

Discourse 18

*“Lefikach Nikra ’u HaRishonim Sofrim –
Therefore the early sages were called ‘counters’”*

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Shmini,
Shabbat Mevarchim Iyyar, 5716
By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

It states in Talmud,¹¹⁷⁴ “Therefore, the early sages were called ‘counters’ (*Sofrim*-סופרים), for they would count all the letters of Torah and say, ‘The letter *Vav*-ו of the word¹¹⁷⁵ ‘belly-*Gachon*-גחון’ is the midpoint of all the letters in the Torah... In the verse,¹¹⁷⁶ ‘The boar of the forest devours it,’ the letter *Ayin*-ע of the word ‘forest-*Ya’ar*-(יער)’ is the midpoint of Psalms.”

The general explanation is that the word, “belly-*Gachon*-גחון” hints at the primordial snake, about whom the verse states,¹¹⁷⁷ “Upon your belly (*Gechoncha*-גחונך) you shall go.” Thus, the letter *Vav*-ו of the word “belly-*Gachon*-גחון” causes separation and cessation to the primordial snake. This likewise is so of the letter *Ayin*-ע of the verse, “The boar of the forest (*Ya’ar*-(יער) devours it.” The boar (*Chazir*-חזיר) refers to

¹¹⁷⁴ Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 30a

¹¹⁷⁵ Leviticus 11:42

¹¹⁷⁶ Psalms 80:14

¹¹⁷⁷ Genesis 3:14

Esav, who is like a boar (*Chazir*-חזיר), as it states,¹¹⁷⁸ “Just as a pig (*Chazir*-חזיר) displays his cloven hooves, as if to say, ‘See, I am a kosher animal,’ so likewise, the wicked kingdom of Esav robs and extorts while pretending to be honorable.” Thus, the letter *Ayin*-ע of the verse, “The boar of the forest (*Ya’ar*-יער) devours it,” which is the midpoint of the letters of Psalms, causes a separation and cessation, so that no additional vitality is drawn to Edom, who is likened to a boar (*Chazir*-חזיר). This summarizes the explanation of Maharsha in his commentary, *Chiddushei Aggadot*, on the words of Talmud there.

2.

Now, to understand this, we must preface by explaining the general matter and context of the verse, “Everything that creeps on its belly (*Gachon*-גחון).” Namely, the Torah is discussing the matter of forbidden foods here, as stated in the very next verse,¹¹⁷⁹ “Lest you become contaminated through them (*v’Nitmeitem Bam*-בם ונטמתם).” About this, our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹¹⁸⁰ “Sin dulls (*Metamtemet*-מטמטמת) the heart of man, as written, ‘And do not defile yourselves with them, lest you become contaminated through them (*v’Nitmeitem Bam*-בם ונטמתם).’ (The word ‘Lest you become contaminated-*v’Nitmeitem*-בם ונטמתם’ is written missing the letter *Aleph*-א.) Do not read it as, ‘Lest you be contaminated-

¹¹⁷⁸ Midrash Bereishit Rabba 65:1; Rashi to Genesis 26:34

¹¹⁷⁹ Leviticus 11:43

¹¹⁸⁰ Talmud Bavli, Yoma 39a (and Rashi)

v'Nitmeitem-ונטמתם,' but as, 'Lest you become dulled-v'Nitamtem-ונטמטם.'" In other words, the consumption of forbidden foods causes the dulling of a person's heart.

This may be understood based on the discourse of the Alter Rebbe, whose soul is in Eden, entitled,¹¹⁸¹ "To understand the matter of the dullness of the heart and the dullness of the brain (*Timum HaLev V'Timum HaMo'ach*).” He explains that the dullness of the heart (*Timum HaLev*) means that the heart becomes unfeeling, like a stone. That is, even though in his brain and mind, he indeed has some grasp of *HaShem*'s יהוה's Godliness, to the point that it has become absorbed in the comprehension of his mind, nonetheless, his heart remains unmoved and unfeeling like a stone, in that he is altogether not aroused by this.

To further explain, in Psalms David said,¹¹⁸² "My heart is empty within me." Now, he did not say this only about *Tzaddikim*, like himself, because David was the pleasant singer of Israel, and said this about all Israel, not just the righteous-*Tzaddikim*. It therefore is understood that all Jews must be in the state indicated by the words, "My heart is empty within me."

Now, the explanation of "My heart is empty within me," (as it relates to all Jews), is that a person must empty his heart of all worldly matters. It is specifically then that he becomes a

¹¹⁸¹ Maamarei Admor HaZaken, HaKtzarim p. 482, and printed with additional glosses in Ohr HaTorah Vayikra Vol. 2, p. 479 and on; Also see the discourse entitled "*Al Gechoncha*" 5626 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5626 p. 67 and on).

¹¹⁸² Psalms 109:22; See Shaarei Kedushah of Rabbi Chayim Vital, translated as Gates of Holiness, Part 1, Gate 3 (in explanation of the level of the Chassid); Also see Tanya, Ch. 1.

fitting vessel to receive the blessings of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, as in the teaching,¹¹⁸³ "An empty vessel holds what is placed into it, whereas a full vessel cannot hold it." Thus, the meaning of "My heart is empty within me" is that he is an empty vessel. His heart can then be a vessel that receives and is moved by what he grasps in his brain and mind in matters of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness.

