

Discourse 14

“Kee Tisa et Rosh Bnei Yisroel - When you take a headcount of the Children of Israel”

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Kee Tisa,
Shushan-Purim Katan, 5717
By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

The verse states,¹¹⁵⁵ “When you take a headcount of the children of Israel according to their numbers... this shall they give... a half *shekel* of the sacred *shekel* etc.” In his discourse of the year 5679 that begins with this verse,¹¹⁵⁶ his honorable holiness, the Rebbe Rashab, whose soul is in Eden, explains that we must first preface with a clarification of the well-known matter that Moshe is called “the Shepherd of Faith” (*Ra’aya Mehemna*),¹¹⁵⁷ in that he guides and sustains the Jewish people by strengthening their faith in *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. He explains at length that faith in *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, must not just be faith that *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, fills all worlds (*Memaleh Kol Almin*), but must also be faith that *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, transcends all worlds (*Sovev Kol Almin*) and even beyond this, it must be faith in the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic Being of *HaShem*-

¹¹⁵⁵ Exodus 30:12-13

¹¹⁵⁶ Sefer HaMaamarim 5679 p. 267

¹¹⁵⁷ See Midrash Shemot Rabba 2:3; See Zohar II 21a

יהו"ה, the Unlimited One Himself, blessed is He, who transcends both aspects of transcending all worlds (*Sovev Kol Almin*) and filling all worlds (*Memaleh Kol Almin*).

About this the verse states,¹¹⁵⁸ “Trust in יהו"ה-*HaShem* and do good, dwell in the land and shepherd faith-אמונה,” meaning that for faith to be drawn down and absorbed in an inner way (*Pnimiyyut*) it must be shepherded. This is also explained by his honorable holiness, my father-in-law, the Rebbe, in the discourse entitled “v’*Keebel HaYehudim*” for Purim-Katan of the year 5687,¹¹⁵⁹ which also is founded on the above-mentioned discourse entitled “*Kee Tisa*” of the year 5679, (only that in the discourse entitled “v’*Keebel HaYehudim*” he does not explain the verse, “When you take a headcount”).

Now, in the discourse,¹¹⁶⁰ he explains that the drawing down of faith in יהו"ה-*HaShem*, blessed is He, in an inner way (*Pnimiyyut*), which is brought about by Moshe, is the same matter of “the half *shekel* of the sacred shekel (*Shekel HaKodesh*-שקל הקדש).” With this in mind, we can understand the verse, “When you take a headcount (*Kee Tisa et Rosh*-כי תשא את ראש),” which also means, “When you elevate the head.” This is to say that when faith in יהו"ה-*HaShem*, blessed is He, is drawn in an inner manner (“When you elevate the head of the children of Israel,”) it automatically follows that the general conduct of thought, speech, and action, will also be as they should be. Thus, through this there also is the nullification of

¹¹⁵⁸ Psalms 37:3

¹¹⁵⁹ See chapter four there and on. (Sefer HaMaamarim 5687 p. 113 and on.)

¹¹⁶⁰ See Sefer HaMaamarim 5679 p. 275.

all undesirable matters. The verse therefore continues and states, “To their numbers-*Li'fekudeihem*-לפקדיהם,” which is a term that also indicates lacking, such as in the verse,¹¹⁶¹ “You will be missed (*v'Nifkadeta*-ונפקדת), because your seat will be empty (*Yipakeid*-יפקד).” Thus, through drawing faith in *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in an inner way (*Pnimityut*) undesirable matters become nullified.

This may be understood like the verse,¹¹⁶² “A refining pot is for silver and crucible for gold, and a man according to his praises.” That is, just as a refining pot and a crucible purify the gold and silver from all dross and excess, so likewise is, “a man according to his praise (*Mahallelo*-מהללו).” That is, it is according to one's praise (*Hilul*-הילול) of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, during prayer, that he refines and purifies himself of all dross, including even the most refined dross and excess etc. It is for this reason that, in the Amidah prayer, we say, “Forgive us our father, for we have sinned.”¹¹⁶³ For, specifically after the preparations of the verses of song (*Pesukei d'Zimra*) and the blessings of the *Shema* recital, as well as the first three blessings of the *Amidah* prayer, we then come to sense that even the refined dross within us is undesirable and we remove it.

The same may be understood in the matter of, “When you uplift the head of the children of Israel according to their numbers-*Li'fekudeihem*-לפקדיהם,” that when faith (*Emunah*) in *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, illuminates in an inner manner (*Pnimityut*), we then come to even sense very refined

¹¹⁶¹ Samuel I 20:18

¹¹⁶² Proverbs 27:21

¹¹⁶³ See the “*Slach Lanu*” blessing of the weekday Amidah prayer.

undesirable matters within ourselves, and through this we rid ourselves of all undesirable matters, (not just matters that are actually evil, but) even the most refined lackings.

