

Discourse 8

“*V’Yaakov Nasa Sukkotah -
Yaakov journeyed to Sukkot*”

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Vayishlach, 18th of Kislev, 5716
By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

The verse states,⁵²⁴ “Yaakov journeyed to Sukkot and built himself a house, and for his livestock he made shelters; This is why the place was called Sukkot.” In his discourse by this same title (which is printed in *Boneh Yerushalayim*,⁵²⁵ and is also in hand-written manuscript⁵²⁶), the Alter Rebbe explains that this matter may be understood through the verse that states,⁵²⁷ “She discerns that her enterprise is good; Her lamp is not extinguished at night.”

2.

The explanation is that there are two kinds of love (*Ahavah*) of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. There is a love called

⁵²⁴ Genesis 33:17

⁵²⁵ *Boneh Yerushalayim*, 96, and subsequently printed in *Maamarei Admor HaZaken*, *HaKtzarim* p. 16 and on.

⁵²⁶ Cited in *Maamarei Admor HaZaken*, *HaKtzarim* *ibid.*; Also see the beginning of the Sichah talk that followed this discourse (printed in *Torat Menachem*, Vol. 15, p. 238).

⁵²⁷ Proverbs 31:18

“great love” (*Ahavah Rabba*), and a love called “worldly love” (*Ahavat Olam*).

“Worldly love” (*Ahavat Olam*) of יהו"ה-*HaShem*, blessed is He, is derived from a person's contemplations (*Hitbonenut*) of the world, which is the aspect of the light of יהו"ה-*HaShem*, blessed is He, that fills all worlds (*Memaleh Kol Almin*). For, in every single point in the worlds, יהו"ה-*HaShem*'s Godliness is present and enlivens it. In contrast, “Great love” (*Ahavah Rabba*) of יהו"ה-*HaShem*, blessed is He, is beyond knowledge and understanding. In other words, it is the aspect of יהו"ה-*HaShem*'s light, blessed is He, that surrounds all worlds (*Sovev Kol Almin*), meaning that it utterly transcends them, so much so, that if it would enter the worlds, they would be incapable of withstanding it.

Now, the matter of “worldly love” (*Ahavat Olam*) of יהו"ה-*HaShem*, blessed is He, means that a person serves יהו"ה-*HaShem*, blessed is He, in every particular that he encounters in the world. This even includes the food that he eats, as well as all his other bodily needs. Now, at first glance, these matters seem to be below man himself, being that they are within the category of the inanimate (*Domem*), the vegetative (*Tzome'ach*), and the animal (*Chai*), whereas man himself is in the higher category of the speaker (*Medaber*). This being so, how is it that the speaker (*Medaber*) would derive his vitality from the inanimate (*Domem*), the vegetative (*Tzome'ach*), and the animal (*Chai*)?

However, since we indeed observe that man receives his vitality from them, it therefore is certain that in their root, they

are from a higher level than man,⁵²⁸ and the reason they descended so low, is because “the end action arose first in thought.”⁵²⁹ [For, as known,⁵³⁰ whatever is higher descends lower.] When a Jew subsequently eats of them, he thereby elevates them to their root. [The indication from the Alter Rebbe words is that his intention is to explain why man must elevate his food, even though the root of the food actually is higher than man himself. He thus explains that since they descended lower, they therefore require to be consumed by man, by which he elevates them to their root.]

However, this only happens when a person’s soul is completely dedicated, in a way of self-sacrifice, to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. That is, he takes nothing for himself and is higher than the world. If he eats in this manner, when the food becomes his flesh and blood and he then serves *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, with the vitality of the food, the food becomes elevated to its source.

Now, it is specifically man who ascends and descends, and when he descends from his level, he becomes depressed (*Atzvoot*) and is unable to properly learn Torah or pray to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. The reason is because, throughout, his service was for his own self-benefit.⁵³¹ That is, he wants to be pious and a Chassid of the highest order, and

⁵²⁸ Also see Likkutei Torah, Tzav 13b and elsewhere.

⁵²⁹ See the liturgy of the Friday night “*Lecha Dodi*” hymn.

⁵³⁰ See the citations in Sefer HaMaftachot (Kehot 5741) I’Sifrei Admor HaZaken, section on “*Kol HaGavo’ah*”; Also see Siddur Im Divrei Elokim Chayim 71d, 303c; Shaarei Orah of the Mittler Rebbe 58a and on, 65a and on, and elsewhere.

⁵³¹ An adaptation of the language of Talmud Bavli, Brachot 48a

when he falls from his level [which itself was caused because he only serves out of self-interest], he comes to a state of darkness.

However, this is not the true and proper path in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. In fact, a Jew should pay no attention to himself at all, but should instead set himself completely aside. For, though he may have evil in him, he nevertheless possesses "a part of God from on high."⁵³² Therefore, he should serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, for the benefit of the Godliness of *HaShem*-יהו"ה that is within him, to illuminate it by studying the Torah of *HaShem*-יהו"ה and praying to Him, as the verse states,⁵³³ "For You will light my lamp. *HaShem*-יהו"ה my God illuminates my darkness."

