

Discourse 21

“Lehavin Inyan HaNedarim - To understand the matter of vows of abstinence”

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Matot,
Shabbat Mevarchim Menachem-Av, 5714
By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

Let us understand the matter of vows of abstinence (*Nedarim*).¹⁵⁵⁶ Now, at first glance, the general matter of vows of abstinence (*Nedarim*) is that one takes a vow to forbid himself and abstain from something that is permissible. However, this does not seem to correlate with the statement in the Jerusalem Talmud,¹⁵⁵⁷ “Is what the Torah forbade you not enough, that you wish to forbid other things upon yourself?”

We also must understand the particulars of vows of abstinence (*Nedarim*), such as the fact that the vow must specifically be stated orally and the substance of the vow must be something to which he is associated and is not already forbidden by Torah.¹⁵⁵⁸ For example, if he says, “This thing shall be forbidden to me like the flesh of an animal that has been

¹⁵⁵⁶ See the discourse entitled “*Vayedaber... Ish Ki Yidor Nedar LaHaShem*” 5679 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5679 p. 537 and on); Also see the Sichah talk that followed the discourse, ch. 2 (Torat Menachem, Vol. 12 p. 138 and on).

¹⁵⁵⁷ Talmud Yerushalmi, Nedarim 9:1

¹⁵⁵⁸ Talmud Bavli, Nedarim 13a-14a

improperly slaughtered (*Neveilah*),” which is an association to something that already is forbidden by Torah, it is as if he has said nothing and his vow is neither binding nor effective. Rather, it only is effective when he associates the vow with something that is forbidden by means of a vow. For example, if he says, “This thing shall be to me like a sacrificial offering (*Korban*),” then the vow indeed is binding and effective, since the oral designation of an animal to be a sacrificial offering (*Korban*) consecrates and prohibits it to any ordinary person.

However, we must understand how it is that the power of speech can forbid something that is permissible. Even though this is likewise so regarding the oral designation of sacrificial offerings, nevertheless, in truth, a vow of abstinence is different than designating a sacrificial offering. For, in the designation of sacrificial offerings, the speech affects a matter of ascent in animal, in that before its designation as a sacrificial offering it was unconsecrated and mundane (*Chullin*), whereas now it is consecrated for holiness (*Hekdesh*). In contrast, with vows of abstinence (*Nedarim*) the opposite is true, in that it is a matter of descent rather than ascent. For before, this thing was within the permissible and could be used in service of the Creator, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in a manner of refinements (*Birurim*). However, as a result of the vow it became forbidden. It thus is a matter of descent, which is the opposite of the ascent in the consecration of sacrificial offerings.

Moreover, we must understand how it is that a Sage (*Chacham*) can absolve the vow, and that in this too, the

absolution of the vow comes about through the speech of the Sage (*Chacham*). That is, we must understand how it is that the speech of the Sage is superior to the speech of the vow, to the extent that the speech of the Sage can permit what the speech of the vow forbade.

2.

Now, to understand this, we must preface with an explanation of the root of the two matters; forbidden (*Issur*-אסור) and permitted (*Heter*-היתר).¹⁵⁵⁹ For, the matter of the forbidden (*Issur*-אסור), is that this thing is imprisoned (*Asur*-אסור)¹⁵⁶⁰ and bound up in the hands of the external forces. On the other hand, the permitted (*Heter*-היתר)¹⁵⁶¹ means that it is not imprisoned (*Asur*-אסור) in the hands of the external forces, as explained at length in Tanya. Nevertheless, from the very fact that we say that, that which is permitted (*Heter*-היתר) is not bound up and imprisoned (*Asur*-אסור) in the hands of the external forces, it is understood that even that which is permitted (*Heter*-היתר) has some relation to the external forces, and is of like kind, except that it is not bound up and imprisoned (*Asur*-אסור) in their hands. For, if it had no relation whatsoever

¹⁵⁵⁹ See the discourse entitled “*Vayedaber... Ish Ki Yidor Neder LaHaShem*” 5630 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5630 p. 216 and on).

¹⁵⁶⁰ In addition to meaning “forbidden,” the term “*Asur*-אסור” also means “captive” or “imprisoned” as utilized in Song of Songs 7:6 and elsewhere, such as the liturgy of the morning blessing, “Blessed are You, *HaShem*-יהוה, our God, King of the universe, Who releases the imprisoned-*HaMateer Asurim*-המתיר אסורים.”

¹⁵⁶¹ That is, the term “*Heter*-היתר” also means “released,” as elucidated in the previous note regarding the blessing “Who releases the imprisoned-*HaMateer Asurim*-המתיר אסורים.”

to them, it would be entirely inapplicable to say about it that it is released (*Heter*-היתר) and not bound up and imprisoned (*Asur*-אסור).

Now, it is understood from the root of the matter of the forbidden (*Issur*-אסור) and the permitted (*Heter*-היתר), that the root of the forbidden (*Issur*-אסור) is from the three entirely impure husks (*Shalosh Kelipot HaTmei'ot*), whereas the root of the permitted (*Heter*-היתר) is from the external husk of *Kelipat Nogah*, as explained there in Tanya. However, the external husk of *Kelipat Nogah* has some relation to the three entirely impure husks (*Shalosh Kelipot HaTmei'ot*) and is the intermediary between the worlds of holiness and the three entirely impure husks of evil (*Shalosh Kelipot HaTmei'ot*).

To further explain, there is a constant bestowal of Godly power and vitality that is bestowed within all matters of the world, particularly matters that are permitted (*Heter*-היתר), in order to bring them into existence. That is, their very existence, in its entirety, is solely the Godly vitality - the power of the Actor within the acted upon. It is only that in matters of holiness (*Kedushah*) this is revealed, in that it is openly apparent that their existence is the Godly vitality, whereas in the extraneous husks (*Kelipot*), this is concealed, in that their vitality is not recognized in them, and they are in a state of separation.

Now, since these are two opposing extremes, it is necessary for there to be an intermediary between them. This intermediary is the external husk of *Kelipat Nogah*. For when it comes to the external husk of *Kelipat Nogah*, the Godly

vitality is not openly recognized in it in a revealed manner, but nevertheless, it is not in a state of separation, and due to this it is the intermediary between holiness (*Kedushah*) and the three entirely impure husks of evil (*Shalosh Kelipot HaTmei'ot*). What is understood from this, however, is that even the permitted (*Heter*-היתר), the root of which is in the external husk of *Kelipat Nogah*, is in the category of relating to the external forces, only that it is not bound up and imprisoned (*Asur*-אסור) in their hands.

3.

The explanation of this matter is as follows: The verse states,¹⁵⁶² “God made one thing opposite the other.” That is, just as it is the case that on the side of holiness (*Kedushah*) there are four worlds; Emanation, Creation, Formation and Action (*Atzilut, Briyah, Yetzirah, Asiyah*), likewise in the opposing side there also are four worlds; Emanation, Creation, Formation and Action (*Atzilut, Briyah, Yetzirah, Asiyah*).¹⁵⁶³ However, because the extraneous husks (*Kelipot*) are not just opposed to holiness (*Kedushah*), but are opposites of holiness (*Kedushah*), therefore, the order is reversed in them. For, in the order of holiness (*Kedushah*), the loftier the level, the greater the abundance. In contrast, in the extraneous husks (*Kelipot*), the opposite is true - the lower the level, the greater the abundance.

¹⁵⁶² Ecclesiastes 7:14

¹⁵⁶³ See Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 53-54; Also see *Hemshech* 5672 Vol. 1, p. 432 and on.