In contrast, the dulling of the heart (*Timtum HaLev*) is that instead of his heart being empty within him, as it should be, his heart becomes completely dulled, like a heart of stone. That is, it altogether is not a receptacle to receive the Godly light of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

The discourse continues that the dulling of the heart (*Timtum HaLev*) is comparable to falling from the heavens. In other words, since in his mind he indeed has some grasp of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness, this being so, according to the proper order of things, what he grasps in his mind should cause arousal in his heart. Thus, if his heart is dull, like a heart of stone, this indeed is a very great fall, so much so, that it is compared to falling from the heavens.

However, we must better understand this, for our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹¹⁸⁴ "Everything is in the hands of Heaven, except for the fear of Heaven." This being so, since dullness of the heart is like falling from the heavens, it seems as if a person has no control over this. However, there is a remedy

¹¹⁸³ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 40a, and see Chiddushei Aggadot of the Maharsha there; Also see Torah Ohr, Mishpatim; See the discourse entitled "*Ani LeDodai*" 5700, Ch. 3 (and the note of the Rebbe to Sefer HaMaamarim 5710 p. 120).

¹¹⁸⁴ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 33b

that one should follow so that his heart will not be a heart of stone, but instead be a heart of flesh, and the application of this remedy is indeed in his control.

The explanation is as follows;¹¹⁸⁵ The remedy for dullness of the heart (*Timtum HaLev*) is as taught in Zohar,¹¹⁸⁶ “A wooden beam that does not catch on fire, should be splintered; a body in which the light of the soul does not illuminate, should be crushed, and it will illuminate.” In other words, a person must contemplate (*Hitbonenut*) his spiritual condition and what he has become sunken into, such as the fact that he only is interested in eating and drinking, no different than an animal, whose entire being is only invested into eating and drinking and knows of nothing else. If so, the difference between him and an animal is only in the fact that the animal eats hay, while he eats different foods. Nonetheless, he is completely preoccupied with food and drink and their procurement. This being so, instead of occupying himself in self-refinement, as he should be, so that perhaps he may attain some measure of Godliness, he literally is like an animal.

Now, although in various places, including the previous discourse,¹¹⁸⁷ it is mentioned that one’s service of *HaShem* – יהו"ה, blessed is He, should not at all be self-serving, meaning that it should not even be motivated in revealing the light of *HaShem*’s יהו"ה Godliness in his soul, but should rather be in a way of accepting the yoke of *HaShem*’s יהו"ה Kingship upon

¹¹⁸⁵ See Sefer HaSichot, Torat Shalom p. 163 and on.

¹¹⁸⁶ Zohar III 168a; See Tanya Ch. 29 and on.

¹¹⁸⁷ See the previous discourse of this year, 5716, entitled “*Kiyemei Tzeitcha* – As in the days when you left the land of Egypt,” Discourse 17, Ch. 6.

himself, and to bring satisfaction of spirit to his Maker, blessed is He, nevertheless, when a person is just beginning in his service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, especially if he must rescue himself from actual evil, he should then examine himself by making an accounting of his soul, with the realization that he needs to ascend from his current level. This is like the explanation¹¹⁸⁸ of the teaching,¹¹⁸⁹ "A Torah scholar must have one-eighth of one-eighth of arrogance...it crowns and protects him like the husk protects the grain."

This then, is the meaning of the teaching, "A body in which the light of the soul does not illuminate should be crushed, and it will illuminate." That is, through contemplating (*Hitbonenut*) his current spiritual condition, he will come to have great bitterness in his soul, in the left ventricle of his heart.¹¹⁹⁰ Through this, he will come to have joy in his soul, in the right ventricle of his heart,¹¹⁹¹ and will come to have a heart of flesh.

There is yet another remedy for dullness of the heart (*Timtum HaLev*), which involves contemplating (*Hitbonenut*) lofty matters. That is, since in his brain and mind he indeed has some grasp of matters of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness, and absorbs these matters in a way of comprehension, in that only his heart is dulled, whereas in his brain and mind he indeed is

¹¹⁸⁸ See Likkutei Sichot Vol. 22 p. 162, note 32; Igrot Kodesh, Vol. 1, p. 278, p. 302, p. 303; Vol. 13, p. 395; Reshimot, Booklet 15, p. 34 and on.

¹¹⁸⁹ Talmud Bavli, Sotah 5a

¹¹⁹⁰ The seat of the evil inclination and animalistic soul. See Tanya Ch. 9.

¹¹⁹¹ The seat of the good inclination and Godly soul. See Tanya Ch. 9 *ibid.*; Also see Sefer HaSichot, Torat Shalom p. 162 *ibid.*

capable of grasping, therefore, if he continues contemplating lofty matters in general, especially the wondrousness of the Limitless Light of *HaShem*-יה"ה, the Unlimited One, blessed is He, the abundance of Godly illumination in his mind will cause a breakthrough in his heart of stone as well.

In other words, through the faculty of knowledge-*Da'at*, which is called “the key that includes the six [emotions],”¹¹⁹² the emotions of his heart will be repaired, at least as they relate to thought, speech and action (*Machshavah, Dibur, Ma'aseh*).

There is yet another remedy for dullness of the heart (*Timum HaLev*), which is to recite the letters of Torah. For, it states about Torah,¹¹⁹³ “Torah is light,” which is the matter of the wisdom-*Chochmah* of Torah. Thus, the light and illumination of Torah will even affect his heart of stone, so that even his heart of stone will surely melt.¹¹⁹⁴

3.

