

Discourse 17

*“Vayar Yisroel et HaYad HaGedolah... -
Israel saw the great hand...”*

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Beshalach,
The 15th of Shvrat – Tu BiShvat, 5723
By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

The verse states,⁷⁰⁵ “Israel saw the great hand that *HaShem*-יהו"ה did in Egypt etc.” About this the Alter Rebbe explains as follows:⁷⁰⁶

We first must understand the root of the matter of Egypt and what it is , for as known, the matter of Pharaoh-פרעה, king of Egypt, is explained in two ways. The first is from above, and is the aspect of the Crown-*Keter*, that is, the “back of the neck-*Oreph*-עורף” of *Arich Anpin* etc. The second is the aspect of Kingship-*Malchut*, and is of the same root as the word “uncover-*Priyah*-פריעה,” referring to the revelation of all the lights etc.,⁷⁰⁷ as in the verse,⁷⁰⁸ “and shall uncover-*u’Para*-ופרע the head of the woman etc.”

⁷⁰⁵ Exodus 14:31

⁷⁰⁶ See the end of the discourse entitled “*Vayar Yisroel*” in manuscript #78, p. 27a and on; #1146 p. 95b and on (in the library of Agudat Chassidei Chabad), subsequently printed (with additional glosses etc.) in *Ohr HaTorah*, Beshalach p. 451 and on.

⁷⁰⁷ See *Zohar* I 210a

⁷⁰⁸ Numbers 5:18; Also see *Torah Ohr*, Mikeitz 31c

Now, according to the second explanation, Egypt (*Mitzrayim*-מצרים) together with Pharaoh (פרעה), is the aspect of the external vessels (*Keilim*) of the shiny husk (*Kelipat Nogah*) from which the worlds of Creation, Formation, and Action (*Briyah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*) derive vitality. This is because they are in the ultimate state of constraint (*Meitzar*-מיצר) and limitation, this being the “sea-*Yam*,” which is the end of all levels. This is why Egypt-*Mitzrayim* is called the upper “constraint of the sea-*Meitzar Yam*.”⁷⁰⁹ They also are the aspect of “constraints-*Meitzarim*” and limitations that cause limitation in the Godly light of the side of holiness, so that nothing of it is revealed except by way of great constrictions etc.

According to the first explanation of Pharaoh-פרעה, Egypt-*Mitzrayim* is called the aspect of the external vessels (*Keilim*) of the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*), from which the shiny husk (*Nogah*) of the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*) receives etc. The general matter [of these vessels] is only that they are the aspect of the “constraint-*Meitzar*-מיצר” and limitation that limits the bestowal of Godly beneficence etc., whether in the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*) itself, or whether from the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*) to the world of Creation (*Briyah*) etc. This will suffice for the understanding.

Now, as known, all the action *mitzvot* are within [the categories] of the inanimate (*Domem*), vegetative (*Tzome'ach*), animal (*Chay*), and speaker (*Medaber*) of the physical shiny husk (*Nogah*). Examples of this are [the *mitzvah* to wear]

⁷⁰⁹ See Pri Etz Chayim, Shaar Chag HaMatzot, Ch. 7.

Tzitzit made of [physical] wool, and the *mitzvah* of Tefillin made of [physical] parchment from animal skin, and the like.

When fulfilling the physical action *mitzvot* this causes an arousal and revelation of the innerness (*Pnimiyut*) of the quality of Kingship-*Malchut* of the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*) with much greater strength, for the above reasons, namely, through the aspect of nullification (*Bittul*) in them. Because of this, they are called the “commandments of the King-Mitzvat HaMelech-המלך.”⁷¹⁰

This is the meaning of the words, “that *HaShem*-יהו"ה did (*Asah*-עשה) in Egypt etc.,” meaning, what was done and drawn down from the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה into Kingship-*Malchut* of the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*), and even higher, in *Zeir Anpin* and in [the aspects of] the father-*Abba* (Wisdom-*Chochmah*) and the mother-*Imma* (Understanding-*Binah*), as mentioned before.

All this is brought about by the elevation of the refined sparks of the shiny husk (*Nogah*) of Egypt (*Mitzrayim*-מצרים) through *mitzvot* that are done in action specifically by restraining the side opposite holiness etc.⁷¹¹

Similarly, this is how the words, “Israel saw etc.,” can be understood. Namely, the very fact that this took place, that Egypt-מצרים itself could be forced to actualize the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה, is because they saw “the Great Hand” (*Yad HaGedolah*). The explanation of “the Great Hand” (*Yad HaGedolah*) is that it refers to the aspect of the “Godly

⁷¹⁰ See the note of the Rebbe in Sefer HaMaamarim 5700 p. 48.

