

Discourse 5

“*Asher Kideshanu b’Mitzvotav v’Tzivanu -
Who sanctified us with His mitzvot and commanded us*”

Delivered on the morning of the 3rd day of Chol HaMo’ed Sukkot,
19th of Tishrei, 5724

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

1.

We recite,²⁴⁰ “[Blessed are You, *HaShem*-יהוה our God, King of the world], who has sanctified us with His *mitzvot* and commanded us etc.” In the booklet of [manuscripts of] discourses of the year 5562,²⁴¹ in the discourse by this title,²⁴² [a short discourse²⁴³ that does not state when it was said, but since it is found between the discourse of the eve of Shabbat Chol HaMo’ed [Sukkot], entitled “*Yekarah Hee MeePeninim*”²⁴⁴ and the discourse of the eve of Simchat Torah, it is understood that it was said between the eve of Shabbat Chol

²⁴⁰ In the liturgy of blessings over *mitzvot*.

²⁴¹ In the handwriting of the Mittler Rebbe, in which there are also glosses and annotations from the Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzeddek.

²⁴² Subsequently printed in Maamarei Admor HaZaken 5562 Vol. 1, p. 31-32.

²⁴³ Note: As is known from the words of his honorable holiness, my father-in-law, the Rebbe, (in his Igrot Kodesh, Vol. 3, p. 340), in the early years of the Alter Rebbe most of the discourses were said in the form of short teachings (short in quantity [only]), and in the years that followed they were sometimes longer in quantity and sometimes shorter in quantity. This discourse is from among those that are short in quantity.

²⁴⁴ Also see the preceding discourse of the 2nd night of Sukkot of this year, 5724, entitled “*Chassidim v’Anshei Ma’aseh*,” Discourse 4, Ch. 2.

HaMo'ed and the eve of Simchat Torah], the Alter Rebbe²⁴⁵ prefaces with an explanation of the words we recite,²⁴⁶ “You are holy and Your Name is holy.” Namely, that even “Your Name-*Sheemcha*-שמך,” (which is not just any name, but is “**Your** Name”), referring to Kingship-*Malchut* of the Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, and is the root for all the emanated lights, is called “Holy-*Kadosh*-קדוש.” That is, it is separate from all comparison to the emanated (*Ne'etzalim*) to which it is drawn, since it only is drawn into the emanated lights by way of great constriction (*Tzimtzum*). This will suffice for the understanding.

Likewise, the words (that we then recite), [“and holy ones shall each day] praise You for all eternity (*Yehallelucha Selah*-יהללוך סלה),” in which the praise through song and praise is in a way of “eternity-*Selah*-סלה,” about which our sages, of blessed memory, stated,²⁴⁷ “Wherever it says ‘*Netzach*-נצח,’ ‘*Selah*-סלה,’ or ‘*Va’ed*-ועד’ [it is a matter] with no cessation.”

That is, there is no cessation or end to the praise and greatness of the limitless light of the Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. For, even those (who “praise You”) and are called “holy ones-*Kedoshim*-קדושים,” in that they are named for that light, which they lack due to the impossibility of it being constricted within them, (and is thus called “Holy-*Kadosh*-קדוש,” as mentioned before), therefore their praise is to no end, being that they are praising that which is beyond their grasp.

²⁴⁵ This year is the 150th year of his passing and *Hilulah*.

²⁴⁶ In the Amidah prayer.

²⁴⁷ Talmud Bavli, Eruvin 54a

By way of analogy, when a lesser sage praises a greater sage, being that he understands and recognizes his greatness and wisdom, there therefore is a limit to his praise of him, being that his praise is commensurate to his recognition and grasp of him. However, in regard to the wisdom of the greater sage, which remains transcendent and above him in an encompassing way, to the point that it is impossible for him to grasp it, in regard to this, he praises that which is beyond his own grasp, and it therefore is without end or limit. About this we say, “[and holy ones shall each day] praise You for all eternity (*Yehallelucha Selah*-יהלליך סלה).”

2.

He then continues to explain the connection with the words, “Who has sanctified us (*Kideshanu*-קדשנו) with His *mitzvot*.” For, as known,²⁴⁸ the *mitzvot* are called,²⁴⁹ “The pathways of *HaShem*-יהו”ה.” That is, through them there is a drawing down from the Emanator (*Ma’atzil*) to the emanated (*Ne’etzalim*). For, just as there is a drawing down to the emanated through the letters of the Name *HaShem*-יהו”ה, which is “**Your** Name,” so likewise, there is a drawing down from the Emanator to the emanated through fulfilling the *mitzvot*, which are called “**His** *mitzvot*-*Mitzvotav*-מצוותיו,” being that they are “the pathways of *HaShem*-יהו”ה.”