Now, if a person has done all the above (reciting the words of Torah, contemplating lofty matters of *HaShem*'s-יה"ה Godliness, and contemplating his own (spiritual) condition, which is the matter of “crushing him”), and yet has not been helped, this indicates that not only is his heart dulled, but beyond this, he also suffers from dullness of the brain (*Timum HaMo'ach*). In other words, his mind is not a fitting receptacle

¹¹⁹² Zohar II 177a, and is further explained in Likkutei Torah, VaEtchanan 6d.

¹¹⁹³ Proverbs 6:23

¹¹⁹⁴ See Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 30b

that can absorb the light of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. Because of this, the above-mentioned remedies will not cure him.

To explain, his brain is dulled (*Timtum HaMo'ach*) because he is overly invested in his lusts, including lust for the permissible. Because of this, he is not a fitting receptacle to receive and absorb the Godly light of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. This may be better understood through the matter of the "River of Fire (*Nahar Dinor*)" and the pillar that exists between each world.¹¹⁹⁵ That is, in order to be capable of receiving the Godly light and illumination of the Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*), the soul must first be immersed in the River of Fire (*Nahar Dinor*), the purpose of which is to forget the visions of this world. For, as long as the soul relates to the visions of this world, it cannot be a receptacle to receive the revelations of the Godly light and illuminations of the Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*).

This is like the statement about Rav Zeira,¹¹⁹⁶ that in order to be able to study the Jerusalem Talmud, he underwent many fasts to forget the Babylonian Talmud. In other words, this matter even applies to Torah itself, such as when Rav Zeira went up to the Land of Israel, where the study of Torah was on a higher level. The reason the Torah of the Land of Israel was loftier, was because the scholars of the Land of Israel maintained an unbroken chain of transmission from one

¹¹⁹⁵ See Zohar I 219a; Zohar II 211a; Maamarei Admor HaZaken al Parshiyot HaTorah, Vol. 2 p. 773.

¹¹⁹⁶ Talmud Bavli, Bava Metziyah 85a

generation to the next, all the way to our teacher Moshe, peace be upon him. Thus, their Torah study was in the ultimate state of refinement and nullification (*Bittul*) to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. It thus states that whoever (in Talmud) is called "Rabbi-רבי," with the additional letter *Yod*-י, is from the Land of Israel.¹¹⁹⁷ The addition of the letter *Yod*-י to the title "Rav-רב" indicates the matter of sublimation and nullification (*Bittul*) to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, stemming from wisdom-*Chochmah*. Thus, when Rav Zeira needed to study Torah on a much higher level that he was accustomed to, which was the manner of study of the Jerusalem Talmud, he first had to forget the Babylonian Talmud, about which the verse states,¹¹⁹⁸ "He has made me dwell in dark places, as those who have been long dead."

We thus find that even in the study of Torah itself, a lower level of grasp causes distraction and confusion of a higher level of grasp. The same may be understood about the River of Fire (*Nahar Dinor*), that as long as the soul retains its relationship to the visions of this world, the soul cannot relate to the revelations and illuminations of the Godly light of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in the Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*).

Thus, with the above in mind, we can understand that lust causes dullness of the brain (*Timtum HaMo'ach*). This is deduced as a matter of logical certainty from the River of Fire

¹¹⁹⁷ See the end of Seder Tana'im v'Amora'im; Etz Chayim, Shaar 19 (Shaar Ana"Ch) Ch. 3, and elsewhere. Also see the note of the Rebbe to Sefer HaMaamarim 5708 p. 121.

¹¹⁹⁸ Lamentations 3:6; Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 24a

(*Nahar Dinor*). For, the revelations of the Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*) are a mere glimmer of the radiance of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness, and are the matter of, "delighting in the radiance of the Indwelling Presence of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He (the *Shechinah*)."¹¹⁹⁹ However, even though it is but a mere glimmer of radiance, nonetheless, the visions of this world distract and confuse the soul from receiving the revelation and illumination of the radiance of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness in the Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*). This being so, it is understood that it is even more so, in relation to the revelations of Torah and *mitzvot* in this world, which is the aspect of the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic Being, *HaShem*-יהו"ה Himself, blessed is He. That is, being sunken into lust certainly distracts and confuses a person from this revelation, because through this, his mind becomes dulled and he becomes incapable of receiving the revelations of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness.

Now, it should be pointed out that this dullness of the brain (*Timtum HaMo'ach*) does not only happen while he actually is sunken in his lusts. In other words, even if at this moment, he is not sunken in lust, nevertheless, his previous lust distracts him and causes the revelation of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה light to be confused in him. This is because, even though at this moment, his lust is dormant, it nevertheless remains hidden in him and can reawaken. As a result, his brain is incapable of

¹¹⁹⁹ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 17a; Also see Tanya Ch. 4; Ohr HaTorah, Bamidbar p. 10, and elsewhere.

properly receiving the revelation of *HaShem* 's-יהו"ה Godly light and illumination.

By way of analogy, this may be understood from a person who studies a certain Tractate of Talmud, to the point that he has become fully proficient in it. When he then studies a different Tractate, the first one remains hidden in his memory, even though he is not presently thinking about it. Proof of this, is the fact that he can recall it whenever he wishes. In other words, even when he is not engaged in studying the previous Tractate, it has not withdrawn him, and remains hidden in his power of memory.

