloved is mine," that, "He grazes (His flock) amongst the roses." However, we must better understand what is added by the words, "He grazes (His flock) amongst the roses," and what it comes to add to the two matters of, "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine."

There is yet another matter to understand here, as follows: As known, the explanation of the words "He grazes (His flock) amongst the roses," is that it indicates that strength

¹⁶⁹² See the first discourse entitled "*Ani LeDodi*" in Likkutei Torah Re'eh, 32a and on.

¹⁶⁹³ Song of Songs 2:16

¹⁶⁹⁴ See Ohr HaTorah, Shir HaShirim ibid. p. 543; Sefer HaMaamarim 5627 p. 196; Likkutei Sichot Vol. 29 p. 163.

is given from Above in the matter of service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.¹⁶⁹⁵ That is, it is similar to the simple meaning of the words, "He grazes (His flock) amongst the roses," that just as a shepherd grazes his sheep in the best pastures, so likewise, spiritually, this refers to the granting of additional strength from Above in matters that relate to serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. However, this must be better understood. For, since the matter of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה with repentance during the month of Elul is from below to Above, as is the service of repentance-*Teshuvah* in general, and particularly in the month of Elul, as explained regarding the verse, "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine," then of what significance is this matter of, "He grazes (His flock) amongst the roses," which is the granting of strength from Above? For, this seems to indicate that service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, from below to Above, is dependent on the granting of strength from Above first.

However, the explanation is that there are two interpretations of the words, "He grazes (His flock) amongst the roses."¹⁶⁹⁶ The first is as stated in *Zohar*,¹⁶⁹⁷ "Just as a rose has thirteen petals, the Jewish people are surrounded on all sides by the thirteen attributes of mercy." That is, the words "He grazes (His flock) amongst the roses," refers to the thirteen attributes of mercy. The second interpretation is like

¹⁶⁹⁵ See the second discourse entitled "*Ani LeDodī*" in *Likkutei Torah*, Re'eh 33c and on.

¹⁶⁹⁶ See *Likkutei Torah* *ibid.* 33a and on; Discourse entitled "*Ani LeDodī*" 5693 (printed in *Kuntres Chai Elul* 5712; *Sefer HaMaamarim Kuntreisim* Vol. 3, p. 101; *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5693 p. 537 and on.)

¹⁶⁹⁷ *Zohar* Introduction 1a

the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory,¹⁶⁹⁸ “The word ‘roses-*Shoshanim*-שׁוֹשָׁנִים’ refers to ‘the study of Torah-*SheShonim BaTorah*-שְׁשׁוֹנִים בַּתּוֹרָה.” Thus, according to this, the thirteen petals correspond to the thirteen principles of exegesis by which the Torah is expounded.¹⁶⁹⁹

Thus, the meaning of, “I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine, He grazes (His flock) amongst the roses,” is that through, “grazing (His flock) amongst the roses,” strength is given from Above in two matters: In Torah (through the thirteen principles of exegesis by which the Torah is expounded), and in prayer (through the thirteen attributes of mercy). It is through them (the study of Torah and prayer) that one comes to serve *HaShem*-יְהוָה, blessed is He, in the manner of, “I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine.”

2.

The explanation¹⁷⁰⁰ is that Torah and prayer represent two paths in the service of *HaShem*-יְהוָה, blessed is He. The study of Torah is from Above to below, whereas prayer is from below to Above.

Torah is from Above to below, which is the general matter of the giving of the Torah. That is, the Jewish people received the Torah by virtue of the Holy One, blessed is He,

¹⁶⁹⁸ Zohar II 20b; 274a; Talmud Bavli Shabbat 30b

¹⁶⁹⁹ Beginning of Sifra, Braita d’Rabbi Yishmael

¹⁷⁰⁰ See the discourse entitled “*Ani LeDodi*” 5674 (*Hemshech* 5672 Vol. 1, p. 618 and on); Also see the discourse by the same title, Shabbat Parshat Re’eh 5715 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5715 p. 193 and on).

bequeathing it to them as a gift. That is, it did not at all result from the service of the creatures.¹⁷⁰¹ For, after all, when the Jewish people were in Egypt, they were sunken in the forty-nine gates of impurity.¹⁷⁰² That is, when they left Egypt, their service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה was in a way of flight, as indicated by the words,¹⁷⁰³ “the people fled,” meaning that without taking their state and standing into consideration – in that their evil was in full strength – and without entering into any interaction of give and take with the opposing side of evil (*Sitra Achara*), they fled from Egypt. This was followed by a period of fifty-one-day until the giving of the Torah.¹⁷⁰⁴ During that time, they served *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, through counting the Omer. This is as stated by Rabbeinu Nissim,¹⁷⁰⁵ citing the Midrash Aggadah, that each individual counted to himself (and asked, “when will we already come to the giving of the Torah?”)