To further elucidate, in the order of the four worlds of Emanation, Creation, Formation and Action (*Atzilut, Briyah, Yetzirah, Asiyah*) of the side of holiness (*Kedushah*), there is an illumination of the light and radiance of the line-*Kav* in the world of Emanation-*Atzilut*. In contrast, in the worlds of Creation, Formation and Action (*Briyah, Yetzirah, Asiyah*) there is a cessation and the light and radiance of the line-*Kav* does not illuminate. Nevertheless, since the world of Creation-*Briyah* is the first world and is still in close proximity to the world of Emanation-*Atzilut*, there is a radiance of a radiance of light from the line-*Kav* (that is, a glimmer of the light of the world of Emanation-*Atzilut*). However, in the world of Formation-*Yetzirah*, the light and illumination is further diminished.

For as well known, although the general worlds of Creation, Formation and Action (*Briyah, Yetzirah, Asiyah*) (including the world of Creation-*Briyah*) are in the aspect of garments (*Levushin*), as in the teaching,¹⁵⁶⁴ “You have made garments for them,” nonetheless, there are distinctions in the garments (*Levushin*) themselves. An example, is the difference between the garments of the mundane days of the week and Shabbat garments, which are holy garments. This is likewise the difference between the world of Creation-*Briyah* and the world of Formation-*Yetzirah*.

The world of Creation-*Briyah* is the aspect of a holy garment (*Levush Kodesh*), for, in regard to the holy (*Kodesh-*

¹⁵⁶⁴ Introduction to Tikkunei Zohar 17a

קודש) Zohar states,¹⁵⁶⁵ “Holy-*Kodesh*-שקד is a thing unto itself.” In the *Sefirot* this corresponds to wisdom-*Chochmah* and in the worlds, this corresponds to the world of Emanation-*Atzilut*.¹⁵⁶⁶ Therefore, the world of Creation-*Briyah* is the aspect of a holy garment (*Levush Kodesh*), since in the world of Creation-*Briyah* there is a glimmer of illumination from the light of the world of Emanation-*Atzilut*. In contrast, there is a greater diminishment in the world of Formation-*Yetzirah* and an even greater diminishment in the world of Action-*Asiyah*, in which the illumination is completely diminished and weakened.

Now, just as there is a difference in the quality of the lights and illuminations, there also is a difference in the quantity of lights and illuminations. That is, the loftier and more elevated it is, the greater quantity and number of lights and illuminations. For, in the world of Emanation-*Atzilut*, all ten *Sefirot* illuminate, since the Supernal Father-*Abba Ila'ah*, referring to the *Sefirah* of wisdom-*Chochmah*, together with all the other *Sefirot*, “dwells in the world of Emanation.”¹⁵⁶⁷

However, the *Sefirah* of wisdom-*Chochmah*, does not dwell and directly illuminate within the world of Creation-*Briyah*. Rather, the world of Creation-*Briyah* is the seat of the *Sefirah* of understanding-*Binah*, along with all of the *Sefirot*

¹⁵⁶⁵ Zohar III 94b

¹⁵⁶⁶ Thus, the world of Creation-*Briyah*, which generally corresponds to the *Sefirah* of understanding-*Binah*, and is the garment of thought (*Machshavah*), is the garment of holiness-*Kodesh*-שקד, meaning, the garment for the world of Emanation-*Atzilut*, wherein there is an illumination of the light of the world of Emanation-*Atzilut*.

¹⁵⁶⁷ See Rabbi Moshe Zacuto (Ramaz) to Zohar II 220b; Torah Ohr Mishpatim 75a; Sefer HaMaamarim 5696 p. 119.

below it.¹⁵⁶⁸ However, the *Sefirah* of understanding-*Binah* does not dwell and directly illuminate in the world of Formation-*Yetzirah*. Rather, only the six emotive *Sefirot* of *Zeir Anpin* illuminate there.¹⁵⁶⁹ Moreover, the six emotive *Sefirot* of *Zeir Anpin* do not directly illuminate the world of Action-*Asiyah*, but there only is an illumination of the aspect of the cycle-*Ophan*.¹⁵⁷⁰

Now, the same is true of the four letters of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He and blessed is His Name. That is, in the world of Emanation-*Atzilut*, there is an illumination of the letter *Yod*-י together with the remaining letters of His Name. In the world of Creation-*Briyah*, there is an illumination of the first *Hey*-ה and the remaining letters of His Name, in the world of Formation-*Yetzirah*, the letter *Vav*-ו illuminates and in the world of Action-*Asiyah* the final letter *Hey*-ה illuminates.¹⁵⁷¹

However, in the opposing side of evil the order is reversed. This is because in the world of Emanation-*Atzilut* of the opposing side of evil, there only are the seven lower *Sefirot* alone that are called “the seven earlier kings.”¹⁵⁷² However, in the world of Creation-*Briyah* of the opposing side of evil, the

¹⁵⁶⁸ See Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 6 (23a).

¹⁵⁶⁹ See Tikkunei Zohar *ibid.* Tikkun 6 (23a).

¹⁵⁷⁰ See Tikkunei Zohar *ibid.* Tikkun 6 (23a).

¹⁵⁷¹ See Etz Chayim, Shaar 3 (Seder Atzilut of Rabbi Chayim Vital) Ch. 1; Shaarei Kedushah of Rabbi Chayim Vital, Section 3, Shaar 1, and elsewhere.

¹⁵⁷² That is, the seven kings of the world of chaos-*Tohu* about whom it states (Genesis 36:31), “These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the sons of Israel.” Regarding each these seven kings of chaos-*Tohu*, the verse (Genesis 36 *ibid*) states, “He reigned... and he died.” (For further elucidation, see Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 20 and the notes and additional citations there.)

additional aspects of wisdom-*Chochmah* and understanding-*Binah*, which are the aspects of the nations of Amon and Mo'av, are also there.¹⁵⁷³ In the world of Formation-*Yetzirah* of the opposing side of evil, there is the addition of the crown-*Keter* of the opposing side too, about which it states,¹⁵⁷⁴ “You are the head of gold.” Finally, in the world of Action-*Asiyah* of the opposing side of evil, there even is the aspect of *Atik* (pleasure) of the extraneous husks of *Kelipah*, which is the matter of an even greater strength and force of the extraneous husks of *Kelipah*. It is called “removed-*Atik*,” indicating that due to the great strength and force of the extraneous *Kelipah* within it, it even is removed from the extraneous husks of *Kelipah*.¹⁵⁷⁵

Now, the reason that in the side of holiness (*Kedushah*), the higher the level, the greater abundance, whereas in the external husks of *Kelipah* the opposite is true, is because the primary and foundational aspect of holiness (*Kedushah*) is the matter of nothingness (*Ayin*) and sublimation (*Bittul*) before *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. Therefore, since the closer something is to *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness, the greater is its state of nothingness (*Ayin*) and sublimation (*Bittul*) before Him,¹⁵⁷⁶ therefore, there is a greater illumination of the lights of holiness (*Kedushah*). This is because the very matter of

¹⁵⁷³ See Likkutei Torah of the Arizal, Parshat Vayera (discourse entitled, “*Inyan Amon uMo'av*” as well as Parshat Devarim there; Also see Torah Ohr Lech Lecha 11d; Likkutei Torah Chukat 66c; Maamarei Admor HaEmtza'ee Bamidbar Vol. 4 p. 1,481; Dvarim Vol. 1 p. 10.

¹⁵⁷⁴ Daniel 2:38; See Likkutei Torah Beha'alotcha 35d

¹⁵⁷⁵ See *Hemshech* 5672 Vol. 1, p. 432 and on.

¹⁵⁷⁶ See Tanya, Iggeret HaKodesh, Epistle 2.

holiness (*Kedushah*) is the matter of sublimation and nullification (*Bittul*) to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

Thus, for this very same reason the opposite is true of the extraneous husks of *Kelipah*. This is because the very matter of the extraneous husks of *Kelipah* is the sense of self (*Yeshut*). Thus, since the lower the *Kelipah* is, the greater the sense of self (*Yeshut*), therefore the greater the descent, the more abundance and number of external husks, since their very substance is sense of self (*Yeshut*).

