

Discourse 30

“U’Mikneh Rav - An abundance of livestock”

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Matot-Masei,

2nd of Menachem-Av, 5721

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

1.

The verse states,²¹³⁰ “The children of Reuven and the children of Gad had much livestock... They saw the land of Ya’zer and the land of Gil’ad, and found that the place was a [good] place for livestock... They said to Moshe... let this land be given to your servants as a permanent holding; do not bring us across the Jordan.” Moshe responded with words of rebuke, [reminding them of the misdeeds of the spies]. However, he finally said,²¹³¹ “If you arm yourselves before *HaShem*-יהו"ה for war... and the Land will be conquered before *HaShem*-יהו"ה... then you will be vindicated... and this Land will be your permanent holding.”

Now, we must understand²¹³² why the children of Gad and the children of Reuven chose [to reside on] the other side

²¹³⁰ Numbers 32:1 and on

²¹³¹ Numbers 32:20-22

²¹³² See the discourse entitled “*U’Mikneh Rav*” 5666 (*Hemshech* 5666 p. 308); Also see the discourse entitled “*U’Mikneh Rav – An abundance of livestock*” 5720, translated in *The Teachings of The Rebbe* 5720, Discourse 25 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5720, p. 196 and on); *Likkutei Sichot* Vol. 8 p. 189.

of the river Jordan, rather than enter the Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisroel*), for, this took place after “the end of the entire generation”²¹³³ during which there was the sin of the spies. This being so, how was it possible that they did not want to enter the Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisroel*)?

What is even more difficult to understand is that they told Moshe,²¹³⁴ “We shall arm ourselves swiftly [in the vanguard of the children of Israel until we have brought them to their place etc.]” In other words, in and of themselves, (even before Moshe made this stipulation with them),²¹³⁵ they were in the state and standing of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, with self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*). This being so, how is it possible that they did not want to enter the Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisroel*)?

We also must understand Moshe's response to them, “If you arm yourselves before *HaShem*-יהו"ה for war... and the Land will be conquered before *HaShem*-יהו"ה... then you will be vindicated... and this Land will be your permanent holding.” In other words, Moshe had no doubt that they were in a state and standing of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, with self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) and yet he also sought that they serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in the way indicated by the words, “before *HaShem-Lifnei HaShem*-יהו"ה לפני,” meaning,²¹³⁶ higher than the [lower] Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה.

²¹³³ Numbers 32:13

²¹³⁴ Numbers 32:17

²¹³⁵ Numbers 32:20

²¹³⁶ See the beginning and end of the discourse entitled “*U'Mikneh Rav*” 5629 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5629 p. 258, p. 263).

This is similar to what the verse states in regard to Avraham,²¹³⁷ “Walk before Me (*Lefanai*-לפני) and be perfect,” specifying “before Me-*Lefanai*-לפני,” meaning, “ahead of Me.” This is as in the well-known²¹³⁸ explanation of the verse,²¹³⁹ “Before *HaShem* (*Lifnei HaShem*-יהו"ה לפני) you shall be purified,” meaning, “Higher than the [lower] Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה.”²¹⁴⁰ Yet, even so, what ultimately resulted from this, is that “this Land will be your permanent holding,” specifically on the other side of the river Jordan.

2.

This may be understood by prefacing with a teaching of the Alter Rebbe²¹⁴¹ regarding the difference between Yosef's service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה and the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה of the other tribes. That is, the other tribes where shepherds, meaning that they chose an occupation for themselves that allowed them to be in a state of seclusion from the world. This is because their service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, was in the aspect

²¹³⁷ Genesis 17:1

²¹³⁸ Likkutei Torah, Acharei 26c and on; 27d, and elsewhere.

²¹³⁹ Leviticus 16:30

²¹⁴⁰ Also see Shaarei Orah of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as Gates of Light, Gates Three & Four (*Netzach & Hod*), section on “The Essence of The Heavens-*Etzem HaShamayim*-עצם השמים.”

²¹⁴¹ Maamarei Admor HaZaken 5565 Vol. 1, p. 192 and on; Also see the discourse entitled “*Ben Porat Yosef*” in Torat Chaim, Vayechi 102b and on; Ohr HaTorah, Mikeitz Vol. 6, p. 1,102a and on; Discourse entitled “*V'Lo Zachar Sar HaMashkeem*” 5633 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5633 Vol. 1, p. 63 and on); Discourse by the same title 5677 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5677 p. 103 and on); 5688 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5688 p. 23 and on); Discourse entitled “*U'Mikneh Rav*” Ohr HaTorah, Matot, p. 1,339; 5629 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5629 p. 258); 5720 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5720 *ibid.*) translated in The Teachings of The Rebbe 5720, Discourse 25.

of a Chariot (*Merkavah*),²¹⁴² such that the totality of their occupation was involved in Godliness.

They therefore did not desire to be in the world, so that the world would not distract them from being a Chariot (*Merkavah*) for *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness. In contrast, "Yosef was the ruler over the land"²¹⁴³ of Egypt, to the point that [Pharaoh told him],²¹⁴⁴ "Without you no man may raise his hand or foot in all of the land of Egypt."