3.

This then, is the meaning of the verse,⁵³⁴ "She discerns that her enterprise is good (*Ta'amah Ki Tov Sachrah*- טעמה כי טוב סחרה)." The term "She discerns-*Ta'amah*-טעמה" also means "she tastes-*Ta'am*-טעם." Thus, the verse may be understood as meaning that whatever "taste-*Ta'am*-טעם" a person has in His service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, "is good-*Ki Tov*-כי טוב." This is because it is of the aspect of "her enterprise-*Sachrah*-סחרה," which also means to "go around." This is because he has the aspect of "great love" (*Ahavah Rabba*) of *HaShem*-יהו"ה,

⁵³² Job 31:2; Tanya Ch. 2

⁵³³ Psalms 18:29

⁵³⁴ Proverbs 31:18

blessed is He, which comes from the light of *HaShem*-יהו"ה that surrounds all worlds (*Sovev Kol Almin*), in that the word "her enterprise-*Sachrah*-סחרה" is related to the words, "going around and around-*Schor Schor*-סחור סחור."⁵³⁵

Nonetheless, the continuation of the verse tells us that this is conditional. That is, when is it possible to come to such a love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He? The verse answers, when "her lamp is not extinguished at night." In other words, even when a Jew is in a state of darkness – "at night" – he nevertheless must serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. Therefore, "her lamp is not extinguished at night," referring to the part of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness from on high that is in him.⁵³⁶

Now, it is noteworthy that in regard to this matter, there is a difference between the discourse, as it is in the hand-written manuscript, and as it is in its printed form. In the printed discourse it states that by means of the first half of the verse, "She discerns that her enterprise is good," he thereby comes to the aspect of the latter half of the verse, "her lamp is not extinguished at night." That is, one must first come to "great love" (*Ahavah Rabba*) of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. In contrast, the hand-written manuscript gives an even more delightful explanation. That is, when he has the matter indicated by the latter half of the verse, "her lamp is not extinguished at night," which is the matter of serving *HaShem*-

⁵³⁵ Talmud Bavli, Avodah Zarah 17a

⁵³⁶ Which is called the lamp of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, as in the verse (Proverbs 20:27), "The soul of man is the lamp of *HaShem*-יהו"ה."

יהו"ה, blessed is He, in action, which relates to every single Jew, he then comes to the aspect indicated by the first half of the verse, "She discerns that her enterprise is good," which is the matter of "great love" (*Ahavah Rabba*) of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

The discourse continues to explain that this is also the meaning of the verse,⁵³⁷ "Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; for though I have fallen, I shall rise! Though I sit in darkness, *HaShem*-יהו"ה is my light." That is, the souls of the Jewish people say to the extraneous husks of the opposite of holiness, "Do not rejoice over me, my enemy, on account of my fallen state." For, even when a Jew falls, he still has hope and shall rise, because though he is in darkness, he still can serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, as the verse concludes, "Though I sit in darkness, *HaShem*-יהו"ה is my light!"

4.

This then, is the meaning of the verse,⁵³⁸ "Yaakov journeyed to Sukkot." In other words, he journeyed and took himself to the place of the love that stems from the light of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, that surrounds all worlds (*Sovev Kol Almin*). This light of *HaShem*-יהו"ה is like a *Sukkah* (סוכה) that surrounds a person from above and is distant from him. Nonetheless, he took himself and journeyed. For, as explained before, even though a person may be in a fallen state and in

⁵³⁷ Micah 7:8

⁵³⁸ Genesis 33:17

darkness, he nevertheless must serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, for the part of the Godliness of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה that is in him.

Through this, Yaakov subsequently came to the aspect indicated by the words, "he built himself a house." That is, he came to that kind of love that is compared to a house (in that it is drawn forth within him in an inner manner). Thus, the verse uses the term "he built-*VaYiven*-וַיִּבֶן," which is of the same root as "contemplation-*Hitbonenut*-הִתְבּוֹנְנוּת."

The verse continues and states, "and for his livestock he made shelters (*Sukkot*)." This refers to the foods that he eats (which are called "his livestock-*Miknehoo*-מִקְנֵהוּ," in that they are "acquisitions-*Neekneem*-נִקְנִיִּים," meaning that they are not matters that are essential to himself). Thus, relative to them, he is like a *Sukkah* (סֻכָּה), meaning that he is above them and transcends them, since he does not use them for his own benefit, in that, as explained above (in chapter two), he takes nothing for himself, but instead, with self-sacrifice, dedicates his entire soul and being to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

Now, all the above is the case when he is in a state of ascent. However, when he is in a state of darkness, then even for himself, he is in the state indicated by the *Sukkah*. Thus, the verse continues and states, "This is why the place was called *Sukkot* (סֻכּוֹת)," in the plural, indicating that it includes both himself and his livestock (since the aspect of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness is transcendent and beyond both).