That is, in the world of Emanation-*Atzilut* of the opposing side of evil, which, at least, is in proximity to holiness (*Kedushah*), the sense of self (*Yeshut*) is not so great, and is not so openly apparent. This is like the aspect of Re'umah-ראומה,¹⁵⁷⁷ which is a composite of two words "See what-Re'u Mah-מ"ה-ראו,"¹⁵⁷⁸ indicating that there indeed is a state of sublimation and nullification (*Bittul*), as indicated by the word "what-Mah-מ"ה-ראו,"¹⁵⁷⁹ except that it is in a way of, "See what-Re'u Mah-מה-ראו," meaning that one senses himself, in that he is self-aware of his sublimation (*Bittul*). Therefore, in the world of Emanation-*Atzilut* of the opposing side of evil, there only are the seven lower *Sefirot* of the opposing side, and nothing more.

¹⁵⁷⁷ See Genesis 22:24; Re'umah-ראומה was the concubine of Nachor, the brother of Avraham, and refers to the external husk of *Kelipat Nogah*. (See Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 53-54 and the notes there.)

¹⁵⁷⁸ See Likkutei Torah, Tazria 23d; Behar 43a; Shaar HaYichud ibid. Ch. 53-54; Sefer HaMaamarim 5679 p. 92; p. 559, and elsewhere.

¹⁵⁷⁹ See Exodus 16:8 where Moshe states, "For what are we-v'Nachnu Mah-מה-נחנו," indicating his utter sublimation and nullification (*Bittul*) to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

For, when it comes to the extraneous husks of *Kelipah*, seven is their lowest number and there cannot be less than this.

This is as known¹⁵⁸⁰ in regard to the seventy sacrificial bulls¹⁵⁸¹ offered on the holiday of Sukkot, that on the first day they would begin by sacrificing thirteen bulls, and then on each consecutive day the number would decrease by one, until on the final day, seven bulls would be sacrificed. Now, at first glance, why did they not decrease further, to six bulls, then five bulls and so on? The reason is because seven is the lowest number of the external husks of *Kelipah*, and they cannot be less than this. That is, in order to perform the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, of refining (*Birurim*) the extraneous husks of *Kelipah*, they must number seven and if there would be a decrease below this number, it would no longer be the service of refining (*Birurim*) the opposing side of evil, but would be the beginning of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, on the side of holiness (*Kedushah*). Thus, when it comes to the worlds of Creation, Formation and Action (*Briyah, Yetzirah, Asiyah*) of the opposing side of evil, the lower the descent, the greater the sense of self (*Yeshut*) and the greater the number.

4.

Now, in the four worlds of Emanation, Creation, Formation and Action (*Atzilut, Briyah, Yetzirah, Asiyah*) as they

¹⁵⁸⁰ See Talmud Bavli, Sukkah 55b

¹⁵⁸¹ These seventy sacrificial offerings correspond to the seventy nations and were given on their behalf. (See Talmud Bavli, Sukkah 55b *ibid.*)

are in the side of holiness (*Kedushah*), the world of Emanation-*Atzilut* is the intermediary between the limitless light of the Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה blessed is He, and the worlds of Creation, Formation and Action (*Briyah, Yetzirah, Asiyah*). In the same manner, in the four worlds of Emanation, Creation, Formation and Action (*Atzilut, Briyah, Yetzirah, Asiyah*) as they are in the opposing side of evil, the world of Emanation-*Atzilut* of the opposing side is the intermediary between holiness (*Kedushah*), and the external husks of unholiness (*Kelipah*). In other words, the aspect of Emanation-*Atzilut* of the opposing side, which is the aspect of “See what-*Re’u Mah*-ראו מה,” is the aspect of the glowing husk, called *Kelipat Nogah*, and this husk is the intermediary between holiness (*Kedushah*) and the external husks of unholiness (*Kelipah*), as explained before.

Now, in regard to the matter of an intermediary, as known, an intermediary must be inclusive of both the upper level and the lower level. The same is true of the husk, called *Kelipat Nogah*, which is the aspect of Emanation-*Atzilut* of the opposing side of evil, and is an intermediary between holiness (*Kedushah*) and the external husks of unholiness (*Kelipah*). That is, it possesses an element of holiness (*Kedushah*), as well as elements of the three completely impure husks of evil (*Shalosh Kelipot HaTmei’ot*).

Additionally, as known regarding any intermediary, these two aspects – that of the upper level and that of the lower level – (are not in a state of separateness from each other, because if that was so, it would be impossible for it to be an intermediary. Rather, they) are one matter. This itself is the

novelty an intermediary, in that its two aspects, the upper and the lower, are included in one matter. It is specifically this characteristic that makes it possible to be an intermediary. The same is true of the glowing husk called *Kelipat Nogah*, which is the intermediary between the holy (*Kedushah*) and the unholy husks (*Kelipah*). Both of these are matters within it.

In other words, in permissible matters (*Heter*), two things are present in the pleasure of the physical thing itself; the holy (*Kedushah*), and the unholy husks (*Kelipah*), and it is specifically because of this that it is an intermediary. That is, if a person uses the pleasure of the physical thing for the sake of the Name of Heaven, he elevates it to holiness (*Kedushah*), through which additional vitality of holiness (*Kedushah*) is added to him. An example of this is the statement,¹⁵⁸² “Until I had eaten ox meat, my mind was not sharp,” and similarly,¹⁵⁸³ “As long as I have not drunk a quarter-log of wine, my mind is not clear.” We also find this about fragrance, which is a loftier matter than the consumption of food, as it states,¹⁵⁸⁴ “Wine and good scents make me wise.” From this it is understood that there also is an element holiness in the pleasure in the physical thing.

However, the converse is also true, that there also is an element of the external husks (*Kelipot*) in the pleasure of physical things. That is, when a person does not use them for the sake of the Name of Heaven, but just to fulfill the lusts of

¹⁵⁸² See Talmud Bavli, Bava Kamma 71b-72a

¹⁵⁸³ See Eruvin 64a

¹⁵⁸⁴ Talmud Bavli, Yoma 76b

his soul, he then degrades and lowers the physical thing into the external husks of evil (*Kelipot*), which causes a lowering and degradation of the person himself too.

Thus, we find these two matters; holiness (*Kedushah*) and the opposite of holiness, in a single matter. This is similar to the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory,¹⁵⁸⁵ about “three people who have eaten together at one table,” that their consumption could either be described as a table “full of filthy vomit,” or “as if they have eaten at the table of the All-Present One (*HaMakom*).”

However, regarding what we explained that if the pleasure in the physical thing is for the sake of the Name of Heaven, it refines and elevates it, and that through doing so, additional elevation is given to the vitality of the side of holiness (*Kedushah*) – in this manner there is additional light and illumination, and not merely the renewal of that which was already newly brought into being. This is the meaning of the verse,¹⁵⁸⁶ “that you should know that not by bread alone does man live, but by everything that emanates from the mouth of *HaShem*-יהוה does man live.”

About this it is explained¹⁵⁸⁷ that the words, “everything that emanates from the mouth of *HaShem*-יהוה,” refer to the Godly spark in the food, which is rooted in the world of chaos-*Tohu*, and that through this man lives. Nevertheless, this verse

¹⁵⁸⁵ Mishnah Avot 3:3

¹⁵⁸⁶ Deuteronomy 8:3

¹⁵⁸⁷ See Likkutei Torah of the Arizal, Eikev 8:3; Shnei Luchot HaBrit 74a; Torah Ohr 9d, 65d; Likkutei Torah Tzav 13b, Matot 81b, Eikev 14a and on, and elsewhere.

is still not fully understood. For, at first glance, the verse could have stated, “that you should know that not by bread does man live, but by everything that emanates from the mouth of *HaShem*-יהו"ה does man live.” That is, we must understand why the verse specifies, “that not by bread **alone** (*Levado*-לבדו) does man live”?