Nevertheless, the actual matter of the giving of the Torah itself, was specifically in a way of a gift. This is because the revelation in the giving of the Torah was not at all commensurate to their service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. For, even though their service was such that they fled from Egypt and served Him through counting the Omer, nevertheless, we cannot say that through this service, in a mere fifty-one days, they could come from being sunken in the

¹⁷⁰¹ See *Hemshech* 5672 *ibid.* p. 626.

¹⁷⁰² *Zohar Chadash*, beginning of Parshat Yitro, and elsewhere.

¹⁷⁰³ Exodus 14:5; See *Tanya* Ch. 31 (40b).

¹⁷⁰⁴ See *Shulchan Aruch* of the Alter Rebbe, *Orach Chayim* 494:1

¹⁷⁰⁵ See Rabbeinu Nissim at the end of Tractate *Pesachim*

depths of forty-nine gates of impurity, to the revelations of the giving of the Torah. For, at the giving of the Torah there were the revelations of,¹⁷⁰⁶ “*HaShem*-יהו"ה descended upon Mount Sinai,” and the utterance of,¹⁷⁰⁷ “I am *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God!” This revelation was a gift from Above, and was not at all on account of their service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

Now, since the matter of Torah is that it is from Above to below, meaning that the revelation of Torah is due to the One Above, whereas the state and standing of the one below is of no consequence whatsoever, therefore, even as the Torah descends and is lowered to many different levels, to the point that it even manifests in physical matters,¹⁷⁰⁸ and even in false arguments,¹⁷⁰⁹ nevertheless, in all levels of its manifestation, including even the lowest of levels, the Torah causes an aspect of nullification to *HaShem*-יהו"ה in them. Moreover, this nullification is not merely sublimation as a separate being (*Bitul HaYesh*), but is the nullification of their essential self to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, (*Bittul Atzmi*).

In other words, even though the Torah manifests within the lowest of matters, nevertheless, since it is the aspect of a revelation from Above, in a way that the one below takes up no space in relation to it, therefore, on all levels within which it manifests, it causes the nullification of the essential self to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

¹⁷⁰⁶ Exodus 19:20

¹⁷⁰⁷ Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 5:6

¹⁷⁰⁸ See Tanya, Ch. 4 (8b)

¹⁷⁰⁹ See Tanya, Ch. 5 (9b); Kuntres Etz HaChayim Ch. 11 (p. 38); Sefer HaMaamarim 5692 p. 148; 5704 p. 108.

This is analogous to the Manna. That is, even though it was “bread from heaven,”¹⁷¹⁰ nonetheless, when it descended below to become physical food and be converted into the physical flesh and blood of the one who consumed it, no waste was produced from it. That is, it remained in its pristine state, as bread from heaven. The same is true of Torah. Since it is a revelation from Above, “bread from heaven,” therefore, even as it descends below to manifest in physical matters, even in false arguments, it nevertheless remains in its state of essential nullification to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

On the other hand, prayer is service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, from below to Above. That is, it is the toil of the creatures themselves (in purifying themselves), each according to his capability and station. Thus, even the loftiest level of prayer is only the aspect of sublimation to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, as a separate being (*Bitul HaYesh*), and is not the nullification of one's essential self to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He (*Bittul Atzmi*). This is because prayer is called, “service-*Avodah*”-עבודה, as it states,¹⁷¹¹ “And you shall serve (*V'Avadetem* ויעבדתם) *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God,” referring to prayer,¹⁷¹² as it states,¹⁷¹³ “and serve Him with all your heart,” about which our sages stated,¹⁷¹⁴ “Which is the service of the heart? This is prayer.” The term “service-*Avodah*”-עבודה, is of the same root as, “worked hides-*Orot Avudim*”-עורות

¹⁷¹⁰ Exodus 16:4

¹⁷¹¹ Exodus 23:25

¹⁷¹² Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Tefilah uBirkat Kohanim 1:1

¹⁷¹³ Deuteronomy 11:13

¹⁷¹⁴ Talmud Bavli Taanit 2a; Mishneh Torah ibid.

עבודים.”¹⁷¹⁵ That is, just as when working with animal hides, the tanner takes coarse leather and works and softens it, until it is fit to be made into a garment, so it is with the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, through prayer, in that it causes the refinement in the creature.