⁷¹¹ See Zohar II 67b, 128b; Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 27; Likkutei Torah, beginning of Pekudei.

nothingness-*Ayin*-אין” of the Supernal Crown-*Keter*. For, as known, Kindness-*Chessed* and Might-*Gevurah* of *Arich Anpin* are called “the Great Hand (*Yad HaGedolah*)” and “the Mighty Hand (*Yad HaChazakah*),” as explained elsewhere.⁷¹²

This is because they spread forth into the intellect without any constraint or constriction whatsoever etc., to the point that the three sections (*Perakim*) of *Arich Anpin* become garbed in the three statures (*Partzufim*) of the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*). The first section (*Perek*) becomes garbed in the father-*Abba* (Wisdom-*Chochmah*), the second in *Zeir Anpin*, and the third in *Nukva*, until the “feet” of the ten *Sefirot* etc., as the verse states,⁷¹³ “And below are the arms of the world etc.” This will suffice for the understanding.

This is as explained elsewhere⁷¹⁴ about the reason that “Your right hand is extended to receive those who repent etc.”⁷¹⁵ That is, due to its height and exaltedness [above], the descent of this “Great Hand” (*Yad HaGedolah*) is all the way down. It therefore is in the power of the Great Hand (*Yad HaGedolah*) to restrain the fifty gates of impurity of the shiny husk (*Nogah*) of the world of Action (*Asiyah*) etc., until there thereby is caused to be the [revelation of] the Name *HaShem*-יהוה in all the statures (*Partzufim*) of the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*), since, as mentioned above, there is no restriction whatsoever. This will suffice for the understanding. (This concludes the words of the Alter Rebbe.)

⁷¹² See Siddur Im Da”Ch p. 293c and on.

⁷¹³ Deuteronomy 33:27

⁷¹⁴ See Torat Chayim, Vayechi 45d

⁷¹⁵ See liturgy of the 1st day of *Selichot*

2.

We can add and say that the two explanations of the matter of “Pharaoh-פרעה,” that it refers to the aspect of the “back of the neck-*Oreph*-עורף” of *Arich Anpin*, and that it is the aspect of Kingship-*Malchut* of the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*), are related to each other. Therefore, even though the discourse explains that the derivation of vitality to the shiny husk (*Nogah*) of the worlds of Creation, Formation, and Action (*Briyah, Yetzirah, Asiyah*) is from the lowest level of Pharaoh-פרעה, this being the aspect of Kingship-*Malchut* of the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*), nonetheless, to negate this derivation of vitality, we must also nullify the derivation of vitality to the shiny husk (*Nogah*) of the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*), which derives [it’s vitality] from the highest level of Pharaoh-פרעה, this being the aspect of the “back of the neck-*Oreph*-עורף” of *Arich Anpin*. For, because of the great abundance of chainings down (*Hishtalshelut*), from this it is possible for there to even be a chaining down into the shiny husks (*Nogah*) of the worlds of Creation, Formation, and Action (*Briyah, Yetzirah, Asiyah*).

Beyond this, the derivation of the lower Pharaoh-פרעה is specifically from the aspect of the “back of the neck-*Oreph*-עורף” of *Arich Anpin*. This is as explained in various places⁷¹⁶ in elucidation of the terminology of our sages, of blessed memory,⁷¹⁷ “Those who pass **over** His will (*Ovrei Retzono*-עוברי רצונו),” that they derive vitality from that which transcends the aspect of the Supernal will, so to speak. It therefore is

⁷¹⁶ See Torah Ohr, Beshalach 61c and elsewhere.

⁷¹⁷ Talmud Bavli, Makkot 24b and elsewhere.

necessary to negate even the loftiest level of Pharaoh-פרעה, since without doing so, derivation of vitality from there is possible even all the way to the lowest external husks (*Kelipot*).