The same applies to the matter of lust. That is, since he previously was sunken in lust, it always remains in him, at least in a concealed manner. Thus, since his lusts cause dullness of the brain (*Timtum HaMo'ach*) and remain within him, he therefore is incapable of being a proper receptacle for the revelation of *HaShem* 's-יהו"ה Godly light and illumination.

4.

Now, the remedy for removing dullness of the brain (*Timtum HaMo'ach*) from oneself, is by undergoing, “the flinging of the slingshot” (*Kaf HaKela*),¹²⁰⁰ as explained in the Akeida,¹²⁰¹ and in Ikkarim,¹²⁰² that just as a stone is flung from place to place, so likewise, the soul is flung from place to place.

¹²⁰⁰ Samuel I 25:29

¹²⁰¹ Akeida, Parshat Nitzavim, Gate 101

¹²⁰² Ikkarim, Maamar 4, end of Ch. 33

That is, at one moment it is flung into a state of Godly delight (for, since it is rooted in *HaShem's* יהו"ה Godliness, it indeed has some relation to delighting in Godliness) and the next moment it is flung into lusting for matters of physicality (for, since it was previously sunken into the physical lusts of this world, it therefore relates to physical pleasures). This is repeated over and over, causing great anguishing to the soul. For, since the soul has a relation to Godly delight, when it then is flung into physical pleasures, this brings it great anguish. The same is true in the reverse. Since the soul relates to physical pleasures, when they are then taken away, he is greatly anguished by this.

Now, the above only applies if initially (before sinking into lust and coming to a state of dullness of the brain – *Timtum HaMo'ach*) he had some relation to delighting in contemplating (*Hitbonenut*) matters of *HaShem's* יהו"ה Godliness. In such a case it is applicable for this “flinging of the slingshot” (*Kaf HaKela*) to be effective. However, if initially he did not even have the matter of delighting in *HaShem's* יהו"ה Godliness, it is inapplicable for him to undergo such a “flinging of the slingshot” (*Kaf HaKela*). Instead, he must undergo a much lower form of the, “flinging of the slingshot” (*Kaf HaKela*).

This lower form is as explained in Shnei Luchot HaBrit¹²⁰³ citing Pirke d'Rabbi Eliezer.¹²⁰⁴ It states that in this “flinging of the slingshot” (*Kaf HaKela*) the soul is repeatedly flung from the Land of Israel to outside the Land of Israel and

¹²⁰³ Shnei Luchot HaBrit 105b

¹²⁰⁴ Pirke d'Rabbi Eliezer, Ch. 34

back. To explain, the spiritual aspect of the Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisroel*) is understood from the teaching,¹²⁰⁵ “Why is it called, “Land-*Eretz*-ארץ?” Because it desired-*Ratzta*-רצתה to fulfill the will of its Maker. Why is it called Israel-*Yisroel*-ישראל? Because it forms the words,¹²⁰⁶ “A head for Me-ראש,” as in the verse,¹²⁰⁷ “Because you have ruled over (*Sarita*-שרית-*Elohi*”m-אלהים and have prevailed.” This refers to fulfilling Torah and *mitzvot* in actuality, by accepting the yoke of *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Kingship, upon oneself. Thus, this is something that he too relates to. That is, even though he has no relation to the pleasure of contemplating (*Hitbonenut*) *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Godliness, he nonetheless relates to the study of *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Torah and fulfilling His *mitzvot* in actuality.

Now, for him, the matter of the “flinging of the slingshot” (*Kaf HaKela*) is that he is repeatedly flung from the Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisroel*) to outside of the land (*Chutz LaAretz*). The Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisroel*) corresponds to Kingship-*Malchut* of the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*),¹²⁰⁸ which is the sublimation (*Bittul*) of accepting the yoke of *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Kingship, blessed is He, upon oneself. From there he is flung to outside the land (*Chutz LaAretz*), referring

¹²⁰⁵ Midrash Bereishit Rabba 5:8

¹²⁰⁶ Derech Mitzvotcha 15b citing Zohar; Etz Chayim, Shaar 8 (Shaar Leah v’Rachel, Ch. 2; Shaar HaPesukim of the Arizal to Genesis 32:29; Sefer HaLikkutim of the Arizal to Genesis 47:28, 48:2; Also see Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 34.

¹²⁰⁷ Genesis 32:29

¹²⁰⁸ See Shaarei Orah of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, end of Shaar 1 (Malchut).

to the external husk of Nogah,¹²⁰⁹ which is the matter of being sunken and entrenched in lusts for the permissible.

However, if a person does not even relate to the spiritual aspect of the Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisroel*), for him, “the flinging of the slingshot” is even lower and is like the teaching,¹²¹⁰ “He is flung from one end of the world to the other end of the world.” In other words, in this world itself (meaning physicality) he is flung from one end of the world to the other end of the world. The world consists of six directions, however, in general they divide into the two lines of south and north, corresponding to expansiveness and abundance on the one side, and constriction and scarcity on the other side. Thus, the meaning of being flung from one end of the world to the other, is that at one moment he is flung to a sense of expansiveness and abundance, and the next moment he is flung to a state of constriction and scarcity.

However, the above is only true if the dullness of his brain (*Timtum HaMo'ach*) is caused by lusts for the permissible. However, if the dullness is brought about because of forbidden lusts, the “flinging of the slingshot” is ineffective by itself. As stated in Tanya,¹²¹¹ for such a problem purgatory (Gehinnom) is specifically necessary.