Thus, even in the most elevated level of prayer, a person can only attain sublimation to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, as a separate being (*Bitul HaYesh*). For, since prayer is the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, from below to Above, meaning that there is the existence of the one who serves and there is, “leather that needs working and refining,” which is the same matter, therefore, the sublimation to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, attained through this service, is only an aspect of sublimation to *HaShem*-יהו"ה as a separate being (*Bitul HaYesh*). That is, there is the existence of the one who is sublimated. This is not an aspect of utter nullification of independent existence (*Bittul B'Metziyut*), which is the nullification of the essential self (*Bittul Atzmi*). This is to say that even the loftiest levels of prayer, which are considered to be the aspect of nullification of independent existence (*Bittul b'Metziyut*),¹⁷¹⁶ are only so relative to lower levels of prayer. In truth, however, they only are sublimation to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, as a separate being (*Bitul HaYesh*). For, since prayer itself is the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, from below to Above, it therefore is not the aspect of

¹⁷¹⁵ Torah Ohr Mishpatim 76a

¹⁷¹⁶ Torah Ohr Vayeichi 45c and elsewhere.

nullification of one's essential self to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He (*Bittul Atzmi*).

3.

Now, since prayer is the matter of ascent from below to Above, therefore the order of the prayers is also in a way of ascent from below to Above.¹⁷¹⁷ This is because prayer is the aspect of a ladder, as in the verse,¹⁷¹⁸ “A ladder (*Sulam*-סֶלָם) was set on the earth and its head reached the heavens.” That is, one begins with the lower levels of prayer and ascends to the higher levels. For, prayer begins with the words,¹⁷¹⁹ “Give thanks to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, declare His Name, make His acts known among the nations,” which is only the aspect of general thankfulness. Now, there also is an even more general thankfulness, which is the thankfulness of, “*Modeh Ani* – I am thankful,” said immediately upon waking from sleep. That is, immediately upon waking, a Jew thanks *HaShem*-יהו"ה and says,¹⁷²⁰ “I am thankful before You, Living and Eternal King, for returning my soul to me with mercy, Great is Your faithfulness.” In other words, even though he has not yet washed his hands and impurity still remains upon his

¹⁷¹⁷ Also see *Torat Chayim Va'era* 74a and on.

¹⁷¹⁸ Genesis 28:12; *Zohar* I 266b, *Zohar* III 306b; *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 45 (83a); *Likkutei Torah Beshalach* 2b and on; *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5655 p. 222 and on; 5708 p. 80 and on.

¹⁷¹⁹ Psalms 105:1

¹⁷²⁰ See *Shulchan Aruch* of the Alter Rebbe, *Mahadura Kamma* 1:8; *Mahadura Tinyana* 1:6; *Siddur* of the Alter Rebbe, section preceding the *Modeh Ani* recitation.

fingertips, nevertheless, since his soul is a “part of God from Above,”¹⁷²¹ and since, when one grasps a part of the Essence, he grasps all of the Essence,¹⁷²² he therefore says, “I am thankful before You,” which is thankfulness in general, altogether unrelated to one’s inner state of being (*Pnimiyyut*).

However, there indeed is a superiority to the thankfulness of “*Modeh Ani*.” For this thankfulness and sublimation touches the essential self of the soul. This is because, at this point, it does not yet relate to comprehension or to the various inner powers of the soul, since “*Modeh Ani*” is recited before the morning blessings, at which time the various powers of the soul are specified, such as, “Blessed are You, *HaShem*-יהו"ה our God, King of the universe, who has given the rooster the understanding to distinguish between day and night,” and “Blessed are You, *HaShem*-יהו"ה our God, King of the universe, who opens the eyes of the blind,” etc. In contrast, the recitation of, “*Modeh Ani* – I am thankful,” does not yet relate to the division of the inner powers of the soul. Thus, the thankfulness of, “*Modeh Ani*,” is all encompassing, in that it encompasses him from head to toe equally. This is because it is the nullification to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, of the essential self of the soul.¹⁷²³ Moreover, the nullification to *HaShem*-יהו"ה of “*Modeh Ani* – I am thankful,” reaches Above to the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Essential Being of *HaShem*-יהו"ה Himself,

¹⁷²¹ Job 31:2; Tanya Ch. 2

¹⁷²² *Hemshech* 5672 *ibid.* p. 609; Keter Shem Tov (5764 printing), *Hosafot* 227.

