

Discourse 29

*“Shoftim v’Shotrim Titen Lecha b’Chol She’arecha -
Judged and officers shall you appoint in all your
gates”*

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Shoftim, 4th of Elul, 5716

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

1.

The verse states,¹⁸⁶⁰ “Judges and officers you shall appoint in all the gates of your cities (*She’arecha*-שְׁעָרֶיךָ) etc.” Now, it is explained in the teachings of Chassidut¹⁸⁶¹ that when it states “in all the gates of your cities (*She’arecha*-שְׁעָרֶיךָ),” this is related to the verse,¹⁸⁶² “Her husband is known in the gates (*Shi’arim*-שְׁעָרִים).” The explanation is that in the verse, “Her husband is known in the gates (*Shi’arim*-שְׁעָרִים),” the wife refers to “the wife of valor (*Eishet Chayil*-אִשֶּׁת חַיִּל),”¹⁸⁶³ That is, it refers to the Ingathering of the souls of Israel (the *Shechinah*). “Her Husband” therefore refers to the Holy One, blessed is He, as it states,¹⁸⁶⁴ “Your Maker is your husband, *HaShem Tzva*’ot-יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת is His Name.”

¹⁸⁶⁰ Deuteronomy 16:18

¹⁸⁶¹ See the discourse entitled “*Shoftim v’Shotrim*” in Ohr HaTorah, p. 823 and on; Sefer HaMaamarim 5629 p. 295 and on; 5630 p. 336 and on, and elsewhere.

¹⁸⁶² Proverbs 31:23

¹⁸⁶³ Proverbs 31:10

¹⁸⁶⁴ Isaiah 54:5

Similarly, our sages, of blessed memory, said about marriage,¹⁸⁶⁵ “A woman only forms a covenant (*Brit*) with the one who made her into a vessel, as it states, ‘Your Maker is your husband, *HaShem Tzva’ot* יהו"ה צבאות is His Name.”

The Zohar¹⁸⁶⁶ poses a question about this. Namely, this being so, how then is it possible that “Her husband is known in the gates (*Shi’arim* שערִים)?” For, is it not so that *HaShem* יהו"ה, the Unlimited One, blessed is He, is concealed with the ultimate concealment, and none can grasp Him?

The Zohar then provides two explanations in answer to this question. The first is that the meaning of the verse, “Her husband is known in the gates (*Shi’arim* שערִים),” is that “*HaShem* יהו"ה makes Himself known and attaches Himself to each person commensurate to the extent of the estimation (*Mesha’er* משער) of his heart, each person according to his capacity to adhere to the spirit of wisdom-*Chochmah*,” [as also cited in Tanya].¹⁸⁶⁷ In other words, the meaning of the word “gates-*Shi’arim* שערִים” here, is like the word “estimation-*Hash’arah* השערה.” That is, this is not true knowledge, but is rather an estimation (*Hash’arah* השערה) of it. In general, this refers to knowledge of *HaShem*’s יהו"ה existence (*Yediyat HaMetziyut*), rather than to the grasp of His Being (*Hasagat HaMahut*).

The second answer, is that the word “gates-*Shi’arim* שערִים” here, means “measure-*Shee’oor* שיעור,” that is, quantity (*Midah* מדה). In other words, it refers to the ten *Sefirot*, which have measure (*Shee’oor* שיעור) and quantity (*Midah* מדה), in that

¹⁸⁶⁵ Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 22b

¹⁸⁶⁶ Zohar I 103a; Also see Likkutei Torah, Matot 85b and on.

¹⁸⁶⁷ See the introduction to Tanya, and the beginning of Ch. 44.

they are “ten and not nine, ten and not eleven.”¹⁸⁶⁸ That is, since the revelation that comes through them is measured and limited, therefore, specifically through them it is possible to grasp Him, blessed is He, by the use of analogies from the ten powers of the soul, and the like. This is as stated,¹⁸⁶⁹ “From my flesh I behold God.” This knowledge is in a way of actual grasp, literally, and not just in a way of estimation, being that in Aramaic, the word “*Echezeh*-אֶחְזֶה” means “sight-*Re’iyah*-רְאִיָּה,” that is, actual vision, rather than just an estimation (*Hash’arah*-הַשְׁעָרָה). That is, it indeed is possible to grasp the aspect of *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Godliness that is in the *Sefirot*. In contrast, the knowledge of *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Godliness that transcends the *Sefirot* is only known in a way of estimation (*Hash’arah*-הַשְׁעָרָה).