The explanation is that when it comes to permissible lusts, since they are not forbidden-*Assur*-אסור, meaning that they are not imprisoned-*Assur*-אסור in the hands of the external

¹²⁰⁹ See Likkutei Torah, Masei 89b and on.

¹²¹⁰ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 152b

¹²¹¹ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 8

forces, the soul is only in the aspect of being laden with dust. Thus, to remove this type of lust, the “flinging of the slingshot” (*Kaf HaKela*) is effective, and is like shaking off the dust.

In contrast, since forbidden lusts are indeed imprisoned (*Assur*-אסור) in the hands of the external forces, the soul becomes stained and the “flinging of the slingshot” (*Kaf HaKela*) is ineffective in removing the stain. Rather, purgatory (*Gehinnom*) is specifically necessary to remove the stain. The word “purgatory-*Gehinnom*-גיהנום” is a composite of the words, “The Valley of Hinnom-*Gey Hinnom*-גיא הנום.”¹²¹² The word “*Gey*-גיא” means “valley,” which has the shape of a vessel (*Klee*), meaning that instead of making himself into a vessel (*Klee*) for holiness, by doing the right thing (as explained above about the matter of an empty vessel), he has made himself into a vessel (*Klee*) for the external husks of *Kelipah*, which are called, “The Valley of the shadow of Death-*Gey Tzalmavet*-גיא צלמות.”¹²¹³ This causes great torment to the soul, through which the stain is removed.¹²¹⁴

5.

Now, as known, the remedy that removes dullness of the brain (*Timtum HaMo'ach*) is serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, through three things that one must do before prayer.¹²¹⁵ He

¹²¹² See Kings II 23:10; Jeremiah 7:31 and elsewhere.

¹²¹³ Psalms 23:4

¹²¹⁴ Also see the discourse entitled “*Yafe Sha'ah Achat*” of the Mittler Rebbe, Maamarei Admor HaEmtza'ee, Kuntreisim.

¹²¹⁵ See Likkutei Torah, Tavo 43b and on.

must give charity (*Tzedakah*), as in the teaching,¹²¹⁶ “Rabbi Elazar would first give a *peruta* to a poor person, and only then would he pray.” This is because charity (*Tzedakah*) represents all the *mitzvot*,¹²¹⁷ and fulfilling the *mitzvot* in action is a remedy that removes the dullness of the brain (*Timtum HaMo’ach*).

To clarify, the remedy for dullness of the heart (*Timtum HaLev*) is to recite words of Torah (as explained in chapter two), which is the matter of speech (*Dibur*). However, to remove the dullness of the brain (*Timtum HaMo’ach*), speech (*Dibur*) alone is inadequate, but there specifically must be action (*Ma’aseh*). The reason is because of the general principle that, “whatever is higher descends lower.”¹²¹⁸ Therefore, it is specifically through action (*Ma’aseh*), which is lower than speech (*Dibur*), indicating that in its root it is higher, that the dullness of the brain (*Timtum HaMo’ach*) can be removed.

Before prayer one must also immerse in a Mikvah. The word “immersion-*Tevilah*-טבילה” has the same letters as the word, “the nullification-*HaBittul*-הביטול,”¹²¹⁹ referring to nullification (*Bittul*) of one’s very being to *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He. In the words of the Rebbe:¹²²⁰ “When a person immerses himself in the Mikvah, it is not just to transform

¹²¹⁶ Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 10a

¹²¹⁷ See Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 37 and elsewhere.

¹²¹⁸ Likkutei Torah, Emor 34c; Also see the citations in Maftchot l’Sifrei Admor HaZaken (Kehot 5741), section entitled “*Kol HaGavo’ah*”; Siddur Im Divrei Elokim Chayim, 71d, 303c; Shaarei Orah of the Mittler Rebbe, Shaar HaPurim 58a and on, 65a and on.

¹²¹⁹ See Siddur Im Dach, Kavanot HaMikvah 159d

¹²²⁰ Sefer HaSichot, Torat Shalom p. 165.

himself from impurity to purity. It rather must be in a manner that he knows that the Mikvah is itself a place of purity, as stated,¹²²¹ “Only a spring or a cistern, a gathering of water (*Mikveih Mayim*), shall remain pure.” Thus, as long as he is immersed in the waters of the Mikvah, he essentially is in a lofty state, and when he exits from the waters of the Mikvah, he departs from this state. This is why the word, “immersion-*Tevilah*-טבילה,” has the same letters as, “the nullification-*HaBittul*-הביטול,” meaning that in the waters of the Mikvah, he is in a state of the nullification (*Bittul*) of existence to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

In other words, about dullness of the heart (*Timtum HaLev*), we explained that the remedy is to engage in contemplating (*Hitbonenut*) matters that “crush his soul,” and bring him to a state of broken-heartedness. Nevertheless, even then, he remains in a state of existence. However, the remedy for removing dullness of the brain (*Timtum HaMo'ach*), is to undergo the complete nullification (*Bittul*) and transformation of his being. This is the same as repentance (*Teshuvah*), which also involves transforming one's very being, as known.

6.