2.

The discourse continues¹¹⁶⁴ to explain the next verse, “This shall they give – everyone who passes through the census – a half *shekel* of the sacred *shekel* - a *shekel* is twenty *gera* - half a *shekel* as a portion to *HaShem*-יהוה.” That is, we must understand the matter of specifically giving a half *shekel*. Additionally, we must understand why the verse tells us the quantity of a whole *shekel*, being that it only is necessary is to give a half *shekel*. Moreover, we must understand why this amount is equal for both a pauper and a wealthy person.¹¹⁶⁵

The explanation is that a half *shekel* is ten *gera*, indicating the ten powers of the soul. That is, every Jewish soul possesses ten aspects corresponding to the ten *Sefirot* from which they chained down,¹¹⁶⁶ and in this regard all the souls are equal. For, since the upper *Sefirot* are ten in number, as it states,¹¹⁶⁷ “Ten and not nine, ten and not eleven,” therefore, every single Jewish soul possesses ten aspects. In other words, even a soul that is of the aspect of *Nefesh* of *Nefesh* of the world of Action (*Asiyah*),¹¹⁶⁸ has no less than ten aspects, and similarly, a soul that is a *Neshamah* of the world of Emanation

¹¹⁶⁴ Sefer HaMaamarim 5679 p. 277 and on.

¹¹⁶⁵ Exodus 30:15

¹¹⁶⁶ See Tanya, Ch. 3

¹¹⁶⁷ Sefer Yetzirah 1:4

¹¹⁶⁸ See Tanya, Ch. 18

(*Atzilut*) has no more than ten aspects. The difference between them is that the ten powers themselves are of different levels. For, the ten powers of the soul that stem from *Nefesh* of *Nefesh* of the world of Action (*Asiyah*) are not like the ten powers of a soul that is a *Neshamah* of the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*), so much so, that there is utterly no comparison between them. Thus one is called a pauper, while the other is called wealthy.

Nevertheless, every single Jew is equal in the fact that every individual possesses ten soul powers. The toil required in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is that each individual must devote and give of the ten powers of his soul. In other words, even though there may be a person whose ten soul powers are of a higher order and level, and another person whose ten soul powers are of a lower order and level, nonetheless, the Holy One, blessed is He, only requests that we each give according to our capacity.¹¹⁶⁹ That is, each individual must dedicate and give according to *his* ten soul powers.

However, when every Jew as an individual dedicates and gives over his ten soul powers, this is only *half* a *shekel*. Nevertheless, by the fact that each Jew as an individual gives over his half, meaning that he dedicates all his soul's powers to Godliness, he thereby is granted the second half from *HaShem*-יהו"ה above, blessed is He.

¹¹⁶⁹ Midrash Bamidbar Rabba 12:3; Tanchuma Naso 11

The explanation is that the verse states,¹¹⁷⁰ “Serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה with joy.” This is a command to each and every Jew to serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, with joy, in that the matter of joy (*Simchah*) is foundational to serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, as stated by Rambam at the end of laws of Lulav,¹¹⁷¹ “The happiness with which a person should rejoice in the fulfillment of the *mitzvot* and the love of God who commanded them, is a very great service, and whoever holds himself back from such service deserves retribution, as it states,¹¹⁷² ‘Because you did not serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God, with joy and with gladness of heart.’” In other words, even if a person possesses Torah and is engaged in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, but only lacks joy (*Simchah*) in doing so, he deserves retribution. Moreover, this is to such an extent, as if he lacks the matter of service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, altogether. This is because joy (*Simchah*) is foundational to serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. However, with this in mind, we must understand the meaning of the verse,¹¹⁷³ “Be joyous, O’ righteous ones (*Tzaddikim*) in *HaShem*-יהו"ה,” which seems to imply that the matter of joy (*Simchah*) specifically applies to the righteous (*Tzaddikim*).

The explanation is that there are two aspects of joy (*Simchah*). The general matter of joy (*Simchah*) is service that stems from love (*Ahavah*) of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, and

¹¹⁷⁰ Psalms 100:2

¹¹⁷¹ Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Shofar, Sukkah, v’Lulav, 8:15

¹¹⁷² Deuteronomy 28:47

¹¹⁷³ Psalms 97:12

we find two aspects in this. There is love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, that stems from reason and intellect, meaning that when a person contemplates that “the reward of a *mitzvah* is the *mitzvah*,”¹¹⁷⁴ he comes to appreciate the value and importance of the Torah and *mitzvot*, and as a result, his service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, becomes imbued with joy. This applies to every single Jew, in that every Jew must come to appreciate the value and importance of Torah and *mitzvot*, and as a result, his service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, will be joyful (*Simchah*). However, if joy (*Simchah*) is lacking, it is not merely a lacking of a particular detail in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, but it rather indicates that he entirely lacks appreciation of the value of Torah and *mitzvot* altogether.