2.

The explanation is that, as known, there are fifty gates of understanding (*Nun Sha’arei Binah*-נו"ן שערי בינה). About this the verse specifies and states, “[Judges and officers you shall appoint] in **all** the gates of your cities (*b’Khol She’arecha*-בְּכָל שְׁעָרֶיךָ etc.” That is, the word “all-*Khol*-כָּל-50” has the numerical value of *Nun*-נ-50 (as the letter *Beit*-ב in the word is just a prefix – *Otiyot HaShimush*).¹⁸⁷⁰ Therefore, this refers to the fifty gates of understanding (*Nun Sha’arei Binah*-נו"ן שערי בינה).

¹⁸⁶⁸ Sefer Yetzirah 1:4

¹⁸⁶⁹ Job 19:26

¹⁸⁷⁰ See Ginat Egoz of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as *HaShem Is One*, Vol. 3, section entitled “The Gate explaining how the twenty-two letters are divided in the Holy Language-*Lashon HaKodesh*.”

Now, the matter of these gates, is that they are like gates that open to the outside. That is, the light of the grasp and comprehension of the mind exits through these gates to become grasped in the heart, by means of which the heart “estimates” (*Mesha’er*-משער) and grasps what the mind contemplates (*Hitbonenut*). However, for there to be a drawing of the intellect (*Mochin*) to the emotions (*Midot*), there first must be an ascent of the emotions (*Midot*) to the intellect (*Mochin*). About this the verse states,¹⁸⁷¹ “The eyes of all (*Kol*-כל) look to You with hope.” The numerical value of the word “all-*Kol*-כל” is *Nun*-נ-50, referring to the fifty gates of understanding (*Nun Sha’arei Binah*-נו"ן שערי בינה), through which an ascent of the emotions (*Midot*) to the intellect (*Mochin*) is caused, which subsequently causes a drawing down of the intellect (*Mochin*) to the emotions (*Midot*).

However, the verse, “Her husband is known in the gates (*Shi’arim*-שערים),” refers to a much loftier drawing down of the fifty gates of understanding (*Nun Sha’arei Binah*-נו"ן שערי בינה). To explain, just as there are fifty gates of understanding (*Nun Shaarei Binah*), there also are thirty-two paths of wisdom (*Lamed-Beit Netivot Chochmah*-ל"ב נתיבות חכמה).¹⁸⁷² The difference between them is that the matter of the fifty gates of understanding is to bond the intellect (*Mochin*) to the emotions (*Midot*). In contrast, the matter of the thirty-two paths of wisdom is to bond

¹⁸⁷¹ Psalms 145:15; Also see Likkutei Torah *ibid.*, and Siddur Im Divrei Elokim Chayim, 54c.

¹⁸⁷² See Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 32, and the notes there at length.

wisdom-*Chochmah* to understanding-*Binah*, so that there this is a “point in the sanctuary (*Nekudah b’Heichalah*).”¹⁸⁷³

This may be understood like the explanation before¹⁸⁷⁴ about the difference between the upper desire (*Ratzon HaElyon*) and the lower desire (*Ratzon HaTachton*). The lower desire (*Ratzon HaTachton*) is desire born of intellect (*Sechel*), whereas the upper desire (*Ratzon HaElyon*) is desire that transcends intellect (*Sechel*) and is the essential desire (*Ratzon Atzmee*). This is likewise the difference between the fifty gates of understanding (*Nun Shaarei Binah*) and the thirty-two paths of wisdom (*Lamed-Beit Netivot Chochmah*). That is, the matter of the fifty gates of understanding is to draw down intellect into the emotions, and is the matter of the drawing down of the lower desire (*Ratzon HaTachton*) which is born of intellect. In contrast, the matter of the thirty-two paths of wisdom is the drawing down of the upper desire (*Ratzon HaElyon*), meaning desire that transcends intellect, which is drawn down through wisdom-*Chochmah* and from wisdom-*Chochmah* into understanding-*Binah*. This upper aspect is referred to in the verse, “Her husband is known in the gates (*Shi’arim*-שערים).” That is, it is the matter of drawing down the upper desire (*Ratzon HaElyon*) through the thirty-two paths of wisdom (*Lamed-Beit Netivot Chochmah*) into the fifty gates of understanding (*Nun Shaarei Binah*).