The explanation is that in regard to dullness of the heart (*Timtum HaLev*), it is self-understood that since he has not labored in refining and purifying his soul, he therefore is

¹²²¹ Leviticus 11:36

automatically in a state of the dulling of the heart (*Timum HaLev*). On the contrary, how could it be otherwise? (That is, what virtue does he have to not have dullness of the heart – *Timum HaLev*?) For, as Tanya explains¹²²² about thoughts that are alien to Godliness (*Machshavot Zarot*), if a person is aware of his spiritual condition, without deluding himself, he knows quite well that he is neither refined nor purified, and that alien thoughts automatically enter his mind. On the contrary, how could it be otherwise? (That is, for what reason and by what virtue should he not have alien thoughts?)

That is, the matter of toiling in the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is that a person must refine and purify himself until he comes to the state of,¹²²³ "*HaShem*-יהו"ה is my portion, says my soul." This is as explained in the previous discourse,¹²²⁴ citing the analogy in Midrash about this verse. It states there,¹²²⁵ "This is analogous to a king who entered a country accompanied by a duke, a prefect, and a commander. One person said, 'I will choose the duke as my patron.' Another said, 'I will choose the prefect as my patron.' Still another said, 'I will choose the commander as my patron.' Now, amongst them was a clever man, who said, 'I will choose the king, because all the others can be replaced (by the king), whereas the king is irreplaceable.'"

¹²²² Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 27

¹²²³ Lamentations 3:24

¹²²⁴ See the previous discourse of this year, 5716, "*Kiyemei Tzeitche* – As in the days you left the land of Egypt," Discourse 17, Ch. 7; Also see Ohr HaTorah, Tavo p. 1,074; *Hemshech* 5672 Vol. 2, p. 920.

¹²²⁵ Midrash Eicha Rabba 3:8

The meaning of this analogy is that the nations of the world serve the seventy angelic ministers. For, since in the chaining down of the worlds (*Seder HaHishtalshehut*) the bestowal of influence passes by way of these ministers, the nations therefore believe that the ministers have independent existence. However, the clever man amongst them, referring to the souls of the Jewish people, says, "I will choose the King, because all the others can be replaced, whereas the King is irreplaceable." In other words, even though currently, this is not openly recognized, in truth, all the angelic ministers are replaceable.

This is like another more physical analogy.¹²²⁶ When seeds are planted and the rains come, it is not yet recognizable which part of the wheat is primary. Nevertheless, after the rains have passed and the grain is harvested and taken for threshing, it then becomes apparent which part of the wheat is primary.

The same is true in the above analogy. The clever one recognizes that even though the bestowal of influence passes by way of the angelic ministers, nonetheless, this is not primary. Rather, the Essential Self of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, the Unlimited One, blessed is He, who utterly transcends the chaining down of the worlds (*Histalshehut*) is primary. Moreover, even though this transcends the chaining down of the worlds (*Hishtalshehut*), nevertheless, since the souls of the Jewish people are rooted there, they recognize the Essential Self of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, the Unlimited One, blessed is He, who transcends the chaining

¹²²⁶ See Midrash Bereishit Rabba, 83:5

down of the worlds (*Hishtalshelut*). This is the meaning of the verse, “*HaShem*-יהו"ה is my portion, says my soul.”

Thus, a person must engage in contemplation (*Hitbonenut*) and toil in his service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in the appropriate manner. However, if he does not do so, it is self-understood that he automatically will come to have dullness of the heart (*Timum HaLev*). In regard to this, the remedies (discussed in chapter two) are given, and through them the dullness of the heart (*Timum HaLev*) can be removed.

In contrast, dullness of the brain (*Timum HaMo'ach*) has an effect that reaches the very essence of one's being. For, the soul of man is the intellectual soul (*Nefesh HaSeechleet*). Thus, if his intellect is contaminated and dulled, this affects his entire being. Therefore, the remedy to splinter and crush his soul until he becomes broken-hearted, is inadequate. Rather, there must be a complete transformation of his being, and through this, he removes the contamination and dullness of the brain (*Timum HaMo'ach*). The basic point is that, even though our sages, of blessed memory, stated that sin causes the heart of man to be dulled, nevertheless, through drawing down a much higher light, so that his very being is transformed, he thereby nullifies the contamination and dullness.

7.

With the above in mind, we can understand the matter of the letter *Vav*-ו of the word “belly-*Gachon*-גחון,” and that it causes cessation and separation in the primordial snake. For, it

is the primordial snake who brought about the sin of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which is the source of all subsequent sins. The letter *Vav*-ו of the word “belly-*Gachon*-גחון,” is the midpoint of all the letters of the Torah, and thus causes a separation and cessation of the primordial snake.

The explanation¹²²⁷ is that Torah-תורה means “instruction-*Hora*’ah-הוראה,”¹²²⁸ in that it instructs us in “distinguishing between the impure and the pure,”¹²²⁹ between the forbidden and the permitted, and the valid and the invalid, which indicate two lines. The midpoint of Torah is the middle line, which connects the other two lines. This is possible because it is higher than both.

This then, is the meaning of the letter *Vav*-ו of the word “belly-*Gachon*-גחון,” which is the midpoint of the letters of Torah. For, the letter *Vav*-ו [is like a pipe that] draws influence down (*Hamshachah*).¹²³⁰ Thus, the letter *Vav*-ו at the midpoint of the letters of Torah, indicates a drawing down of much loftier light; the light of the middle line. It therefore causes cessation to the vitality of the primordial snake, who is the source cause of all forbidden matters. This is like what we explained before, that contamination and dullness of the brain (*Timtum HaMo’ach*) is removed by drawing down a much loftier light

¹²²⁷ See Ohr HaTorah, Vayikra Vol. 1, p. 242 and on; Discourse entitled “*Vayomer.. HaChodesh*” 5632 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5632 Vol. 1 p. 263 and on); Discourse entitled “*Amar Rabbonteinu Zichronam LiVrachah, Lefikach*” 5699 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5699 p. 168 and on).