Now, all the above is regarding love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, that stems from reason and intellect. However, there is a higher form of love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, that transcends reason and intellect. This love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is unlike love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה that stems from reason and intellect, since in that case, there necessarily involves some level of self-interest. Rather, this higher love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, involves no self-interest at all. It rather is as stated in Tanya¹¹⁷⁵ about “men of ascent” (*Bnei Aliyah*)¹¹⁷⁶ that, “their service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is not merely with the intent of adhering to Him to quench the thirst of their souls, which thirst for *HaShem*-יהו"ה, but is rather

¹¹⁷⁴ Mishnah Avot 4:2; Also see Tanya, Ch. 37 & Ch. 39.

¹¹⁷⁵ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 10; Also see Shaarei Kedushah of Rabbi Chayim Vital, translated as Gates of Holiness, Part 1, Ch. 1 and on.

¹¹⁷⁶ Talmud Bavli, Sukkah 45b

as elucidated in Tikkunim,¹¹⁷⁷ ‘Who is a pious one (*Chassid-*חסיד)? He who does kindness (*Mitchased-*מתחסד) with his Maker,’ with his Nest, in order to unite the Holy One, blessed is He, with His Indwelling Presence, the *Shechinah*, in the lower worlds.” About this the verse states,¹¹⁷⁸ “Be joyous, O’ righteous ones (*Tzaddikim*) in *HaShem*-יהו”ה.” This form of love of *HaShem*-יהו”ה, blessed is He, does not apply to every Jew, but only to the righteous (*Tzaddikim*), and comes is a way of a gift from *HaShem*-יהו”ה above, blessed is He.

Now, it can be said that this also is the meaning of the verse,¹¹⁷⁹ “I have set *HaShem*-יהו”ה before me always (*Tamid*-תמיד),” as explained by the Baal Shem Tov (in *Tzava’at HaRivash*).¹¹⁸⁰ That is, “The word ‘I have set-*Shiviti*-שויתי’ is of the same root as ‘equanimity-*Hishtavoot*-השתוות.’” This means that being that “*HaShem*-יהו”ה is before me always (*Tamid*-תמיד), all matters should be equal for a person.” This stems from serving *HaShem*-יהו”ה, blessed is He, in a way that transcends reason and intellect. For, when service of *HaShem*-יהו”ה, blessed is He, is in a way that accords to the reason and intellect, some self-interest is involved in his service, and he thus automatically lacks the matter of equanimity (*Hishtavoot*-השתוות). However, when his service of *HaShem*-יהו”ה, blessed is He, transcends reason and intellect, and is devoid of self-interest, then all matters will be equal for him, in a way of

¹¹⁷⁷ Introduction to Tikkunei Zohar 1b

¹¹⁷⁸ Psalms 97:12

¹¹⁷⁹ Psalms 16:8

¹¹⁸⁰ *Tzava’at HaRivash*, translated as *The Way of The Baal Shem Tov*, Ch. 2; Also see the discourse entitled “*Shiviti* – I have set *HaShem*-יהו”ה before me always” of the year 5720.

equanimity (*Hishtavoot*--השתווות). As a result, his service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, will be with self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*), (being that no self-interest is mixed in) and his only care is to fulfill the Supernal will of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

With the above in mind, we can understand the matter of the second half *shekel*. That is, after a person serves *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, with all ten powers of his soul, (meaning, that he gives his half *shekel*), in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, according to reason and intellect, he is then given a gift from *HaShem*-יהו"ה above, of the second half *shekel*. That is, he comes to the level indicated by the verse,¹¹⁸¹ "Be joyous, O' righteous ones (*Tzaddikim*) in *HaShem*-יהו"ה,"¹¹⁸² which is the matter of love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה and joy (*Simchah*) in serving Him, in a way that transcends reason and intellect. Moreover, the verse states,¹¹⁸³ "Your people are all righteous (*Tzaddikim*)," indicating that every Jew can come to this through love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה and being joyful (*Simchah*) in serving Him, by way of reason and intellect, through which we then are gifted with the upper love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה and joy (*Simchah*) in serving Him in a manner that transcends reason and intellect.

This is likewise the difference between the two halves of the *shekel*. The first half *shekel*, which every Jew gives of his own ten soul powers, has degrees and variations, such as the difference between a pauper and a wealthy person (as

¹¹⁸¹ Psalms 97:12

¹¹⁸² See Ginat Egoz of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as *HaShem Is One*, Vol. 1, *The Gate of Intrinsic Being (Shaar HaHavayah)* and on.