¹⁸⁷³ See Zohar I 6a; Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 5 (19a); Tikkun 28 (72b) and elsewhere; Also see Tanya, Iggeret HaKodesh, Epistle 5 (107a); Likkutei Torah, Re’eh 18b; Also see the prior discourse of this year, 5716, Discourse 24, entitled “*Kara Shachav k’Ari*-He crouched and lay down like a lion.”

¹⁸⁷⁴ In the previous discourse of this year, 5716, entitled “*VeHayah Eikev Tishme’un* – And it shall come to pass that because you listen,” Discourse 27, Ch. 4 and on, and in the discourse entitled “*v’Samti Kadkod Shimshotayich* – And I shall make your pinnacles of *Kadkod*,” Discourse 28, Ch. 2 and on.

This is also the meaning of the verse,¹⁸⁷⁵ “And I shall make your pinnacles of *kadkod* (כדכד),¹⁸⁷⁶ your gates of precious stones (*Avnei Ekdach*-אבני אקדח), and all your borders of desirable gems (*Avnei Cheifetz*-אבני חפץ-*She'arayich* שערִיך) in this verse, refers to the fifty gates of understanding (*Nun Shaarei Binah*), the matter of which is to be drawn down into the emotions (*Midot*). This is what is meant by the “precious stones-*Avnei Ekdach*-אבני אקדח.” That is, the word “*Ekdach*-אקדח” is related in its root to the word *Kadchah*-קדחה in the verse,¹⁸⁷⁷ “Fire will have been kindled-*Aish Kadchah*-אש קדחה,” and is related to the word *Kedo'ach*-קדוח, in the verse,¹⁸⁷⁸ “Like the kindling of a fire-*K'Kedo'ach Aish*-כקדוח אש,” and refers to the arousal of passionate emotions.

Additionally, the words, “All your borders (*Gvuleich*-גבולֶך) of desirable gems (*Avnei Cheifetz*-אבני חפץ-*She'arayich* שערִיך) of desirable gems,” refer to the fifty gates of understanding, which are in a state of limitation (*Hagbalah*-הגבלה). It thus is necessary to draw down and unify the aspect of “desirable gems” (*Avnei Cheifetz*) in them, referring to the matter of the thirty-two paths of wisdom.

3.

This then, is the meaning of the verse,¹⁸⁷⁹ “Judges and officers (*Shoftim* ו *Shotrim*-שופטים ושוטרים) you shall appoint in all the gates of your cities (*Khol She'arecha*-כל שערִיך etc.” Now, as

¹⁸⁷⁵ Isaiah 54:12; Also see Likkutei Torah, Re'eh 26a and on.

¹⁸⁷⁶ See the previous discourse.

¹⁸⁷⁷ Deuteronomy 32:22

¹⁸⁷⁸ Isaiah 64:1

¹⁸⁷⁹ Deuteronomy 16:18

this verse, relates to man's service of יהו"ה-*HaShem*, blessed is He, "all the gates of your cities (*Khol She'arecha*-כל שעריך)" refers to the gates the human body, as known.¹⁸⁸⁰ This is as stated in Sefer Yetzirah,¹⁸⁸¹ that the body has seven gates corresponding to the seven letters בג"ד כפר"ת, these being the two eyes, the two ears, the two nostrils of the nose, and the mouth.¹⁸⁸² They are called "gates-*She'arim*-שערים," because through them a person connects with what is external to him, both to receive through them, and to express himself to the outside through them.¹⁸⁸³

Now, because these gates can also be used by the external husks (*Kelipot*) of the opposite of holiness, which is why we are warned,¹⁸⁸⁴ "You shall not go after your hearts and after your eyes through which you may stray," the Torah states about this, "Judges and officers you shall appoint in all the gates of your cities (*Khol Shi'arecha*-כל שעריך etc)." That is, a person must place judges and officers (*Shoftim* v'*Shotrim*-שופטים ושוטרים) on all his gates.

Judges (*Shoftim*-שופטים) refers to the final legal rulings of Torah laws (*Halachot*), by which we know what is permissible to do and what is forbidden to do. In general, this refers to serving יהו"ה-*HaShem*, blessed is He, in a way of understanding and comprehension.

On the other hand, the purpose of officers (*Shotrim*-שוטרים) is "to chastise and enforce the laws [of the Judges] with a

¹⁸⁸⁰ See Siftei Kohen on the Torah, to Deuteronomy 16:18; Also see at length in Ohr HaTorah, Shoftim, and elsewhere.