¹²²⁸ Zohar III 53b; See Likkutei Sichot Vol. 9 p. 462 and elsewhere.

¹²²⁹ Leviticus 10:10

¹²³⁰ See Likkutei Torah, Beshalach 1a; Tzav 13b, 14a, and elsewhere.

and illumination; an illumination that brings about a transformation of being.

In the same manner we may understand the matter of the letter *Vav*-ו of the word “belly-*Gachon*-גחון,” which is the drawing down of the middle line and is a much loftier light that causes cessation to the vitality of the snake.

The same is true of the “hanging *Ayin*-ע”¹²³¹ of the verse,¹²³² “The boar of the forest (*Ya’ar*-יער) devours it,” which is the midpoint of the letters of Psalms. That is, this matter causes cessation to the vitality of Esav, who is compared to a boar (*Chazir*-חזיר) and generally refers to the exile of Edom. The removal of his vitality is specifically through the midpoint of Psalms (*Tehillim*).

8.

To understand this better, we must preface with an explanation of the difference between Torah and Psalms (*Tehillim*). The Book of Psalms (*Tehillim*) is composed of songs and praises to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, about the coming redemption of the Jewish people and the era of Moshiach. It therefore is similar to serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in prayer.

Now, in general, there is a difference between Torah and prayer. That is, Torah is from above to below, whereas prayer

¹²³¹ The letter *Ayin*-ע of the word “forest-*Ya’ar*-יער” is written as if it hangs above the line of the other letters.

¹²³² Psalms 80:14

is from below to above. Nevertheless, the Book of Psalms (*Tehillim*), which consists of songs and praises to *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, and is similar to prayer, is itself part and parcel of Torah and, in general, relates to fear of Heaven.

To explain, our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹²³³ “Whoever has Torah in him, but does not have fear of Heaven, is like a treasurer who was given the keys to the inner doors of the treasuries, but was not given the keys to the outer doors.” In other words, Torah is the inner matter (*Pnimiyut*), whereas the fear of Heaven (and prayer in general) is the external matter (*Chitzoniyut*). Now, the general matter of inner (*Pnimiyut*) and outer (*Chitzoniyut*) exists on every level. That is, whatever is lower is considered external (*Chitzoniyut*) compared to what is above it.

By way of analogy, this may be understood from the powers of the soul. For example, the power of action (*Ma'aseh*) is external compared to the power of speech (*Dibur*). However, more particularly, even in action (*Ma'aseh*) itself, there also are inner (*Pnimiyut*) and external (*Chitzoniyut*) aspects. For example, the power to throw an object, in which there altogether is no manifestation of intellect, is the externality (*Chitzoniyut*) of the power of action (*Ma'aseh*), as we observe, that even an animal is able to throw something. In contrast, the ability to write and the ability to draw a picture, are inner (*Pnimiyut*) aspects of the power of action (*Ma'aseh*). However, in truth, writing is external (*Chitzoniyut*) compared to drawing. For, the

¹²³³ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 31a-b

intellect that is given over in writing only applies to a reader who himself is intellectual, which is not so of drawing. That is, in drawing, not only is the drawing itself revealed, but the inner life and vitality of the drawing is revealed and appreciated, even by a person who himself has no talent to draw. Nevertheless, generally speaking, the power of action (*Ma'aseh*) is external compared to the power of speech (*Dibur*).

Similarly, in speech (*Dibur*) itself, there also are various levels. For example, there is no comparison between speech that is totally external (*Chitzoniyut*), in which the words and letters come out of one's mouth thoughtlessly and without intention, and speech that is spoken with intent. In other words, if a person speaks about an intellectual matter that he already has contemplated and conceptualized, particularly if he conceptualizes it as he speaks, his speech will be full of life and vitality, to the extent that there is a level of speech (*Dibur*) about which it states,¹²³⁴ "My soul came out with his speech." Nevertheless, the general power of speech (*Dibur*) is itself external (*Chitzoniyut*) compared to the power of thought (*Machshavah*). This is because speech (*Dibur*) is a garment that is separate from the soul and can therefore cease, as the verse states,¹²³⁵ "A time to be silent and a time to speak." In contrast, thought (*Machshavah*) is a garment that is unified to the soul, which is why it flows constantly without cessation.

Now, in thought (*Machshavah*) itself, there also are various levels. For example, there are thoughts that do not

¹²³⁴ See Song of Songs 5:6

¹²³⁵ Ecclesiastes 3:7

relate to oneself, or he may be thinking about something in the past that is old and long gone. On the other hand, he may be thinking about something that relates to the very essence of his soul. Nevertheless, all three of these aspects; thought, speech, and action (*Machshavah, Dibur, Ma'aseh*) are external in comparison to one's emotions (*Midot*) and intellect (*Sechel*).