The explanation is that there are two types of vitality. That is, there is the vitality of the bread itself and there is the vitality of that which “emanates from the mouth of *HaShem*-יהו"ה,” which is the Godly refined spark. The difference between them is that the vitality of the bread itself is the aspect of the renewal of that which already was brought forth into being. In contrast, the vitality of that which “emanates from the mouth of *HaShem*-יהו"ה,” which is the refined spark rooted in the world of chaos-*Tohu*, is an aspect of additional light and illumination, meaning, that there it is a new issuance and drawing forth of Godliness.

This may be better understood by the general difference between the sacrificial offerings (*Korbanot*) and the incense (*Ketoret*). The sacrificial offerings are the aspect of bread (*Lechem*-לחם), as it states,¹⁵⁸⁸ “My offering, My bread (*Lachmi*-לחמי) for My fires,” in which there is no novel issuance and drawing forth of Godliness. The incense (*Ketoret*), on the other hand, is the matter of fragrance (*Rei'ach*-ריח), through which a novel drawing forth and issuance of Godliness is elicited.

¹⁵⁸⁸ Numbers 28:2

To clarify, although the sacrificial offerings not only possess (the matter of bread (*Lechem*-לֶחֶם) as in, “My offering, My bread (*Lachmi*-לֶחֶמי),” but also possess) the matter of fragrance, as it states,¹⁵⁸⁹ “My satisfying aroma (*Rei’ach Nichochi*-רִיחַ נִיחֹחִי), indicating that this is not merely the renewal of that which already was brought forth into being, but rather, that this too has novel additional light and illumination, nevertheless, this is not truly a drawing forth and revelation of light and illumination that is actually novel. Rather, it only is the revelation of that which was concealed (*Giluy HaHe’elem*).

However, in the case of the sacrificial offerings, it is an actual revelation of the concealed (*Giluy HaHe’elem*), meaning that it is not merely a revelation **from** the concealed, wherein the concealed remains concealed and only a mere glimmer is revealed, since that is only the renewal of that which was already brought forth into being. However, in the case of sacrificial offerings (*Korbanot*), there is an aspect of additional light and illumination, in that there is a revelation of that which is concealed (*Giluy HaHe’elem*).

Nevertheless, since it is the issuance and drawing forth of light and illumination that actually is novel, the incense (*Ketoret*) is loftier than this. This matter is brought about because of the refined Godly spark that is rooted in the world of chaos-*Tohu*, which precedes the world of rectification-*Tikkun*. The worlds of chaos-*Tohu* and rectification-*Tikkun* are like the aspects of the circles-*Iggulim* and the straight line-

¹⁵⁸⁹ Numbers 28:2 *ibid*.

Yosher, which correspond to the light of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, that transcends all worlds (*Sovev Kol Almin*) and the light of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, that fills all worlds (*Memaleh Kol Almin*). That which is drawn from the light of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, that transcends all worlds (*Sovev*), is an issuance of light and illumination that is actually novel.

Now, just as it is on the side of holiness (*Kedushah*), that the use of the physical thing does not merely affect the renewal of that which already was brought into being, but it also elicits a new drawing forth of novel light and illumination, so likewise, this is how it is in the opposing side of evil. In other words, if a person uses the physical thing, such as food, just to satisfy the lusts of his soul, through which he degrades the food and causes it to descend and add additional vitality to the external husks of evil (*Kelipot*), this is not merely a renewal of that which already was brought into being, but rather, it causes additional vitality be drawn to them.¹⁵⁹⁰

Now, with all of the above in mind, we may understand the matter of the permissible (*Heter*-היתר) and that it is in the category of relating to the external forces of evil, except that it is not bound up and imprisoned (*Asur*-אסור) in the hands of the external forces. That is, even though it is permissible (*Heter*-היתר) and can indeed be elevated to holiness (*Kedushah*), nevertheless, the thing itself possesses an element of the external husks of *Kelipah*, as explained above. Therefore, it too

¹⁵⁹⁰ Redactors note: There are those who recalled that the Rebbe stated, “a novel issuance and drawing forth.”

is in the same category as the external husks, except that it is not bound up and imprisoned (*Asur*-אסור) in their hands.

5.

Now, with the above in mind we can understand the matter of vows of abstinence (*Nedarim*) in which a person prohibits himself from the permissible, and how it nevertheless does not contradict the statement in Talmud Yerushalmi,¹⁵⁹¹ “Is what the Torah forbade you not enough, that you wish to forbid other things upon yourself?” The explanation is that even though the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, through the process of refinement (*Birurim*) is a service that is mandated by Torah, and moreover, through serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, by refining the permissible one elevates them to holiness (*Kedushah*), nevertheless, to do this, one must engage with the thing being refined. Moreover, even though it is so that “he who wrestles with a filthy person is bound to become soiled himself,”¹⁵⁹² nevertheless, the only way to serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, through the service of refinement (*Birurim*) is by being engaged with the thing being refined. This being so, he inevitably must be engaged with the permissible, which, as explained above, is of the same category as the forbidden, except that it is not bound and imprisoned (*Asur*-אסור) in the hands of the external forces.

¹⁵⁹¹ Talmud Yerushalmi, Nedarim 9:1

¹⁵⁹² See Tanya, Ch. 28.

However, there is a way to serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, that is loftier than serving Him through refinements (*Birurim*). This is serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, through vows of abstinence (*Nedarim*). To further explain, our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹⁵⁹³ "Vows (*Nedarim*-נדריים) are a (protective) fence to abstinence (*Prishoot*-פרישות)," and as Midrash Shmuel explains,¹⁵⁹⁴ "Abstinence (*Prishoot*-פרישות) is the path of Piety (*Chassidut*-חסידות),"¹⁵⁹⁵ and as known, the level of the Pious-*Chassid* is loftier than the level of the Righteous-*Tzaddik*.¹⁵⁹⁶ For, when it comes to the adjectives, "Righteous-*Tzaddik*-צדיק," "Intermediate-*Beinoni*-בינוני," and "wicked-*Rasha*-רשע," it is explained in Tanya¹⁵⁹⁷ and various other places¹⁵⁹⁸ that when it states, "he who has a majority of merits is called righteous-*Tzaddik*," it is only using the word righteous-*Tzaddik* as a borrowed term.

Based on this, it is understood that these three categories; "Righteous-*Tzaddik*-צדיק," "Intermediate-*Beinoni*-בינוני," and "wicked-*Rasha*-רשע," correspond to the three worlds; Creation, Formation and Action (*Briyah*, *Yetzirah*, *Asiyah*) respectively.¹⁵⁹⁹ That is, the world of Creation-*Briyah* is primarily good and only has a minority of evil.¹⁶⁰⁰ This is

¹⁵⁹³ Mishnah Avot 3:13

¹⁵⁹⁴ Midrash Shmuel to Avot 3:13 *ibid*.

¹⁵⁹⁵ In that one goes beyond the letter of the law

¹⁵⁹⁶ See Metzoref LaKesef v'Kur LaZahav of Rabbi Avraham Abulafia; Also see Shaarei Kedushah of Rabbi Chayim Vital, Section 1, Shaar 3.

¹⁵⁹⁷ See Tanya, Ch. 1

¹⁵⁹⁸ Talmud Bavli, Rosh HaShanah 16b; Rambam Hilchot Teshuvah Ch. 3.

¹⁵⁹⁹ See Ohr HaTorah, Mishpatim p. 1,127 and on; p. 1,140 and on.

¹⁶⁰⁰ See Etz Chayim, Shaar 43 (Shaar Tziyur Olamot), Hakdamah I'Drush; Also see Etz Chayim, Shaar 47 (Shaar Seder ABY"A) Ch. 4; Shaar 48 (Shaar

because the world of Creation-*Briyah* is only the beginning of sense of self (*Yeshut*). In contrast, the world of Formation-*Yetzirah* is half good and half evil, whereas the world of Action-*Asiyah* is primarily evil.¹⁶⁰¹ This being so, the level of the Pious-*Chassid* is loftier than the level of the Righteous-*Tzaddik*,¹⁶⁰² because the righteous-*Tzaddik* is in the world of Creation-*Briyah*, whereas the Pious-*Chassid* is in the world of Emanation-*Atzilut*.