¹¹⁸³ Isaiah 60:21

mentioned before). However, the second half *shekel*, which transcends reason and intellect, is itself the matter of wealth.

4.

This then, is the meaning of the verse,¹¹⁸⁴ “When you uplift the head of the children of Israel according to their numbers... This shall they give... a half *shekel* of the sacred *shekel* etc.” That is, the beginning of the various matters is the uplifting and elevation of the head brought about through Moshe, and as known, “there is an offshoot of Moshe in each and every generation” who draws down the faith in *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, so that it is internalized in an inner way (*b'Pnimityut*). Through this, the matter indicated by the word “To their numbers-*Li'fekudeihem*-לפקדיהם” comes about, (that is, the nullification of undesirable matters, as explained before). Moreover, this also brings to the matter indicated by the words, “This shall they give... a half *shekel* of the sacred *shekel*,” meaning that they first give their half *shekel* (by dedicating all their ten soul powers to *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה, blessed is He). This brings to the second half *shekel*, which comes in the form of a gift from *HaShem*-יהו"ה above, blessed is He, (meaning, serving Him in a way that transcends reason and intellect, which is the matter of equanimity-*Hishtavoot*--השתוות before *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, and serving Him with self-sacrifice-*Mesirat Nefesh*).

Thus, even (the second half *shekel*) applies to every single Jew, being that Moshe is the shepherd of every single

¹¹⁸⁴ Exodus 30:12-13

Jew. However, this especially applies to Chassidim. For, being that they have a greater connection and closeness to the Moshe of our generation, his honorable holiness, my father-in-law, the Rebbe, this should awaken them to an even greater equanimity (*Hishtavoot*--השתוות) before *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in serving Him with complete self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*).

Now, it can be said that when the above-mentioned discourse was enunciated by his honorable holiness, the Rebbe Rashab, whose soul is in Eden, in the year 5679, he drew down a granting of strength so that all may serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in a way that transcends reason and intellect (the second half *shekel*). Moreover, this granting of strength was not only for his time, but applies to all times. Therefore, when his honorable holiness, my father-in-law, the Rebbe, said the discourse entitled "*v'Keebel HaYehudim*" in the year 5687, which is founded on the above-mentioned discourses entitled "*Kee Tisa*," the discourse speaks extensively regarding the matter of the self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) that was appropriate and demanded during those times. In the same way, this discourse must rouse all Jewish people at all times, especially the Chassidim, and affect the matter of equanimity (*Hishtavoot*--השתוות) before *HaShem*-יהו"ה and self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) in serving Him, to an even greater extent. That is, a Jew, especially a Chasid, should not think about his own self-interest, but should be entirely dedicated and invested into fulfilling the Supernal will of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, with total self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*). When each person will bring this about within himself, then that itself should be sufficient, meaning that we will adequately fulfill our

obligations in a manner of potential self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*), without having to sacrifice ourselves (*Mesirat Nefesh*) in actuality.

5.

Now, this can be connected to Purim Katan (the day on which the above-mentioned discourse entitled “v’*Keebel HaYehudim*” was said), the day on which there is special emphasis on the matter of the verse,¹¹⁸⁵ “A good hearted person feasts always (*Tamid*-תמיד),” about which Talmud states,¹¹⁸⁶ “This refers to a person who is broadminded (*Da’at Rechavah*).” The explanation is that broadmindedness (*Da’at Rechavah*) is the matter of wealth that transcends reason and intellect and is devoid of self-interest.¹¹⁸⁷ When a person has this quality he then will come to the matter of equanimity (*Hishtavoot*--השתוות) and as a result of the equanimity (*Hishtavoot*--השתוות), he always will be joyful, which is the meaning of “A good-hearted person feasts always (*Tamid*-תמיד).”

The same is true of the matter of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. For, as explained before, when we stand strong in the motion of self-

¹¹⁸⁵ Proverbs 15:15; See Rama at the end of Orach Chayim; Also see the discourse “*Shiviti* – I have set *HaShem*-יהו"ה before me always” of the year 5720.

¹¹⁸⁶ Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 145b

¹¹⁸⁷ What is being referred to here is loftier than what was explained in the *Sichah* talk preceding the discourse (Ch. 6 [Torat Menachem, Vol. 19, p. 99]) that “broadmindedness” (*Da’at Rechavah*) is thought to mean that he (does not think about physicality, but he only) thinks about spirituality etc., since in that case there is self-interest, only that the self-interest is spiritual.

sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) for the sake of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, then all obstacles and restraints become nullified, and there is no need to come to actual self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*). Instead, there can be the matter of “a good-hearted person feasts always (*Tamid*-תמיד).” In other words, (*Tamid*-תמיד), he always will be goodhearted, since through serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, with self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*), all obstacles will be removed from before him, and he will draw down all matters in a way of openly revealed and apparent goodness!