Now, in the emotions (*Midot*) and intellect (*Sechel*) themselves, there also are various levels. However, in general, thought, speech and action (*Machshavah, Dibur, Ma'aseh*) are external (*Chitzzoniyut*) in comparison to the emotions (*Midot*) and intellect (*Sechel*), which are internal (*Pnimiyyut*). The reason is because thought, speech and action (*Machshavah, Dibur, Ma'aseh*) are merely the garments (*Levushim*) of the soul, about which it states,¹²³⁶ "You will exchange them like a garment." That is, a person can remove the garment of one matter and don another matter. However, this is not so of intellect (*Sechel*) and emotions (*Midot*). Rather, in order to affect change in one's emotional characteristics (*Midot*), and more particularly, in order to affect change in one's intellect (*Sechel*), great toil is necessary.

The same is understood above, in *HaShem's* יהו"ה's Godliness, that the revealed worlds (*Almin d'Itgalyan*), including this world, were brought into being from the aspect of speech. In contrast, the concealed worlds (*Almin Seteemeen*), including the world of Creation (*Briyah*), were brought into being from the aspect of thought

¹²³⁶ Psalms 102:27

(*Machshavah*).¹²³⁷ Nevertheless, all this is external (*Chitzoniyut*), whereas the ten *Sefirot* of the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*) are inner (*Pnimiyyut*), since they are unified with the Essential Self of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. For, as stated about the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*),¹²³⁸ "He and His life force are one; He and His organs are one."

This then, explains why Torah is the inner aspect (*Pnimiyyut*), whereas fear of Heaven (and prayer) is the external aspect (*Chitzoniyut*). Torah is from above to below, and is a drawing down from the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*). It thus is the inner aspect (*Pnimiyyut*). In contrast, prayer is from below to above, and is the toil and service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, of the creatures. It thus is the external aspect, since the creatures are external (*Chitzoniyut*), in that they are not unified with their Source.

With the above in mind, we can understand the statement in Talmud,¹²³⁹ "There are 5,888 verses in a Torah scroll. Psalms (*Tehillim*) has eight verses more and Chronicles (*Divrei HaYamim*) has eight verses less."

The explanation is that Torah, which is drawn from above to below, is much loftier than Chronicles (*Divrei HaYamim*), which relates to matters of the world. Thus, the superiority and elevation of Torah, over and above Chronicles (*Divrei HaYamim*), is signified by the number eight, which is

¹²³⁷ See Tanya, Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah, Ch. 11.

¹²³⁸ Introduction to Tikkunei Zohar 3b

¹²³⁹ Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 30a

far beyond the matter of the seven cycling days, as explained elsewhere.¹²⁴⁰

Nevertheless, even Torah, which is drawn from above to below, is in a state of limitation. For, although it states about Torah that,¹²⁴¹ “Its measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea,” nevertheless, it too is has measure and limitation, only that it is so great that, “its measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea.”

However, the book of Psalms (*Tehillim*) is even loftier, in that its songs and praises are about the coming redemption of the Jewish people and the era of Moshiach. In other words, it is unlike Chronicles (*Divrei HaYamim*), which is the matter of the creation and existence of the worlds. In contrast, the Book of Psalms (*Tehillim*) is the matter of the elevation of the worlds through the Jewish people serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, from below to above.

It therefore is even loftier than Torah, because the matter of ascent (*Aliyah*) reaches far higher than the matter of drawing down (*Hamshachah*) from above, in that it is brought about by the souls of the Jewish people serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, whose souls are even loftier than Torah. This is as known regarding the teaching,¹²⁴² “The thought of Israel preceded everything,” even the thought of the Torah!

¹²⁴⁰ That is, the number eight indicates transcendence over the natural order, which is signified by the number seven. See Sha'alot uTeshuvot HaRashba Vol. 1, Section 9; Likkutei Torah, Shmini Atzeret 88b and elsewhere.

¹²⁴¹ Job 11:9

¹²⁴² Midrash Bereishit Rabba 1:4 and elsewhere.

Furthermore, this superiority is also by the factor of number eight, as mentioned above.

9.

With all the above in mind, we can understand why the midpoint of the letters of Torah causes a cessation of the vitality drawn to the primordial snake, and that the midpoint of the letters of Psalms (*Tehillim*) causes a cessation in the vitality drawn to the exile of Edom.

To clarify, the primordial snake is the root cause of all sins. Thus, since he is the root, the cessation of his vitality must be brought about through drawing down *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godly light from above, as it is in its root. In contrast, the exile of Edom is as it already is drawn down in the chaining down of the worlds (*Hishtalshelut*), through the seventy-ע angelic ministers of the nations (*Ayin Sarim*). Thus, the cessation of the vitality of the exile of Edom, which is drawn to the seventy-ע ministers of the nations (*Ayin Sarim*), is through the "hanging *Ayin*-ע," which is the midpoint of the letters of Psalms (*Tehillim*). This refers to the matter of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, with fear of Heaven, in a manner of ascent from below to above. The greatness of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה from below to above, is that it reaches even higher. Therefore, the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in prayer and fear of Heaven, is what will bring about the songs and praises of the coming redemption of the Jewish people and the era of Moshiach. For, in that time, "there will be a harp of eight

strings,”¹²⁴³ and the prophecy,¹²⁴⁴ “The Glory of *HaShem*-יהו"ה will be revealed and all flesh, as one, shall see that the mouth of *HaShem*-יהו"ה has spoken,” will be revealed. May this happen for us now, with the coming redemption, through our righteous Moshiach!

¹²⁴³ Talmud Bavli, Arachin 13b

¹²⁴⁴ Isaiah 40:5 *ibid.*