Moreover, even as these terms are categorized according to the teachings of Chassidut,¹⁶⁰³ that the level of the “Righteous-*Tzaddik*-צַדִּיק” is a state of ultimate goodness, nevertheless, the “Pious-*Chassid*-חַסִּיד” is a still loftier level.¹⁶⁰⁴ In other words, though they both are in the state of ultimate goodness, still and all, the Pious-*Chassid*-חַסִּיד is loftier than the Righteous-*Tzaddik*-צַדִּיק.

The distinction between them may be understood by the difference between the two levels of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in the *Shema* recital. There is the self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) of the recitation of the words,¹⁶⁰⁵ “*HaShem* is One-*HaShem Echad*-יהו"ה אחד,” and there is the self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) of the continuing

HaKelipot) Ch. 3; Also see Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 53-54.

¹⁶⁰¹ See Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 53-54, and Etz Chayim in the prior note.

¹⁶⁰² See *Hemshech* 5672 Vol. 2, p. 772 and on; Sefer HaSichot Torat Shalom p. 178.

¹⁶⁰³ See Tanya, Ch. 1 and elsewhere.

¹⁶⁰⁴ See Metzoref LaKesef v'Kur LaZahav of Rabbi Avraham Abulafia *ibid*.

¹⁶⁰⁵ Deuteronomy 6:4

verse,¹⁶⁰⁶ “You shall love *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God... with all your soul.” These correspond to the two aspects¹⁶⁰⁷ of the Upper Indwelling Presence (*Shechinah*) of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, and the Lower Indwelling Presence (*Shechinah*) of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, which are called, “The Upper Bride (*Kallah Ila'ah*-כלה עילאה)” and “The Lower Bride (*Kallah Tata'ah*).” Now, although they both are called by the term “Bride-*Kallah*-כלה,” the root of which is, “expiry-*Kilyon*-כליין,” as in “the expiry of the soul-*Klot HaNefesh*-כלות הנפש” to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, nevertheless, there is a difference between them.

For, “The Upper Expiry (*Kallah Ila'ah*-כלה עילאה),” refers to the expiry of the soul (*Klot HaNefesh*) in a way that it is entirely and completely nullified of its very existence. This comes about through contemplating (*Hitbonenut*) how the entire chaining down of the worlds (*Hishtalshelut*) is only subsequent to the restraint of the *Tzimtzum*, and that in reality, the restraint of the *Tzimtzum* only conceals from the perspective of created beings. That is, relative to the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Essential Being, *HaShem*-יהו"ה Himself, blessed is He, the restraint of the *Tzimtzum* causes no concealment at all. This being so, from the perspective of *HaShem*-יהו"ה Himself, blessed is He, even now, after the restraint of the *Tzimtzum*, it is no different than before the restraint of the *Tzimtzum* – and there is utterly no existence whatsoever other than His Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Essential Self, blessed is He.

¹⁶⁰⁶ Deuteronomy 6:5

¹⁶⁰⁷ See Likkutei Torah *ibid.* 1b

Although, even prior to the restraint of the *Tzimtzum* “He estimated within Himself, in potential, all that He destined to be brought forth in actuality,”¹⁶⁰⁸ nevertheless, there is absolutely no actual existence of worlds there, and it is nothing but an estimation. This is clearly indicated by the precision of the words, “He estimated (*Shee’er*-שׁיעַר) within Himself all that He **destined** (*Ateed*-עֲתִיד) to be brought forth in actuality.” Thus, in reality, even now, He is One and alone, just as He was One and alone before the restraint of the *Tzimtzum*. That is, from His perspective there is no existence of worlds, and only the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Essential Being of *HaShem*-יהו"ה Himself, exists. Through such contemplation (*Hitbonenut*) one comes to be in a state of expiry of the soul (*Klot HaNefesh*) to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in a manner that he is utterly and completely nullified of his existence (*Bittul b'Metziyut*).

In contrast, “The Lower Expiry (*Kallah Tata’ah*)” is just the sublimation of one’s tangible sense of self (*Bittul HaYesh*) to *HaShem*-יהו"ה.¹⁶⁰⁹ This comes about through the contemplation (*Hitbonenut*) of matters indicated by the verses,¹⁶¹⁰ “How abundant are Your works, *HaShem*-יהו"ה,” and,¹⁶¹¹ “How great are Your works, *HaShem*-יהו"ה,” and the contemplation of how *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Godly force within them

¹⁶⁰⁸ See Mikdash Melech to Zohar I 15a; Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity Ch. 10 and on; Sefer HaMaamarim 5709 p. 38 (2) and on.

¹⁶⁰⁹ In a manner in which “there is one who is sublimated.”

¹⁶¹⁰ Psalms 104:24

¹⁶¹¹ Psalms 92:6

constantly brings them into being and that they all are entirely sublimated to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. Through such contemplation (*Hitbonenut*), one comes to be in a state of expiry and sublimation to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. However, it is only the sublimation of one's tangible sense of self (*Bittul HaYesh*).

This then, is the difference between the Righteous-*Tzaddik*-צדיק and the Pious-*Chassid*-חסיד. That is, although they both are in a state of ultimate goodness, nevertheless, the level of the Righteous-*Tzaddik*-צדיק (which corresponds to the world of Creation-*Briyah*) is just the sublimation of one's tangible sense of self (*Bittul HaYesh*) to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. In contrast, the level of the Pious-*Chassid*-חסיד (which corresponds to the world of Emanation-*Atzilut*) is the absolute nullification of his very existence (*Bittul b'Metziyut*).

About this the verse states,¹⁶¹² "About Levi he said: Your *Tumim* and Your *Urim* befit Your pious one (*Ish Chassidechah*-איש חסידך)." The words, "Your *Tumim* and Your *Urim*" refer to Aharon, and the verse calls him, "Your pious one (*Ish Chassidechah*-איש חסידך)." That is, he was granted this additional quality of Piety-*Chassidut*-חסידות, meaning that he was granted this additional level of love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, which is loftier than the love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה that preceded it. For, as known,¹⁶¹³ this is the distinction between Avraham's love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה and Aharon's love

¹⁶¹² Deuteronomy 33:8

¹⁶¹³ See Torah Ohr, Tetzaveh 82a and on; Likkutei Torah BeHa'alotcha 30a, 32b; Ohr HaTorah, BeHa'alotcha p. 349 and on.

of *HaShem*-יהו"ה and is the difference between “worldly love” (*Ahavat Olam*), and “abundant love” (*Ahavah Rabba*).¹⁶¹⁴

To clarify, “worldly love” (*Ahavat Olam*) is love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, that results from the contemplation (*Hitbonenut*) of matters such as,¹⁶¹⁵ “How great are Your works,” and,¹⁶¹⁶ “How abundant are Your works,” and how it is that all creatures are sublimated to *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godly power that brings them into being and enlivens and sustains them constantly, at each and every moment. The resultant love is just the sublimation of the tangible sense of self (*Bittul HaYesh*) to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

The reason is because his contemplation (*Hitbonenut*) is into tangible creations, such as “How abundant are Your works etc.,” only that he contemplates and realizes that tangible creations (*Yesh*) are sublimated to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. Thus, the sublimation to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, that results from this, is just the sublimation of the tangible (*Bittul HaYesh*) to the intangible Godliness of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

In contrast, love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, that is called “abundant love” (*Ahavah Rabba*) results from contemplation (*Hitbonenut*) of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness as He utterly transcends worlds altogether, and how it is that before the restraint of the *Tzimtzum*, the existence of worlds is utterly inapplicable. Thus, the result of such love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה,

¹⁶¹⁴ Also see the previous discourse of this year 5714, entitled “*Se’u et Rosh – Take a census*,” Discourse 16, Ch. 6.