From this, we also can understand this matter as it relates to the exodus from Egypt (*Mitzrayim*-מצרים). That is, for the exodus from the Egypt (*Mitzrayim*-מצרים) of the side opposite holiness to be with certainty, there also must be an exodus from the Egypt (*Mitzrayim*-מצרים) of the side of holiness (*Kedushah*), meaning in all worlds, including the worlds about which it is written,⁷¹⁸ “Evil shall not dwell with You.” This is because as long as we still are in a state of Egypt (*Mitzrayim*-מצרים) even of the side of holiness (*Kedushah*), from this there can possibly be a chaining down from of the aspect of Egypt (*Mitzrayim*-מצרים) of the side opposite holiness.⁷¹⁹

The explanation of the matter, as it relates to our service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is that the perfection and completion of the matter of the exodus from Egypt (*Mitzrayim*-מצרים), including the exodus from Egypt (*Mitzrayim*-מצרים) of the side of holiness (*Kedushah*), is when one serves *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in a way that transcends measure and limitation. This is why he does not only serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in one way, according to his nature, but even serves Him in an opposite way, the opposite of his nature. This indicates that his service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is in a way of leaving his own existence, since he gives himself over to the Holy One, blessed is He, in the ultimate way.

⁷¹⁸ Psalms 5:5; Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar 3c; Also see Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 54.

⁷¹⁹ See at length in the Sichah talk that preceded the discourse (Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 3, p. 971).

This is as the Alter Rebbe explained⁷²⁰ about Rabbi Chaninah ben Teradyon, who gave up his life for the sanctification of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה by convening public assemblies to study Torah.⁷²¹ Even so, he had doubt in himself and in his self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) in studying Torah, whether it truly was solely for the sake of Heaven, or perhaps it also was his nature that caused him to have self-sacrifice for Torah. The test [that determined this], was as to whether his service also was in a way opposite of his nature, ("I confused coins that were designated for [my] Purim [festivities] with coins that were designated for charity, and distributed all of them to the poor [and did not reimburse myself from the coins designated for charity]").⁷²² Through this, it became clear that his self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) was solely because only One-*Echad*-אחד was in his heart, without any admixture of his own nature whatsoever.

However, as long as one's service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is only in one way, even if it is a way of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*), we still do not know his true state and standing. Moreover, not only do we not know the state and standing of the essence [of his soul],⁷²³ but we do not even know this in relation to the revealed powers of his soul, since it could be that his service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, only stems from his nature. Therefore one's service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, must specifically be in two ways.

⁷²⁰ Torah Ohr, Toldot 19b and on

⁷²¹ Talmud Bavli, Avodah Zarah 18a – (In violation of the decrees of the Romans, for which he was killed in sanctification of the Name of *HaShem*-יהו"ה.)

⁷²² Talmud Bavli, Avodah Zarah 18a ibid. and Rashi there.

⁷²³ See Likkutei Torah, Vayikra, Hosafot 50d and elsewhere.

We can connect this with the 15th of Shvat, which is the Rosh HaShanah of the trees.⁷²⁴ It states in books of Mussar and also in several books of Chassidus, that Rosh HaShanah of the trees is connected to man's service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, as the verse states,⁷²⁵ "For man is a tree of the field." Furthermore, the primary matter in man's service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is to affect change in his natural character traits (*Midot*) (This is as stated in the name of the Alter Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzeddek.)⁷²⁶ The matter of change of the nature of his character traits (*Midot*) is when his service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is in two ways, meaning that it includes the second way stated above, which is the opposite of his nature.

3.

With the above in mind, we can understand what Torah states about the splitting of the sea,⁷²⁷ "The water was a wall for them, on their right and on their left." About this it states in Mechilta,⁷²⁸ "Who caused Israel to be saved? 'On their right and on their left.' 'On their right' refers to the merit of the Torah that they were destined to receive, as it states,⁷²⁹ 'From His right hand, a fiery law,' 'On their left' refers to prayer (*Tefillah*)."

⁷²⁴ Mishnah Rosh HaShanah 1:1

⁷²⁵ Deuteronomy 20:19; See Talmud Bavli, Taanit 7a

⁷²⁶ Likkutei Dibburim Vol. 1, p. 56a and on; Also see Igrot Kodesh of the Tzemach Tzeddek p. 105.

⁷²⁷ Exodus 14:22, 14:29

⁷²⁸ Mechilta to Exodus 14:29

⁷²⁹ Deuteronomy 33:2

There also is a version⁷³⁰ that states “On their left” refers to the Tefillin.