¹⁷²³ See Kuntres Inyana Shel Torat HaChassidus, Ch. 11 and the notes there.

blessed is He. This is the meaning of the word, “before **You-Lefanecha**-לפניך.” In other words, at this point, there is not yet even mention of His Name (for which reason it is permissible to recite it before washing one’s hands, since none of His Holy Names are mentioned). Rather, there only is mention of “before **You-Lefanecha**-לפניך,” which is of the same root as, “innerness-*Pnimityut*-פנימיות,” and refers to the inner Essential Self of the Unlimited One, blessed is He, as He is, in and of Himself, which is not hinted at or defined by a name, a letter, or even the thorn of a letter, whatsoever.¹⁷²⁴

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the greatness of the thankfulness of the “*Modeh Ani* – I am thankful” prayer, when it comes to the matter of what is revealed, it only is a general thankfulness that does not relate to one’s inner state of being, and is only preparatory to serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה in prayer. However, after having washed one’s hands and recited the morning blessings, after which he already has attained that the particular inner powers of his soul are specified, he then can begin the order of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in prayer. That is, he now can begin ascending the “ladder (*Sulam*-סלם) that was set on the earth and its head reached the heavens.”

Thus, one arrives at the beginning of the prayers, which start with the words, “Give thanks to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, declare His Name, make His acts known among the nations.”

¹⁷²⁴ See Ginat Egoz of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated into English under the title *HaShem Is One*, Volume 1, The Gate of Intrinsic Being (*Shaar HaHavayah*); Also see Likkutei Torah, Pinchas 80b; Re’eh 31d; Zohar III 257b; Also see the discourse entitled “*Shiviti*” 5720.

That is, although he has not yet begun the contemplation and comprehension of prayer, nevertheless, since he has already attained the division of the various powers of the soul during the morning blessings of, “Blessed are You, *HaShem*-יהו"ה our God, King of the universe, who has given the rooster the understanding to distinguish between day and night,” and “who opens the eyes of the blind,” etc., he therefore already has the knowledge to distinguish between, “Give thanks to *HaShem*-יהו"ה” and “declare His Name.” That is, the thankfulness is to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, whereas, the declaration and calling out is, “in His Name-*Shmo*.” In other words, when it comes to the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה, all that is applicable is thankfulness and sublimation (*Hoda'ah*) alone. The reference to Him indicated by “His Name-*Shmo*” is His light and illumination, and thus, it is applicable to call out and draw it forth into revelation below. Nevertheless, the beginning of prayer is only the aspect of a general thankfulness.

Now, after this general thankfulness and submission, we arrive at the verses of song (*Psukei D'Zimrah*), wherein we set forth the praises of the Ever-Present One, blessed is He.¹⁷²⁵ Now, even though there is no matter of comprehension here, nonetheless, by recalling the praises of the Ever-Present One, he attains a state of emotional arousal towards *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. For, when it comes to the recitation of “*Hodu* - Give thanks to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, declare His Name,” not only is there no comprehension in this, but beyond that, there is not

¹⁷²⁵ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 32a; Avoda Zarah 7b

even emotional arousal yet. Rather, it only is general thankfulness and submission. In contrast, when it comes to the verses of song (*Psukei D'Zimrah*), as a result of recalling the praises of the Ever-Present One, blessed is He, there already is an aspect of emotional arousal.

In other words, in truth, he does not actually grasp the matter. For, the verses of song (*Psukei D'Zimrah*) relate the greatness of *HaShem*-יה"ה, blessed is He, in bringing the world into existence from nothing, whereas the true reality of how this takes place is beyond the comprehension of created beings. This is because, the comprehension of something, means that it is fully grasped in one's mind in an inner manner, (as explained,¹⁷²⁶ regarding the verse,¹⁷²⁷ "You will be like God, knowing good from evil," that the upper knowledge is in an encompassing, transcendent manner, whereas the knowledge of created beings is internalized knowledge). Nevertheless, ultimately, *HaShem*-יה"ה actualizes the creation of something from nothing, and if the creatures were to comprehend how they come into being out of nothing, this comprehension would ultimately be internalized by them (and penetrate them) and they would be nullified of their existence. This is similar to the explanation in Tanya,¹⁷²⁸ that if the eye would be given permission to see the Godly vitality that brings it into being, the creatures would be utterly nullified of their existence. They therefore do not

¹⁷²⁶ See Torah Ohr, Bereishit 5c; Torat Chayim ibid. 30b and on.

¹⁷²⁷ Genesis 3:5

¹⁷²⁸ Tanya, Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah Ch. 3

grasp how *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, brings them into being from nothing.