¹⁶¹⁵ Psalms 92:6

¹⁶¹⁶ Psalms 104:24

blessed is He, is the complete nullification of the existence of worlds altogether (*Bittul b'Metziyut*). The reason is because this realization is not brought about through contemplating the existence of tangible created beings (*Yesh*), since, in the first place, the existence of tangible created beings is entirely inapplicable.

Now, this aspect is the matter of vows of abstinence (*Nedarim*), about which our sages, of blessed memory stated,¹⁶¹⁷ “Vows (*Nedarim*-נדרים) are a (protective) fence to abstinence (*Prishoot*-פרישות),” meaning even abstaining from the permissible (*Heter*-היתר), about which it is explained that,¹⁶¹⁸ “Abstinence (*Prishoot*-פרישות) is the path of Piety (*Chassidut*-חסידות).” That is, the matter of Piety-*Chassidut*-חסידות is loftier than serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, through refining (*Birurim*) that which Torah permits.

This is also understood from the statement in Talmud,¹⁶¹⁹ “The early Pious ones (*Chassidim HaRishonim*) would spend one hour in preparation for prayer, one hour engaged in prayer, and wait one hour after prayer etc.” The Talmud questions this and states, “If they would spend nine hours per day engaged in prayer (since there are three prayers per day), how then was their Torah knowledge preserved and how was their work accomplished?” The Talmud provides the answer, “Rather, it is specifically **because** they were Pious-*Chassidim*-חסידים that their Torah was preserved and their work

¹⁶¹⁷ Mishnah Avot 3:13

¹⁶¹⁸ Midrash Shmuel to Avot 3:13 *ibid*.

¹⁶¹⁹ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 32b

was blessed,” (meaning that the blessings from *HaShem*-יהו"ה were the automatic result of their service of Him, blessed is He). From this we understand that the matter of Piety-*Chassidut*-חסידות¹⁶²⁰ is higher than serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, as required by Torah.

This then, is the superiority of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, through vows of abstinence (*Nedarim*), which transcends serving Him through refining (*Birurim*) the permissible. That is, he does not engage himself in refining the world through sublimating the tangible (*Bittul HaYesh*) to *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness, but is rather in a state of separation and abstinence from the world and entirely transcends it. However, by rejecting and separating himself from the permissible, he elevates the physical to a much loftier level that entirely transcends the world. Through this, he too is brought to a much loftier level.

6.

However, there is a matter that is even loftier than vows of abstention (*Nedarim*). This is the level of the Sage (*Chacham*-חכם) who absolves the vow. The explanation is that, although through vows of abstention (*Nedarim*) a person transcends being engaged in worldly matters, nonetheless, he still has some relation to the world, only that he separates himself from the physical thing and rejects it. In other words,

¹⁶²⁰ That is, going beyond the letter of the law

his service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is in a manner of ascent, from below to Above. That is, he first was engaged in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, through refining (*Birurim*) the permissible, and he then ascended to the higher level of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, by separating himself and rejecting the physical. Nevertheless, he still has some relation to the physical, only that he rejects it.

However, the level of the Sage (*Chacham*-חכם) who absolves the vow, is an even loftier level and is from Above to below. That is, he has utterly no relation to the world whatsoever and therefore the physical does not stand in opposition to him at all. Therefore, He can affect the physical and transform it to complete goodness.

An example may be gleaned from food that is consumed on Shabbat.¹⁶²¹ That is, there is no comparison between the consumption of food on Shabbat and the consumption of food during the mundane days of the week. For, during the mundane days of the week, the food that one eats causes him to become coarser and more physical and he must work on himself not to desire the delight of the food, but that his consumption should solely be for the sake of the Name of Heaven. In contrast, about Shabbat the verse states,¹⁶²² “And you shall call Shabbat a pleasure (*Oneg*-ענג),” and it is a *mitzvah* to delight on Shabbat

¹⁶²¹ See Torah Ohr, Chayei Sarah; Likkutei Torah Balak 72a; Sefer HaMaamarim 5663 p. 60 and on.

¹⁶²² Isaiah 58:13

with food and drink,¹⁶²³ and as stated by Rambam,¹⁶²⁴ “One must prepare a particularly sumptuous dish and a pleasantly flavored beverage,” [meaning that the food should not be simple and mundane, but should be special and particularly sumptuous. The same applies to beverage. It should not be just a simple beverage, but should specifically be special and pleasantly flavored]. In other words, the very thing that one must avoid and abstain from during the mundane days of the week, becomes a *mitzvah* and a matter of holiness (*Kedushah*) on Shabbat.

The reason is because, on Shabbat, there is a general elevation of the world at large. For, as known,¹⁶²⁵ on Friday evening, at the commencement of Shabbat upon nightfall, two flames of Supernal fire strike *Nogah*, through which an ascent is affected in the entire world. Because of this even the physical itself is transformed into holiness (*Kedushah*), like the teaching,¹⁶²⁶ “Who amongst you are of those who transform darkness into light?”

The same is likewise true of the Sage (*Chacham*) who absolves the vow of abstention (*Neder*). For, the matter of vows of abstention (*Nedarim*) is the matter of separating from matters of the world, and is service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in ascent from below to Above, which, at the very least, has some

¹⁶²³ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 118b; Shulchan Aruch of the Alter Rebbe 242 and elsewhere.

¹⁶²⁴ Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Shabbat 30:7

¹⁶²⁵ Zohar II 203b; Pri Etz Chayim, Shaar HaShabbat, Ch. 3; Hosafot to Torah Ohr, Tisa 113a-b; Sefer HaMitzvot of the Tzemach Tzedek 90a; Sefer HaMaamarim 5663 p. 61.

¹⁶²⁶ Zohar I 4a

relation to the world. However, the Sage (*Chacham*) can absolve the vow, because the aspect of wisdom-*Chochmah* entirely transcends the world.

We find this in Moshe, who was in the aspect of wisdom-*Chochmah*, and said,¹⁶²⁷ “From where do I have meat to give to this entire people?” That is, his intention in this was not in reference to meat as it is before being refined (*Birur*), for if that was the case, he could have responded that they would be given refined meat. Rather, what is meant is that Moshe entirely transcended the matter of meat, including meat that has been refined (*Birur*). [In other words, the aspect of meat that follows refinement (*Birur*) is the matter of love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in a manner of ascent, like flames of fiery passion. However, in comparison to the sublimation and nullification (*Bittul*) of the aspect of wisdom-*Chochmah*, even this kind of love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is distracting and concealing etc.]

In other words, because the aspect of wisdom-*Chochmah* entirely transcends the matter of the world, therefore on this level even the matter of separation and abstinence (*Prishoot*) is not applicable. For, since the sage (*Chacham*) altogether transcends the world, it therefore is entirely inapplicable for physicality to stand in opposition to him, that

¹⁶²⁷ Numbers 11:13 – That is, Moshe is the aspect of wisdom-*Chochmah*-הכמה, which is the ultimate state of nullification “the power of what-*Ko'ach Ma"n*-ה-מה” and sublimation (*Bittul*) to the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Essential Being of *HaShem*-יהו"ה Himself, blessed is He, and he therefore entirely transcended relation to the matter of meat altogether. (See *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5686 p. 45; Also see *Sefer HaLikkutim* to the letter Beit, p. 641.)

he would have the need to abstain from it. On the contrary, because he has attained this level, the vow is annulled, in that he transforms the physical itself into the Godly. That is, it is not in a way of refinement and clarification (*Birur*), but is rather in a manner that the darkness itself is transformed into light.

7.

We thus find that there are three general modes of service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. There is service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, through refining and clarifying (*Birurim*) that which Torah permits. About such service the Jerusalem Talmud states,¹⁶²⁸ "Is what the Torah forbade you not enough, that you wish to forbid other things upon yourself?" The reason is because the intention in this mode of service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is to refine and clarify matters of the world and therefore the matter of abstention (*Preeshoot*) is inapplicable here.