²⁴⁸ See Zohar III 129a (Idra Rabba); Also see the explanation of the Arizal to Zohar there; Mishnat Chassidim, Mesechet Arich Anpin, Ch. 4; Likkutei Torah, Re’eh 21d; Biurei HaZohar of the Mittler Rebbe, Vayishlach 19b and on; Sefer HaMaamarim 5689 p. 6 and on.

²⁴⁹ Psalms 25:10

Thus, about this we say “Who has sanctified us (*Kideshanu*-קדשנו) with His *mitzvot*.” For, to be able to draw from the Emanator to the emanated through our deeds, our souls must be elevated to the aspect of the Supernal Holiness (*Kodesh HaElyon*-קדש העליון)²⁵⁰ which is separately transcendent from the emanated, through which we thereby can cause a drawing down from the Emanator to the emanated.

However, how is it that the soul of a Jew can reach the Supernal Holiness (*Kodesh HaElyon*-קדש העליון)? [To answer this] he continues by explaining that, in a concealed way, each and every Jew has the potential power to sacrifice himself for the sanctification of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה (*Mesirat Nefesh Al Kiddush HaShem*). That is, since [under circumstances of duress] this comes out into actual revelation, this proves that even when it is not openly revealed and actualized, it nonetheless is present in a concealed and potential way.

He further explains that the meaning of sanctifying the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה (*Kiddush HaShem*) is that one gives up his soul for the sake of the Essential Self of the light of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, who is called “Holy-*Kadosh*-קדוש” [meaning] separately transcendent.

About this we say, “You are Holy (*Atah Kadosh*-אתה קדוש) and Your Name is Holy (*v'Sheemcha Kadosh*-ושמך קדוש),” as mentioned above. This aspect is the root of the *mitzvot*, which are called, “The pathways of *HaShem*-יהו"ה,” in that they [are the pathways] for drawing down from the

²⁵⁰ See Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 46 (66a)

Emanator to the emanated, brought about through the *mitzvot* fulfilled by the Jewish people, whose souls reach this aspect.

For, if a non-Jew dons Tefillin, which is a *mitzvah*, nothing at all is drawn down by this,²⁵¹ and it only is when a Jew don's Tefillin that a drawing down is brought about etc. This proves that this drawing not only stems from the [act of the] *mitzvah*, but also stems from the soul of the Jew, which reaches the aspect of the Supernal Holiness (*Kodesh HaElyon* - קדש העליון) due to the matter of self-sacrifice for the sanctification of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה (*Mesirat Nefesh Al Kiddush HaShem*), as explained above.

Now, since sanctification of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה (*Mesirut Nefesh Al Kiddush HaShem*) means that one gives up his soul and ascends to the Essential Self of the light of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, which is the aspect indicated by "Your Name is Holy (*Sheemcha Kadosh* - שמך קדוש)," this being the root of the *mitzvot*, therefore, the matter of sanctifying the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה (*Kiddush HaShem*) is greater and higher than all the *mitzvot*.

This is as explained²⁵² about the self-sacrifice (*Mesirut Nefesh*) of Rabbi Elazar ben Dordaya who wept and moaned until his soul left him,²⁵³ and [thereby] acquired his [share in the coming] world in a single moment, meaning that [he thereby

²⁵¹ Also see Torah Ohr, Shemot 53d

²⁵² In the notes and citations to Maamarei Admor HaZaken 5562 here, the Rebbe adds a citation, "See before on p. 13 (where this is stated slightly differently)." Also see the discourse of the conclusion of Yom Kippur of earlier this year, 5724, entitled "*Lehavin... SheDorot HaRishonim*," Discourse 3, Ch. 3.

²⁵³ Talmud Bavli, Avodah Zarah 17a

accomplished] everything he could have accomplished by fulfilling Torah and *mitzvot* for a hundred years.

3.

He then continues to explain the matter of the blessing over the *mitzvot*, and that through the blessing one recites, by saying “who has sanctified us with His *mitzvot*,” this is drawn from concealment into revelation. That is, since every Jew has the hidden potential to sacrifice himself for the sanctification of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה (*Mesirut Nefesh Al Kiddush HaShem*), as a result of which his soul reaches the aspect of the Supernal Holiness (*Kodesh HaElyon*-קדש העליון), and likewise, in a hidden way, all the *mitzvot*, which are called “the pathways of *HaShem*-יהו"ה,” have the aspect of the Supernal Holiness (*Kodesh HaElyon*-קדש העליון), it thus is through the blessing (*Brachah*)²⁵⁴ that this is drawn from concealment to revelation.