The explanation⁷³¹ is that the splitting of the sea is the conclusion of the exodus from Egypt, and also includes the conclusion of the toil of affecting refinements (*Birurim*) in Egypt. About this the verse states,⁷³² “And afterwards they will leave with great wealth.” This is why the Holy One, blessed is He, told Moshe,⁷³³ “Please speak in the ears of the people: Let each man request from his fellow and each woman from her fellow, silver vessels and gold vessels,” in which the word “Please-*Na*-נא” is always a term meaning “request-*Bakashah*-בקשה.” That is, “Please request of them, that they ask of the Egyptians vessels of silver and vessels of gold, so that the righteous one (Avraham) will not say that [the words of the verse],⁷³⁴ ‘They will serve them and they will oppress them’ were fulfilled in them, but [the words of the next verse] ‘afterwards they will leave with great wealth’ was not fulfilled in them.”⁷³⁵

However, their primary wealth was received by the Jewish people at the splitting of the sea. This is as our sages, of blessed memory, stated,⁷³⁶ “Greater, indeed, was the booty they obtained at the Red Sea, than the booty they brought out of Egypt.” We thus find that both the exodus from Egypt and the

⁷³⁰ Yalkut Shimoni, Remez 238

⁷³¹ See at length in the Sichah talk that preceded the discourse (Likkutei Sichot Vol. 3, p. 967 and on).

⁷³² Genesis 15:14; See Torat Chayim, Lech Lecha 93a-b; Likkutei Sichot p. 823 and on.

⁷³³ Exodus 11:2

⁷³⁴ Genesis 15:13

⁷³⁵ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 9a and on.

⁷³⁶ Rashi to Exodus 15:22 and elsewhere.

great wealth, were completed and fulfilled at the splitting of the sea.

Now, our sages, of blessed memory, stated,⁷³⁷ “A *mitzvah* is named after the one who completes it.” Therefore, just as it was upon leaving Egypt-*Mitzrayim*-מצרים, that they had to completely leave their existence and limitations, which specifically is by serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in two ways, the same was so of the splitting of the sea, that there had to be “the wall on their right,” referring to Torah, “and the wall on their left,” referring to prayer (*Tefillah*) or Tefillin, (as will be further explained). These two ways caused the salvation and protection of the Jewish people.

The explanation of the relationship between their right and their left, to Torah and prayer or Tefillin, is that in man’s service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, **itself**, there is a difference between serving Him in a way of ascent (*Ha’ala’ah*) which is the left, and serving Him in a way of drawing down (*Hamshachah*), which is the right.

This is the difference between prayer (*Tefillah*) and Tefillin. That is, prayer is the matter of the “running” desire (*Ratzo*) and ascent from below to Above. This is because prayer (*Tefillah*) is the matter nullifying one’s self-existence (*Bittul b’Metziyut*) to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, “like a servant standing before his Master,”⁷³⁸ this being a motion of ascent (*Ha’ala’ah*).

In the same way, the order of prayer is from below to Above. That is, the [Amidah] prayer, must be preceded by the

⁷³⁷ Rashi to Deuteronomy 8:1 and elsewhere.

⁷³⁸ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 10a

recital of Shema and its blessings, which are preceded by the verses of song (*Pesukei d'Zimra*), and there likewise are matters that precede the verses of song (*Pesukei d'Zimra*). This is because prayer is “a ladder (*Sulam*-סֶלֶם) that is set upon the earth,”⁷³⁹ through which we ascend from below to Above, from level to level, until “its head reaches the heavens,” this being the nullification of one’s [sense of] independent existence (*Bittul b’Metziyut*) during the Amidah prayer.

In contrast, the Tefillin, [the matter of which is the subjugation of the mind and heart,⁷⁴⁰ and since all of Torah is equated to Tefillin,⁷⁴¹ we find that through it, there is the subjugation of the self to fulfill all the *mitzvot*], which is the matter of affecting a drawing down (*Hamshachah*) from Above to below, like all the *mitzvot*. This is especially so of the straps of the Tefillin, for as known,⁷⁴² the matter [of the straps] is that of drawing down (*Hamshachah*) to below.

However, **the general totality of man’s service of HaShem-יהו"ה, blessed is He**, (whether in a way of ascent (*Ha’ala’ah*), or in a way of drawing down (*Hamshachah*)), is that in **earthly** matters, this is ascent from below to Above (from the material and physical to the spiritual), which is the matter of the left, whereas in matters that are granted from Above, which are **heavenly** matters given to man below – that is, Torah – this is the matter of the right.

⁷³⁹ Genesis 28:12; See Zohar I 266b; Zohar III 306b; Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 45 (83a).

⁷⁴⁰ Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 25:11; Shulchan Aruch of the Alter Rebbe there, and elsewhere; Also see Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 41.

⁷⁴¹ Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 35a

⁷⁴² See Sefer HaMaamarim 5699 p. 159; Torat Menachem, Sefer HaMaamarim Elul, p. 262.