However, a loftier level is service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, through vows of abstention (*Nedarim*), which is the matter of abstaining and separating (*Preeshoot*) oneself from matters of the world. This mode of service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is much loftier than serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה through the refinement (*Birurim*) of worldly matters, to such an extent that serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, through

¹⁶²⁸ Talmud Yerushalmi, Nedarim 9:1

refinement (*Birurim*) is actually distracting and disruptive to his service in the manner vows of abstention (*Nedarim*).

This is similar to what we find about Rav Zeira,¹⁶²⁹ that he fasted one-hundred fasts to forget the Babylonian Talmud, so that he could study the Jerusalem Talmud. That is, even though the Babylonian Talmud relates to serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, through refinements (*Birurim*) and is the matter of refining and clarifying (*Birurim*) what Torah permits, nevertheless, to attain the level of the Jerusalem Talmud, which transcends the matter of refinements (*Birurim*), he had to forget about the Babylonian Talmud.

However, all the above relates to serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, from below to Above. However, loftier than these two aspects, is the matter of the Sage (*Chacham*-חכם) who annuls the vow. This mode of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה is from Above to below and causes the transformation of darkness to light.

Now, the explanation of these three levels as they relate to the Supernal *Sefirot* is as follows: The verse states,¹⁶³⁰ “Six days (*Sheshet Yamim*-ששת ימים) *HaShem*-יהו"ה made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them etc.” The Zohar¹⁶³¹ asks, “Should it not have instead said, ‘**In** six days (*B'Sheshet Yamim*-בששת ימים) *HaShem*-יהו"ה made etc.’ Why then does the verse state, ‘Six days (*Sheshet Yamim*-ששת ימים) *HaShem*-יהו"ה made the heavens and the earth’?” The Zohar

¹⁶²⁹ Talmud Bavli, Bava Metziya 85a

¹⁶³⁰ Exodus 20:11

¹⁶³¹ Zohar III 94b

answers, “Each day performs its particular service,” meaning that the worlds are brought into being through the six emotive qualities of *Zeir Anpin*. In other words, the actualization of the existence of the worlds is from the *Sefirah* of kingship-*Malchut* as it is drawn from *Zeir Anpin*.

The same is so of the matter of refinements (*Birurim*). Namely, it is accomplished through the *Sefirah* of kingship-*Malchut*. For, since¹⁶³² “her feet go down unto death,” therefore, through the *Sefirah* of kingship-*Malchut* refinement (*Birur*) is affected by way of actual manifestation within the worlds. However, this power of kingship-*Malchut* to affect refinements (*Birurim*) is drawn to it from *Zeir Anpin*. For, since *Zeir Anpin* is the source for the worlds, as mentioned above, it therefore is from *Zeir Anpin* that the empowerment to serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, through refinements (*Birurim*) is drawn forth in a manner of manifestation (*Hitlabshoot*).

However, in regard to the *Sefirah* of understanding-*Binah*, which transcends and is the source of the emotive *Sefirot* of *Zeir Anpin*, as it states,¹⁶³³ “The mother of the children rejoices,”¹⁶³⁴ the matter of manifestation in order to affect refinements (*Birurim*) is not applicable, except in a transcendent manner (*Makif*). However, as also known about understanding-*Binah*, “from understanding-*Binah* judgments

¹⁶³² Proverbs 5:5; See Ohr HaTorah, Na”Ch Vol. 1 to Proverbs 5:5 (p. 564 and on), and elsewhere.

¹⁶³³ Psalms 113:9

¹⁶³⁴ That is, the stature of the *Sefirah* of understanding-*Binah* is called the mother-*Imma* that births the six emotions, but transcends them.

arise,”¹⁶³⁵ meaning, at its conclusion, which refers to the matter of anger towards all that stands in opposition etc.

This may be understood in one’s service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. Namely, when he contemplates the greatness of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, and comes to be roused with passion like fiery flames, he then comes to be in a state of judgment and stricture towards those are not in this state. This is similar to what our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹⁶³⁶ “From the perspiration of the *Chayot* angels, a river of fire emerges and comes upon the heads of the wicked.” In other words, from the strength of the passion of the Holy *Chayot* angels, with flames of fire, anger is caused on everything that stands in opposition. This is their perspiration and secretion, which is the river of fire that emerges and comes upon the heads of the wicked in purgatory. Thus, it is from the *Sefirah* of understanding-*Binah*, from which judgments arise at its conclusion, that the matter of vows of abstinence (*Nedarim*) comes about, which is the separation, abstinence (*Preeshoot*) and rejection of worldly matters. This is like the teaching,¹⁶³⁷ “Whoever makes a vow, it is as if he has vowed by the life of the King,” referring to the aspect of understanding-*Binah*.

However, the *Sefirah* of wisdom-*Chochmah* transcends the *Sefirah* of understanding-*Binah*. In other words, the *Sefirah*

¹⁶³⁵ See Zohar I 151a; Zohar III 10b and on, 65a; Etz Chayim, Shaar 13 (Shaar Arich Anpin) Ch. 8; Shaar 14 (Shaar Abba v’Imma) Ch. 2; Biurei HaZohar of the Mittler Rebbe 145d; Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 21 and elsewhere.

¹⁶³⁶ Talmud Bavli, Chagigah 13b

¹⁶³⁷ Zohar III 255a

of wisdom-*Chochmah* is not even in a state of surrounding and encompassing (*Makif*) the worlds. It is in respect to this that wisdom-*Chochmah* is called wondrous-*Peke*-פלא, as it states,¹⁶³⁸ “I will teach you-*A’Alephcha*-אאלפך wisdom-*Chochmah*,” in that it is wondrously and completely beyond (*Mufla*-מופלא) the worlds. Thus, from the aspect of wisdom-*Chochmah*, the matter of separation and abstinence (*Preeshoot*), which is the matter of the vows (*Nedarim*), is entirely inapplicable. Rather, wisdom-*Chochmah* causes the transformation of darkness into light.

Although it is true that understanding-*Binah* is also called wondrous-*Pele*-פלא, as it states,¹⁶³⁹ “learn-*Aleph*-אלף understanding-*Binah*,” nonetheless, the wondrousness of understanding-*Binah* is not that it is entirely wondrous, but only that it is an aspect that is encompassing and transcendent (*Makif*). Moreover, even though wisdom-*Chochmah* itself is drawn forth into understanding-*Binah*, nevertheless, the issuance of wisdom-*Chochmah* that is drawn into understanding-*Binah* is not the essential wisdom-*Chochmah*, but is only that which relates to comprehension and understanding-*Binah*. Therefore, it is specifically from the aspect of understanding-*Binah* that the matter of abstention (*Preeshoot*) comes to be. However, it is from the aspect of wisdom-*Chochmah*, and specifically the inner essence of wisdom-*Chochmah*, that a transformation of darkness to light and illumination is brought about.

¹⁶³⁸ Job 33:33

¹⁶³⁹ See Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 104a

With the above in mind we can understand how with his speech, a Sage (*Chacham*) can annul and permit that which became forbidden through the speech of the vow. For, the speech of the Sage (*Chacham*) is of a loftier order and level than the speech of the vow (*Neder*). Therefore, it is within the power of the Sage's speech to annul and permit what was forbidden by the speech of the vow (*Neder*).

This is similar to the difference between the speech of words of Torah and the speech of words of prayer. The speech of the words of prayer is from below to Above. That is, prayer commences with the recitation of the verse,¹⁶⁴⁰ "Submit to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, call out in His Name," which is just the aspect of submission to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. It then is followed by the ascension of the verses of praise (*Psukei d'Zimrah*), the blessings of the *Shema* recital and the recital of *Shema* itself, until one arrives at the sublimation and nullification (*Bittul*) to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, of the *Amidah* prayer. Nevertheless, even the sublimation and nullification (*Bittul*) to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, of the *Amidah* prayer, comes about through the toil and effort of ascending from below to Above. Because of this, even in the *Amidah* prayer itself, we still recite the blessing, "Pardon us (*Slach Lanu*-לנו סלח)," and then, upon completing the *Amidah*

¹⁶⁴⁰ Chronicles I 16:1

prayer, we recite the confession, which is the matter of rejecting evil.