Nonetheless, recalling the praises and greatness of the Ever-Present One, blessed is He, in that He brings existence to all creation out of nothing, affects a person with feelings of emotional arousal towards *HaShem*-יהו"ה. This then, is the matter of the verses of song (*Psukei d'Zimrah*), meaning, "melody and song-*Shirah* ו' *Zimrah*-זמרה," indicating emotional arousal.

Additionally, the verses of song (*Psukei d'Zimrah*) cause an external engraving upon the soul. That is, they do not cause an inner engraving, since there is no comprehension here. Nonetheless, as a result of the emotional arousal, an external engraving is caused on the soul.¹⁷²⁹ It is because of this that the term, "verses of song-*Psukei d'Zimrah*-פסוקי זמרה," is of the same root as,¹⁷³⁰ "the **pruning** of the mighty-*Zmir* *Aritzim*-זמיר עריצים,"¹⁷³¹ which means to cut off the thorns and thistles of the animalistic soul that obstruct the revelation of the powers of the Godly soul. For, just as an actual vineyard has an outgrowth of thorns and thistles that sap moisture from the earth and hinder the growth of the plantings, so likewise, the Jewish people, who are the vineyard

¹⁷²⁹ Likkutei Torah, Bechukotai 47d; Shaarei Teshuvah of the Mittler Rebbe Vol. 1, 25d and on.

¹⁷³⁰ Isaiah 25:5; Zohar III 284a – See Rashi to Isaiah 25:5, that "prune-*Zmir*-זמיר" is of the same root as Leviticus 25:4, "You shall not prune-*Lo Tizmor*-לא תזמר."

¹⁷³¹ See Likkutei Torah Bechukotai ibid.; Netzavim 51d, and elsewhere.

of the Holy One, blessed is He,¹⁷³² can also have an outgrowth of thorns and thistles etc.

This refers to any speech that is not focused on *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, such as jest and idle-chatter. That is, they are not actual lusts, like the physical lusts of the body, and at first glance, it could seem that there is no harm in them at all. Because of this, the popular misconception is that jest and idle-chatter cause no obstruction to the Godly soul. For, it makes sense to them that the pursuit of actual lusts increases the vitality of the animalistic soul, through which the Godly soul becomes hidden and concealed. However, they think that since jest and idle-chatter are not matters of lust, they therefore neither increase the vitality of the animalistic soul nor obstruct the Godly soul.

However, in truth, jest and idle-chatter are thorns and thistles that obstruct the animalistic soul from having any sensitivity or understanding of matters of Godliness. Moreover, through this, the Godly soul also becomes enmeshed and entangled and is hampered from ascents that it would have had, if not for the obstruction of the thorns and thistles. In addition to matters of speech, this also applies to matters of thought, as it states,¹⁷³³ "Thoughts of transgression are worse than the transgression itself." The same applies to the sense of sight and the sense of hearing, which are called, "the agents of sin."¹⁷³⁴ For, although they are not the sin

¹⁷³² See Midrash Vayikra Rabba 32:1

¹⁷³³ Talmud Bavli, Yoma 25a

¹⁷³⁴ Talmud Yerushalmi, Brachot 1:5

itself, and are only the thought of sin or the agents of sin, and, in and of themselves, are not necessarily lustful, nevertheless, they are thorns and thistles that prevent the ascent of the Godly soul.

This then, is the purpose of the verses of song (*Psukei d'Zimrah*); to prune the thorns and thistles, which is the matter of causing an external engraving upon the soul, which is brought about by the arousal of one's soul to Godliness.

Now, following the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in the verses of song (*Psukei d'Zimrah*), in a way of arousal without comprehension, one arrives at the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, of the blessings of the *Shema* recital. This service indeed possesses the matter of comprehension, in two ways. The first way is like the comprehension of the fiery angels, called *Seraphim*, who grasp their source, through which they come to grasp that there is a level that transcends their source. This is as stated,¹⁷³⁵ “the fiery angels—*Seraphim* stood above (in service of Him).” The word, “above-*Mima'al*” מִמַּעַל indicates that they attain knowledge of the One who transcends His title, My Lord-*Adona'y*-אֲדֹנָי.¹⁷³⁶ For, through grasping their source, which is *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה title My Lord-*Adona'y*-אֲדֹנָי, they come to grasp that there is an aspect of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed

¹⁷³⁵ Isaiah 6:2

¹⁷³⁶ See Likkutei Torah, Naso 28d; Shlach 47a; Chukat 62c; Discourse entitled “*Mayim Rabim*” 5717 Ch. 7 (Torat Menachem, Sefer HaMaamarim Kislev p. 326 and on); Also see Ginat Egoz of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as *HaShem Is One, The Gate of The Sanctuary (Shaar HaHeichal)*.

is He, who transcends their source, to the point that they burn (*Nisraphim*) as a result of their grasp.¹⁷³⁷

The same is true in man's service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, that when he does grasp and attain some measure of comprehension, he comes to realize that there is a higher level than this, which ultimately is beyond comprehension altogether.