This is as in the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory,⁷⁴³ “He stretched out His right hand and created the heavens, and stretched out His left hand and created the earth.” This is why about the Torah the verse states,⁷⁴⁴ “There was a voice from above the firmament (*Rakiya*-רקיע),” this being the right line and way. Tefillin, is inclusive of all the *mitzvot*, (including those, the matter of which is to draw down – *Hamshachah*), as in the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory,⁷⁴⁵ “All of Torah is equated to Tefillin,” which is on the left line.

It can be added that if we consider both versions [of the above-mentioned teaching] together, (since “both these and those are the words of the Living God”),⁷⁴⁶ at the splitting of the sea (the “wall”) was inclusive of service of *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, in all three ways, (the two ways [of right and left] and the mediator between them). That is, Tefillin (drawing down-*Hamshachah*) is on the right, prayer (*Tefillah*) is on the left, and Torah is the middle column (*Kav HaEmtza’ee*), (which leans to the right, and is therefore also considered as part of the right).⁷⁴⁷

⁷⁴³ See Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 18; Zohar II 20a, 37a, 85b

⁷⁴⁴ Ezekiel 1:25

⁷⁴⁵ Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 35a

⁷⁴⁶ Talmud Bavli, Eiruv 13b

⁷⁴⁷ See Shaarei Orah of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as Gates of Light, Gate Five (*Tiferet*).

Now, through perfecting our service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in all three ways, this causes a revelation of the concealed (*Giluy HaHe'elem*) essence of the soul (the "sea-*Yam*-ים" of the soul). Therefore, there also is thereby caused to be a "revelation of the concealed" (*Giluy HaHe'elem*) in the world at large, this being the matter of the splitting of the sea (*Kriyat Yam Suf*-קריעת ים סוף). For, as explained in Likkutei Torah,⁷⁴⁸ the matter of the "sea-*Yam*-ים" is that of Understanding-*Binah*, which is revealed on the "dry land-*Yabashah*-יבשה," this being the aspect of Kingship-*Malchut*.

Beyond this, as the Mittler Rebbe explains in Shaar HaEmunah,⁷⁴⁹ the revelation of the splitting of the sea (*Kriyat Yam Suf*-קריעת ים סוף) was all the way down below, even in the aspect of the inanimate (*Domem*).⁷⁵⁰ This matter brings a state of preparation into being for the revelation of the coming future, at which time there will be the fulfillment of the prophecy,⁷⁵¹ "The glory of *HaShem*-יהו"ה will be revealed and all flesh together will see that the mouth of *HaShem*-יהו"ה has spoken." As the Mittler Rebbe points out,⁷⁵² [the verse specifies that] even the "flesh-*Bassar*-בשר," which in and of itself, is the aspect

⁷⁴⁸ Likkutei Torah, Tzav 14c; Drushei Shmini Atzeret 85d

⁷⁴⁹ Shaar HaEmunah, Ch. 17 (32b and on)

⁷⁵⁰ See the Sichah talks that preceded the discourse, (Likkutei Sichot Vol. 3, p. 972 and on), that it is in this regard that there was a revelation of the fruit bearing trees which were included in a concealed manner within the power of growth (*Ko'ach HaTzome'ach*) in the splitting of the sea.

⁷⁵¹ Isaiah 40:5

⁷⁵² Torat Chayim, Tetzaveh 482a and on (329b and on in the new edition); Shaar HaEmunah, Ch. 25 (45a).

of the inanimate (*Domem*), will behold *HaShem's* יהו"ה Godliness.

In other words, through the general totality of our deeds and service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, which began with the giving of the Torah [at which time there was a glimmer of similarity to the revelation of the coming future, as explained in Tanya⁷⁵³ about the revelations that will take place in the coming redemption, (at which time *HaShem's* יהו"ה ultimate Supernal intent in creation will be fulfilled, namely, that there be “a dwelling place for the Holy One, blessed is He, in the lower worlds”),⁷⁵⁴ a glimmer of which was already experienced at the giving of the Torah], in drawing down *HaShem's* יהו"ה Godliness in the world, to such an extent that we find amongst greatly righteous *Tzaddikim*, that through their service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, they reached a state of even perceiving Godliness in inanimate objects (*Domem*), as known from the story about the Alter Rebbe.⁷⁵⁵ The same was so of all of our Rebbes, our leaders, and in the coming future, this will also be openly revealed in the whole world at large.

⁷⁵³ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 36

⁷⁵⁴ See Midrash Tanchuma Bechukotai 3, Naso 16; Midrash Bamidbar Rabba 13:6; Tanya Ch. 36, and elsewhere.

⁷⁵⁵ Beit Rebbe Vol. 1, Ch. 22.