This is because a blessing (*Brachah*) is the matter of revealing the transcendent encompassing lights (*Makifim*), and is why fulfilling the *mitzvah* is not contingent on the blessing (*Brachah*),²⁵⁵ being that, in a hidden way, the Supernal Holiness is present in the *mitzvah* itself, as well as in the soul of the person [fulfilling it], as explained above. However, even so, there are [Torah authorities] who say that the *mitzvot* do require devotional intent (*Kavanah*),²⁵⁶ which is the matter of

²⁵⁴ The term “blessing-*Brachah*-ברכה” also means “to draw down” as in the Mishnah Kilayim 7:1, “One who draws down (*HaMavreech*-המבריך) a vine into the ground.”

²⁵⁵ See Talmud Bavli, Brachot 15a

²⁵⁶ See Talmud Bavli, Brachot 13a

revelation from concealment brought about through the blessings (*Brachot*).

He concludes that this is the meaning of the word, “and He commanded us-*v’Tzevanu*-וְצִוָּנוּ,” which is a word that means “bonding-*Tzavta*-צְוִתָּא,” referring to bonding our souls to the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, to the point that when we fulfill the mitzvot in deed, in the world of Action (*Asiyah*), there comes to be a [revelation] from the concealment of the Emanator to the emanated. This will suffice for the understanding. (This concludes the substance of the [above-mentioned] discourse.)

4.

Now, since the general matter of fulfilling the *mitzvot* and their blessings is a command given to each and every Jew, whosoever he may be, we thus find that not only is it that each and every Jew has the hidden potential for self-sacrifice in sanctifying the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה, [meaning that this is not out to any reason, reward, or spiritual profit, but as explained (in chapter two), the meaning of sanctifying the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה is that one gives over his soul for the Essential Self of the limitless light of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, who is called “Holy-*Kadosh*-קדוש” and separately transcendent, and it is in this regard that it states, “[holy ones shall] praise You for all eternity-*Selah*-סֵלָה,” meaning, to no end and without limit, since He is neither grasped nor recognized etc., (as explained in

chapter one), from which it is understood that the self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) is also not out of any matter of grasp or comprehension etc.], but beyond this, it is within one's power to cause the hidden power of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) to be revealed in his service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, by fulfilling the *mitzvot* with joy and gladness of heart, through the blessings (without needing to give up his life with actual self-sacrifice, Heaven forbid).

Moreover, the effect brought about through fulfilling the *mitzvot* is not just in the article that the *mitzvah* was performed with, such as the physical parchment of the Tefillin or the physical wool of the Tzitzit, or even in the world at large, in that through fulfilling [even] a single *mitzvah*, he tips the balance of the entire world to the side of merit (*Zchut*-זכות),²⁵⁷ (this being a term of "refinement-*Zikuch*-זיכוך," indicating that [through this] he causes the refinement and clarification of the world, but beyond this, through [fulfilling] the *mitzvah* he binds his soul to (the Holy One, blessed is He, not only as He is vested in numerous garments, but as He is, in and of Himself, meaning) the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה Himself, blessed is He, about whom we say, "Your Name is Holy-*Sheemcha Kadosh*-שמך קדוש," and beyond that, "You are Holy-*Atah Kadosh*-אתה קדוש."

²⁵⁷ See Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 40a and on; Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 3:4

Based on this, we can explain the relationship between the general service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, throughout the whole year, and the state and standing during the holidays of Sukkot, Yom HaKippurim, and Rosh HaShanah. For, as known,²⁵⁸ the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, of Rosh HaShanah, is general to the entire year, (in that it relates to accepting the yoke of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Kingship). Likewise, the service of Yom HaKippurim is a general service for the whole year, (in that it relates to the matter of repentance – *Teshuvah*). Similarly, the service of the holiday of Sukkot is a general service for the whole year, (in that it relates to the matter of joy).

Now, at first glance, this is not understood, because our state of [spiritual] arousal on Rosh HaShanah, Yom HaKippurim, the holiday of Sukkot and Simchat Beit HaSho'evah is incomparably loftier than our state during the mundane days of the rest of the year, (on regular weekdays), when we engage in mundane matters and deal in the public domain of this world.

This being so, how can it be said that the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, [of the Jewish people] on Rosh HaShanah, Yom HaKippurim, and the holiday of Sukkot, are **general services** for the whole year, meaning that they are the “general whole” (*Klall*-כלל) that includes the entire year, in which “the general whole (*Klall*-כלל) only includes that which

²⁵⁸ See Maamarei Admor HaZaken 5566 p. 379; 5569 p. 238; Ohr HaTorah, Sukkot, p. 1,756; Zot HaBrachah p. 1,866; Sefer HaMaamarim 5654 p. 36; 5656 p. 278; 5702 p. 49.

is in the particulars (*Prat*-פרט),”²⁵⁹ at the very same time that [in the particulars (*Prat*-פרט)] they are very far from this, to the furthest extreme, so much so, that the distance is beyond all comparison?