The second manner is like the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, of the cycle angels – *Ophanim*.¹⁷³⁸ These angels do not grasp their source, but they do grasp and know that there is Something entirely wondrous and beyond them. Nonetheless, they have no comprehension of Him. They thus say,¹⁷³⁹ “Blessed be the glory of *HaShem*-יהו"ה from His place.” For, since they do not know or grasp the matter (neither what He is nor where His place is), they therefore simply state, “from His place,” meaning, from wherever He may be.¹⁷⁴⁰ However, since they do know that He is something utterly wondrous, having no limitations of above and below, and that he therefore is capable of drawing down below, they thus say, “Blessed be the glory of *HaShem*-יהו"ה from His place” - that He should be drawn forth from His place Above to below.¹⁷⁴¹

¹⁷³⁷ See Likkutei Torah, Pinchas 77d

¹⁷³⁸ See the various citations to Likkutei Torah *ibid*.

¹⁷³⁹ Ezekiel 3:12

¹⁷⁴⁰ See Tanya Ch. 49 (69b)

¹⁷⁴¹ See Likkutei Torah, Shir haShirim 5b

Thus, in man's service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, it can also be in this way. That is, he does not grasp, but at least knows that there is Something wondrously beyond him.

After the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in the blessings of the *Shema* recital, a person then comes to the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, of the *Shema* recital itself. For, the comprehension of the blessings of the *Shema* recital is comprehension of the root of the animalistic soul.¹⁷⁴² In contrast, the comprehension of the *Shema* recital itself is comprehension of the root of the Godly soul. For, this is meaning of the words, "Listen, Israel-*Shema Yisroel*-שמע ישראל." The word "Listen-*Shma*-שמע" is a term of contemplation-*Hitbonenut*,¹⁷⁴³ and this contemplation is in "Israel-*Yisroel*-ישראל," referring to the source and root of the Godly soul.

However, all this is only a matter of comprehension, whether with the human intellect or whether with the Godly intellect. Or, in terms of souls, it either is the comprehension of the animalistic soul or the comprehension of the Godly soul. Nevertheless, it just is sublimation brought about through comprehension, which still is sublimation to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, as a separate being (*Bitul HaYesh*). Moreover, all the above are the rungs in the ladder that precede the aspect of, "its top reached to the heavens."

¹⁷⁴² See Likkutei Torah, Vayikra 2b-d

¹⁷⁴³ See Torah Ohr, Bereishit 1a; Likkutei Torah Naso 20d

After all this, one comes to the *Amidah* prayer, in which he stands, “as a servant before his Master.”¹⁷⁴⁴ This is the matter of complete nullification of sense of separate existence (*Bittul b’Metziyut*) before *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. In other words, just as the matter of prayer itself is that, through it, there should be a drawing down into physicality, such as in the blessing of, “He who heals the sick” and “He who blesses our year with sustenance,” and the like, so likewise, regarding the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה itself, it’s purpose is to affect real change of ones very being, this being the matter of the sublimation and complete nullification of one’s sense of separate existence (*Bittul b’Metziyut*) in the presence of *HaShem*-יהו"ה.

In truth, however, even the nullification of sense of separate existence (*Bittul b’Metziyut*) before the presence of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, during the *Amidah* prayer, is not nullification of the essential self (*Bittul Atzmi*). For, since he only attained this level of sublimation to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, by prefacing with the levels that precede it in a manner of grasp and comprehension, it is understood that the sublimation that follows, is not nullification of the essential self (*Bittul Atzmi*) to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. For, as explained before, since the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה in prayer, is from below to Above, therefore, even its loftiest level is merely an aspect of sublimation to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, as a separate being (*Bitul HaYesh*). (This is why immediately after the

¹⁷⁴⁴ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 10a

Amidah prayer, the *Nefilat Apayim* prayer is necessary,¹⁷⁴⁵ which is the nullification of one's essential self (*Bittul Atzmi*)¹⁷⁴⁶ before *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, and encompasses all of him equally, from head to toe, similar to the sublimation of the "*Modeh Ani* – I am thankful" prayer.)