In contrast, words of Torah study are from Above to below. As a result, our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹⁶⁴¹ “Words of Torah do not contract impurity.” This is because when there is a drawing down from Above to below, the matter of an opposing force is entirely inapplicable.

This likewise is the difference between the speech of the vow (*Neder*), which is comparable to the speech of words of prayer, in comparison to the speech of the Sage (*Chacham*) who absolves and permits that which was forbidden by the vow of abstention (*Neder*) and is similar to the speech of words of Torah.

To further clarify, there are three general levels in the matter of speech (*Dibur*); The first level, is as it is drawn forth from the aspect of kingship-*Malchut*. It is from this aspect of speech that the matter of refinements and clarifications (*Birurim*) come about. This also is the root of the matter of sacrificial offerings (*Korbanot*) which specifically become sanctified to holiness (*Hekdesh*) through speech.

The second level of speech (*Dibur*) refers to speech that is drawn from the root of kingship-*Malchut*, which is the aspect of understanding-*Binah*. It is from this level of speech that the matter of vows of abstention (*Nedarim*) stem, whereby one causes something to become forbidden through speech. To further explain, even a vow of abstention (*Neder*) is related to

¹⁶⁴¹ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 22a

the sanctification of sacrificial offerings (*Korban*), in that they both are rendered effective through speech, and furthermore, the substance of the vow must be that which he is associated with and is not already forbidden by Torah.¹⁶⁴²

That is, although the sanctification of the sacrificial offering is a matter of ascension, whereas the vow of abstention is a matter of rejection, separation and abstention, nevertheless, even vows of abstinence (*Nedarim*) possess a matter of ascension and elevation. For, it is through separating and abstaining from worldly matters and his rejection of them, that he actually elevates the physical even higher, to a loftier level, meaning, to a level that is higher than the world. Through this, he himself also attains a much greater level of elevation and ascension.

However, the third level of speech (*Dibur*) is as it is drawn from the essence of the soul. For, as known,¹⁶⁴³ the true root of speech (*Dibur*) is in wisdom-*Chochmah*, and even higher, in the very essence of the soul. Thus, it is from this aspect of speech (*Dibur*) that the Sage (*Chacham*) annuls the vow of abstention (*Neder*).

¹⁶⁴² Talmud Bavli, Nedarim 13a-14a

¹⁶⁴³ See the explanation to the discourse entitled “*Vayedaber... el Roshei HaMatot*” in Maamarei Admor HaZaken 5567 p. 299; Ohr HaTorah Matot p. 1,311; Also see Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 42.

This then, is the meaning of the verse at the beginning of the Torah portion regarding vows of abstention (*Nedarim*),¹⁶⁴⁴ “Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes of the Children of Israel, saying: This is the word that *HaShem*-יהו"ה commanded: If a man takes a vow etc.” The term used for tribes-*Matot*-מטות here refers to the twelve tribes (*Shevatim*-שבטים) of Israel. They are rooted in the six emotive attributes, which are doubled, and from which the twelve diagonal lines (*Yud Beit Gvulei Alachson*) come about.¹⁶⁴⁵

However, there are two levels in this, as indicated by the two words for tribes, “*Shvatim*-שבטים” and “*Matot*-מטות.” The difference between them is as follows: The term “*Shevet*-שבט” also means a staff, but a soft and pliable one. In contrast, the term “*Mateh*-מטה” means a rod, but a hard (and stiff) one. These two aspects correspond to the feminine world (*Alma d’Nukvah*) (indicated by the term “*Shvatim*-שבטים”) and the masculine world (*Alma d’Dechura*) (indicated by the term “*Matot*-מטות”).

In other words, the usage of the term “*Matot*-מטות” in reference to the tribes (which is reflective of the masculine world-*Alma d’Dechura*), indicates that they are rooted in the masculine aspect, which is *Zeir Anpin*. The words, “The heads of the tribes-*Roshei HaMatot*-ראשי המטות” therefore refer to the aspect of the intellect (*Mochin*) of *Zeir Anpin*. However,

¹⁶⁴⁴ Numbers 30:2

¹⁶⁴⁵ See Pardes Rimonim, Shaar 21 (Shaar Pratei HaSheimot) Ch. 6 and on; Ohr HaTorah Bereishit 15a and on; Also see Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 21 and the notes there.

Moshe, refers to the aspect of intellect (*Mochin*) as it essentially is.

It is in this regard that the verse states, “Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes.” That is, although, in and of themselves, their service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, was in the category of the service of refinements and clarifications (*Birurim*), and similarly, may even have been in the category of service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, through vows of abstention (*Nedarim*), which is the matter of separating and abstaining from worldly matters (*Preeshoot*), nevertheless, Moshe empowerment them to come to be in the state of a Sage (*Chacham*) who annuls the vow, as we learn from this verse of the Torah portion,¹⁶⁴⁶ that a single individual who is an expert can annul the vow. This matter is specifically within the power of Moshe.

To further explain, it is from Moshe that we learn¹⁶⁴⁷ that the Sanhedrin was composed of seventy-one individuals, as it states,¹⁶⁴⁸ “Gather Me seventy men of the Elders of Israel,” and Moshe presided over them, and is called¹⁶⁴⁹ “the most marvelous one (*Mufla*-מופלא) amongst the Sanhedrin.” Now, regarding the seventy men it states,¹⁶⁵⁰ “And I shall emanate some of the spirit that is upon you and place it upon them.” That is, Moshe is similar to the limitless light of the Unlimited One,

¹⁶⁴⁶ See Talmud Bavli, Nedarim 78a; Bava Batra 120b and Rashi to Numbers 30:2 *ibid*.

¹⁶⁴⁷ Mishnah Sanhedrin 2:6; Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Sanhedrin 1:3

¹⁶⁴⁸ Numbers 11:16

¹⁶⁴⁹ See Ohr HaTorah, Chanukah 289b and on; *Hemshech* 5672 Vol. 3 p. 1,410 and on.

¹⁶⁵⁰ Numbers 11:17

HaShem-יהו"ה, the Emanator, blessed is He, who emanates a radiance of illumination from Himself, which is the world of Emanation-*Atzilut*. Thus, this is why Moshe is described as "the most marvelous one (*Mufla*-מופלא) amongst the Sanhedrin." For, the term "the most marvelous one-*Mufla*-מופלא" is of the root "wondrous-*Pele*-פלא," and the term "wondrous-*Pele*-פלא" refers both to the crown-*Keter* and to wisdom-*Chochmah*, and more particularly, to the aspect of wisdom-*Chochmah* of the crown-*Keter*, which is the inner aspect (*Pnimityut*) of the crown-*Keter*. It was therefore within his power to draw the aspect of wisdom-*Chochmah* to the heads of the tribes (*Matot*-מטות), thus empowering them to annul vows.

This also is the meaning of the continuation of the verse,¹⁶⁵¹ "This (*Zeh*-זה) is the word that *HaShem*-יהו"ה commanded," specifically using the term "This-*Zeh*-זה." For, all other prophets prophesied with the term "Thus-*Koh*-כה," whereas Moshe prophesied with superior clarity, as indicated by the term "This-*Zeh*-זה."¹⁶⁵² Thus, it is in this manner that the verse states, "This (*Zeh*-זה) is the word," that through the aspect of "This-*Zeh*-זה," which is the level of Moshe and is the aspect of wisdom-*Chochmah*, he also drew this forth to the heads of the tribes, so that they too came to be in the category of a Sage (*Chacham*) who can annul the vow, so that through this, they can bring about the transformation of darkness into light!

¹⁶⁵¹ Numbers 30:2

¹⁶⁵² See Sifrei and Rashi to Numbers 30:2