Moreover, even before this, when he was in the house of Potiphar, he was engaged in worldly matters. This is as our sages, of blessed memory, taught²¹⁴⁵ about the verse,²¹⁴⁶ "He entered the house to do his work," that, "He came to check the accounting books." However, even so, worldly matters did not at all distract him, so that at the very same time, he was a Chariot (*Merkavah*) for *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness.

The distance between these two forms of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is self-understood. This is why the verse states,²¹⁴⁷ "[Yosef recognized his brothers], but they did not recognize him." That is, the brothers did not recognize Yosef, but thought he was an Egyptian. This is because they did not recognize or grasp the level of Yosef's service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, that he could be engaged in worldly matters, and simultaneously be a Chariot (*Merkavah*) for *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness. This is because Yosef's soul

²¹⁴² See Torah Ohr, Vayeitzei 24a; Vayeishev 28a and on.

²¹⁴³ Genesis 42:6

²¹⁴⁴ Genesis 41:44

²¹⁴⁵ Targum Onkelos to Genesis 39:11; Also see Mechilta d'Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai to Exodus 35:3 (*Vayakhel*).

²¹⁴⁶ Genesis 39:11

²¹⁴⁷ Genesis 42:8

was from the aspect of the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*), whereas the souls of the other tribes were from the aspect of the world of Creation (*Briyah*).

Now, this general difference between the two above-mentioned forms of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is present even in our times. That is, there are souls who must be in a state of seclusion from the world, (and no matter how great they are, they certainly are not loftier than the souls of the tribes, which were souls of the world of Creation-*Briyah*, for whom worldly matters cause distraction and confusion). Then there are those souls who can be involved with the world to a greater extent [without being distracted] (similar to souls of the world of Emanation-*Atzilut*).

3.

With the above in mind, we can understand why the children of Gad and the children of Reuven did not want to enter the land. This is because they desired to serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in the aspect of a Chariot (*Merkavah*). Therefore, even though they knew that they specifically needed to be within the world, nevertheless, in this itself, they chose to be shepherds, and to receive a portion on the other side of the river Jordan, which is a land that is good for livestock. This was in order to keep their involvement with the physicality of the world to the utmost minimum. (That is, they wanted to have as little to do with physicality as possible.)

However, in truth, when involvement with the physical is minimal, it is impossible to reach the ultimate elevation

brought about through the form of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in which there is involvement with the physical, and in which the physical will even cause distraction and confusion etc., but even so, through this the physical is refined and elevated.

This is like the teaching,²¹⁴⁸ “According to the difficulty is the reward.” In other words, it is much easier to serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in a way of solitude. However, to come to a much greater level of elevation specifically requires involvement in refining the physical.

It is about this that Moshe specifically told them, “If you arm yourselves before *HaShem*-יהו"ה.” For, since they wanted their involvement with physicality to be at the utmost possible minimum, therefore, for them to also come to have a loftier aspect of spirituality, which usually is attained through involvement in refining physicality, it was necessary for there to be a special and unique form of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

This refers to serving Him as indicated by the words, “before *HaShem-Lifnei HaShem*-יהו"ה,” which is even loftier than serving Him with self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*). It is through such service that, even while on the other side of the river Jordan, they would have the ability to attain a lofty level, similar to the level attained through serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in the land of Canaan.

Nonetheless, even so, it does not reach the level of the land of Canaan, within which *HaShem's*-יהו"ה Supernal intent of refining actual physicality is fulfilled. The Midrash therefore

²¹⁴⁸ Mishnah Avot 5:21

states²¹⁴⁹ that the verse,²¹⁵⁰ “An inheritance hastily seized at its beginning, [will not be blessed at its end],” refers to the children of Gad and the children of Reuven. This is similar to the world of *Chaos-Tohu*,²¹⁵¹ whereas *HaShem*’s יהו"ה Supernal intent blessed is He, is specifically for the world of Repair-*Tikkun*. This is why the destruction and exile began with the children of Gad and the children of Reuven.²¹⁵²

4.

The lesson from this is not like the view of those who argue that it is better for them to close themselves within their four cubits, [and say], “To what end must we specifically travel to a distant place?” Rather, they should know that though it is easier to remain in their four cubits, nonetheless, this is not *HaShem*’s יהו"ה ultimate Supernal intent, blessed is He. Rather, His Supernal intent is that they travel as emissaries to a distant place and spread the wellsprings²¹⁵³ to the outside.²¹⁵⁴

²¹⁴⁹ Midrash Bamidbar Rabba 22:9; Tanchuma, Matot 7

²¹⁵⁰ Proverbs 20:21

²¹⁵¹ See Midrash Bereishit Rabba 83:1; Also see the end of the discourse entitled “*U’Mikneh Rav* – An ubundance of livestock” 5720, translated in The Teachings of The Rebbe 5720, Discourse 25 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5720, p. 201).

²¹⁵² See Midrash Tanchuma Matot ibid. 5; Rashi to Proverbs 20:21 ibid.

²¹⁵³ See the Holy Letter of the Baal Shem Tov, printed at the end of Ben Porat Yosef; Sefer Ginzei Nistarot (Yerushalayim 5684), Vol. 1, Section 65; Keter Shem Tov (Kehot), Section 1; Also translated at the beginning of The Way of The Baal Shem Tov, a translation of Tzava’at HaRivash, and elsewhere.

²¹⁵⁴ The remainder of this discourse is missing.