4.

Now, the reason there are two paths in the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, these being Torah from Above to below and prayer from below to Above, is because the matter of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, was given to man, who is composed of both a soul and a body (and it is specifically when he is composed of these two, that he is called by the term, "man-*Adam*-אדם.")¹⁷⁴⁷ Now,¹⁷⁴⁸ the nature of the soul is to ascend, as it states,¹⁷⁴⁹ "the spirit of man ascends on high." In contrast, the nature of the body is to descend, as it states, "the spirit of the animal descends down to the earth." However, *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Supernal intent, is for there to be a bond between the soul and the body, so that the

¹⁷⁴⁵ The confessional supplication known as *Tachanun*, or *Nefilat Apayim* which means "falling to one's face" before the King, King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He. It is recited immediately after the *Amidah* prayer.

¹⁷⁴⁶ See Shaarei Teshuvah of the Mittler Rebbe, Vol. 1, p. 44a and on; Also see Kuntres Inyan Tefilah of the Mittler Rebbe, translated under the title Praying with Passion.

¹⁷⁴⁷ See Sefer HaMaamarim 5653 p. 235 and the notes of the Rebbe Rashab, whose soul reposes in Eden, to the discourse entitled *Patach Eliyahu* in Torah Ohr – 5658 p. 2.

¹⁷⁴⁸ See the discourse entitled "*Ki Teitzei*" 5674 (*Hemshech* 5672 *ibid.* p. 608 and on).

¹⁷⁴⁹ Ecclesiastes 3:21

nature of both should be transformed. That is, the soul whose nature is to ascend, should come to be in a state of descent and be drawn down below, and the body, whose nature is to descend, should come to a state of ascent.

Because of this, two paths in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, were given; the path from below to Above, which is prayer, and the path from Above to below, which is the study of Torah. For, together, they transform the nature of both the soul and the body.

Thus, Torah and prayer are themselves like the soul and the body. Now, just as both these matters, Torah and prayer, are necessary, and one cannot take the place of the other, as in the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory,¹⁷⁵⁰ “Rava saw Rav Hamnuna prolonging his prayers and commented about him: ‘They abandon eternal life and engage in temporal life.’”¹⁷⁵¹ However we find that¹⁷⁵² Abba Binyamin would engage in prayer immediately upon rising from bed, and would only engage in Torah study following prayer. It is the same way in a person’s service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, with body and soul. That is, both matters are necessary, and there must to be a proper measure and balance between them. In other words, when it comes to these matters, that the soul, whose nature is to ascend, must be drawn down, and the

¹⁷⁵⁰ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 10a

¹⁷⁵¹ See Rashi *ibid.* The study of Torah is the engagement in eternal life, whereas prayer is called engaging in supplicating for the needs of temporal life.

¹⁷⁵² Talmud Bavli, Brachot 5b; See Likkutei Torah, Zot HaBrachah 96b

body, whose nature is to descend, must be drawn up, this must be with proper balance and alignment.¹⁷⁵³

The explanation¹⁷⁵⁴ is that, sometimes, it is possible for a person to contemplate matters of Godliness and be aroused because of his soul, but afterwards, and sometimes even during the contemplation itself, he is incapable of overcoming the lusts of the body, even in matters that are the diametric opposite of his contemplations. The reason is because his arousal to Godliness is the result of his soul, which does not relate to the body. Therefore, if the body lusts, the soul cannot overcome it. This is particularly so regarding those who have a very lofty soul, but a body that is coarse and unrefined, in which case, it is possible that the soul will not bond with the body. Now, it is self-understood that this does not accord with *HaShem* יהו"ה's Supernal intent. For, His Supernal intent is that a person should affect his soul to descend and be drawn forth below (which is the opposite of its nature). Thus, if the soul does not relate to the body, it is not in accordance with *HaShem* יהו"ה's Supernal intent.

It also is possible for a person to have a very lofty soul and a body that is very refined. At first glance, it would seem that this is the most superior quality, but in truth, this too is not the proper measure and balance. For, since the body is very refined, it is drawn to Godliness of its own volition, not because of the soul. Thus, his body does not require the

¹⁷⁵³ See the discourse entitled "*Shoftim*" 5674 (*Hemshech* 5672 ibid. p. 599 and on).