¹⁸⁸¹ Sefer Yetzirah 4:12; Shnei Luchot HaBrit, end of Parshat Shoftim, and elsewhere.

¹⁸⁸² Also see Ginat Egoz of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as *HaShem Is One*, Vol. 2 (The Letters of Creation), Section entitled "The seven letters בג"ד כפר"ת correspond to the seven gates of the soul"

¹⁸⁸³ See Ginat Egoz of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla translated as *HaShem Is One* ibid.

¹⁸⁸⁴ Numbers 15:39

stick and a strap, until a person accepts the rulings of the judges,” (as stated in Rashi’s commentary on this verse). This refers to the matter of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, by accepting the yoke of His Kingship. In the words of our sages, of blessed memory,¹⁸⁸⁵ “A person should always incite his good inclination against his evil inclination etc.” In other words, serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, with understanding and comprehension alone, is insufficient, but there also must be acceptance of the yoke of *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Kingship.

Now, these two matters (comprehension and the acceptance of the yoke of *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Kingship), help each other. In other words, through accepting the yoke of *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Kingship, one’s grasp and comprehension become whole, and on the other hand, through understanding and comprehension, one’s acceptance of the yoke of *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Kingship is drawn down and internalized (*Pnimitiyut*).

This is like the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory,¹⁸⁸⁶ “If not for David, Yo’av would not have been able to wage war successfully,” (referring to inciting the good inclination, vanquishing the evil inclination, and accepting of the yoke of *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Kingship), “and were it not for Yo’av, David would not have been able to study Torah,” (referring to understanding and comprehension).

The verse then continues,¹⁸⁸⁷ “And they shall judge the people with righteous judgment (*Mishpat Tzedek*-משפט צדק).” That is, when a person places judges and officers (*Shoftim*

¹⁸⁸⁵ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 5a; See Zohar I 202a; Zohar III 113b.

¹⁸⁸⁶ Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 49a

¹⁸⁸⁷ Deuteronomy 16:18

ו' *Shotrim*-שופטים ושוטרים) in all his seven gates, to guard that they will not be used for the opposite of holiness, in which case they are called “the gates of the shadow of death (*Shaarei Tzalmavet*-שערי צלמות),”¹⁸⁸⁸ but instead only uses them for matters of holiness, they then are called “the gates of righteousness” (*Shaarei Tzeddek*-שערי צדק).¹⁸⁸⁹

By doing so, the matter indicated by the verse,¹⁸⁹⁰ “Her Husband is known in the gates” (*Shi'arim*-שערים) is actualized. That is, this causes the knowledge of *HaShem*'s יהו"ה Godliness to be in him according to both ways explained above. In other words, the fifty gates of understanding (*Nun Shaarei Binah*), as well as the thirty-two paths of wisdom (*Lamed-Beit Netivot Chochmah*) are brought down. This is the matter of the drawing down the lower desire (*Ratzon HaTachton*) and the upper desire (*Ratzon HaElyon*), as the verse concludes,¹⁸⁹¹ “So that you will live and possess the Land (*Aretz*-ארץ) that *HaShem* יהו"ה your God, gives you.” The word “Land-*Aretz*-ארץ” is of the same root as “desire-*Ratzon*-רצון,” meaning, the lower desire (*Ratzon HaTachton*) and the upper desire (*Ratzon HaElyon*).

Now, this matter is preparatory to Rosh HaShanah. That is, through our work in serving *HaShem* יהו"ה, blessed is He, by appointing “judges and officers (*Shoftim* ו' *Shotrim*-שופטים ושוטרים) in all the gates of your cities etc., and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment (*Mishpat Tzedek*-משפט צדק),” we then go with complete security, trust, and joy, to the day of justice and judgment of Rosh HaShanah, with the knowledge that

¹⁸⁸⁸ Job 38:17

¹⁸⁸⁹ Psalms 118:19

¹⁸⁹⁰ Proverbs 31:23

¹⁸⁹¹ Deuteronomy 16:20

HaShem-יהו"ה, blessed is He,¹⁸⁹² “will judge the world with righteousness.”¹⁸⁹³

¹⁸⁹² Psalms 9:9, 96:12; Midrash Vayikra Rabba 30:4; Also see the next discourse entitled “*Atem Nitzavim* – You are standing this day,” of this year 5716, Discourse 30.

¹⁸⁹³ The conclusion of this discourse is missing.