¹⁷⁵⁴ See *Hemshech* 5672 ibid. p. 610 and on; p. 613 and on.

service of the soul to affect it and draw down Godliness to it. For, since he has such a refined body (as well as a lofty soul), he does not at all need to toil in his service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, but immediately comes to a state of "running" to cleave to Godliness.

For, if the body is coarse, then the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה of the soul is needed, in order to affect the body to be drawn to matters of Godliness. This is accomplished through inner contemplation (*Hitbonenut*) which affects the body to be drawn to Godliness. However, if the body is refined, then although, even then, the awakening of the soul is necessary, nonetheless, only a mere awakening is necessary, which can be accomplished through general contemplation in an encompassing manner. On the other hand, the remainder of his service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is just the service of the body, in and of itself. For, since he has a refined body, he therefore sees Godliness even in physical matters of the material world, such as perceiving Divine Providence (*Hashgachah Pratit*) in everything. However, this is not service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה that is due to the soul. Therefore, it is not in accordance to *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Supernal intent.

This is because *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Supernal intent is for the soul to affect the body and transform its nature. That is, though the nature of the body is to descend, the soul must affect it to be drawn to Godliness, which is the opposite of its nature. However, if the soul is lofty and the body is refined, then the soul merely rouses the body to be drawn after its own

nature to Godliness, and therefore, this does not fulfill *HaShem* יהו"ה's Supernal intent.

The opposite is also true. If the soul is lowly and the body is coarse, then the soul is incapable of affecting the body to ascend, which is the opposite of its nature. This is similar to the kind of wicks and oils that are forbidden to be used in kindling the Sabbath lights,¹⁷⁵⁵ either because they do not ignite properly and sputter as they burn, or the opposite, that the wick becomes entirely consumed by the fire.

It thus is understood that there must be a proper balance and measure between the soul and the body. That is, the soul must be in proper measure commensurate to the body, which is a measure that is determined from Above. For example, during the times of the "heels of Moshiach," the souls are of a much lower order, in that the souls are of the aspect of the "heels," but the bodies are much more refined. This is so that the soul and the body should be commensurate to each other and relate to each other. For, it is specifically through this that a person can serve *HaShem* יהו"ה, blessed is He, by bonding the soul to the body and thus affecting each one to do the opposite of its nature, as explained before.

5.

Now, just as this is so in the general service of *HaShem* יהו"ה, blessed is He, it likewise is so in serving *HaShem* יהו"ה through returning to Him with repentance

¹⁷⁵⁵ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 21a; See Sefer HaMaamarim 5692 p. 118

(*Teshuvah*).¹⁷⁵⁶ For, although the general matter of repentance (*Teshuvah*) is the act of leaving the limitations and parameters of the vessels (*Keilim*), nonetheless, of necessity, it must be in a manner that relates to physicality.

In other words, when contemplation of repentance is in a manner that he comes to sense that physical matters (and particularly, matters that oppose Godliness) obstruct the fulfillment of Torah and *mitzvot*, then the way to serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in this, is not by fleeing and running away from physicality. Rather, one must affect the physical matters themselves, to not obstruct Torah and *mitzvot*.

Similarly, if one comes to feel the goodness of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness, it should not be in a way that causes him to be in a state of withdrawal and “running” (*Ratzo*) away from physicality, but instead, he should sense the Godliness in physicality itself.

Thus, in order for the service of repentance (*Teshuvah*) to be proper, meaning that he does not come to be in a state of “running” (*Ratzo*) away from physicality, but instead senses the Godliness in the physicality, this is accomplished through the proper balance of soul and body, so that they are commensurate to each other in their bond, as explained before.¹⁷⁵⁷

¹⁷⁵⁶ See *Hemshech* 5672 *ibid.* p. 603 and on; p. 614 and on.

¹⁷⁵⁷ See *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchot De'ot* Ch. 3

6.

This then, is the meaning of the verse, “I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine, He grazes (His flock) amongst the roses.” That is, the words, “He grazes (His flock) amongst the roses” refer to the granting of strength from Above. For, even though the general service of repentance to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, and particularly the service of the month of Elul, is from below to Above, nevertheless, for the service to be proper, as it should be, the balance between the soul and the body must be in proper measure and balance, and this balance comes from Above, as explained before.

Thus, the meaning of the verse, “I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine, He grazes (His flock) amongst the roses,” is that, for there to be the service of, “I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine,” which is the proper service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה with repentance (*Teshuvah*), it is specifically through, “He grazes (His flock) amongst the roses,” which is the proper measure and balance that comes from Above. For, it is *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה assistance from Above that grants us the strength to serve Him in a manner of, “I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine.”