However, the explanation is that the difference between the [spiritual] arousal of Rosh HaShanah, Yom HaKippurim etc., and the state and standing during the mundane days [of the year], is only in regard to one’s grasp and his intellectual sensibilities. That is, on Rosh HaShanah and Yom HaKippurim the [spiritual] arousal is intellectually felt and sensed, which is not so throughout the mundane days [of the year], when one engages in mundane matters in the public domain, so that even when he contemplates intellectually etc., he has no sense of [spiritual] arousal etc.

However, in reality, as it is to its ultimate truth, (even if it is not intellectually grasped) - not just in a concealed potential way, but even in a way of revelation - even as he is engaged in mundane matters in the public domain, he has the ability to fulfill the commandment, “know Him in all your ways,”²⁶⁰ which is “a short verse upon which all the fundamental [principles] of Torah depend.”²⁶¹

Through this one comes to be in a state of “bonding-*Tzavta*-צוותא” to the Holy One, blessed is He, as with every *mitzvah*. This is also emphasized by the words, “Know Him in all your ways,” specifying, “Know Him-*Da’eihu*-דעהו,” in which the word “knowledge-*Da’at*-דעת” is a term indicating

²⁵⁹ Talmud Bavli, Pesachim 6b; Yoma 24a, and elsewhere.

²⁶⁰ Proverbs 3:6; See Mishneh Torah, Hilchot De’ot 3:3; Shulchan Aruch of the Alter Rebbe, Orach Chayim 156:2

²⁶¹ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 63a

bonding.²⁶² This matter is [indicated by the word] “and commanded us-*v’Tzivanu*-וצונו,” meaning that a bond and attachment of one’s soul with the One about whom we say, “You are Holy (*Atah Kadosh*-אתה קדוש) and Your Name is Holy (*v’Shimcha Kadosh*-ושמך קדוש)” is caused.

Now, this only depends on oneself. That is, if he makes his soul primary and his body secondary,²⁶³ even his body will come to be in such a state and standing. However, from the perspective of the soul, even if he only fulfills the commandment of “know Him in all your ways” in tangible action, [and as explained (in chapter three), fulfilling the *mitzvah* is not contingent on the blessing (*Brachah*)], then even on a mundane [regular weekday], while engaging in mundane matters, the matter of “He commanded us-*v’Tzivanu*-וצונו” is present, referring to the bond and attachment of the soul to [the One about whom we say], “You are Holy (*Atah Kadosh*-אתה קדוש) and Your Name is Holy (*v’Shimcha Kadosh*-ושמך קדוש).”

This then, explains how the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, of Rosh HaShanah, Yom HaKippurim, and the holiday of Sukkot, are general services for whole year. That is, this is similar to a general principle (*Klall*-כלל), in which the general principle (*Klall*-כלל) only includes that which is in the particulars (*Prat*-פרט).

That is, not only is it that for the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, of Rosh HaShanah, Yom HaKippurim, and the holiday of Sukkot (the general-*Klall*-כלל) to be as it should

²⁶² Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 3; Genesis 4:1 (“Adam knew (*Yada*-ידע) Chavah, and she conceived etc.”)

²⁶³ See Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 32

be, there necessarily must be the preparation that precedes it in our service of Him throughout the whole the [previous] year (the particulars-*Prat*-פרט), but also in regard to the drawing down of the general (*Klall*) (the service of Rosh HaShanah, Yom HaKippurim, and the holiday of Sukkot), to the particulars (*Prat*), (serving Him throughout the rest of the [present] year), so that the lofty state we are in on Rosh HaShanah and Yom HaKippurim, which are [called] the “Days of Awe,”²⁶⁴ and “Holy Days,”²⁶⁵ on which we recite, “The Holy King-*HaMelech HaKadosh*-המלך הקדוש,” to the point that this affects one’s whole existence, (transforming and) elevating him to the state about which we recite, “Holy ones (*Kedoshim*-קדושים) shall each day praise You for all eternity,” meaning that even as his soul manifests below ten handbreadths in his body, he is included amongst those who are called “Holy ones-*Kedoshim*-קדושים,” stemming from the light that is impossible to constrain in them, (as explained in chapter one), and all his deeds (by which he fulfills the commandment, “know Him in all your ways”) are in a way that every act, whatever it may be, is imbued with the inner matter of praise for the Holy One, blessed is He, which is the meaning of “[shall] praise You for all eternity,” with song and praise for the Holy One, blessed is He, as indicated by the word “*Selah*-סלה,” in that “wherever it says ‘*Netzach*-נצח,’ ‘*Selah*-סלה,’ or ‘*Va’ed*-ועד’ [this is a matter] that has no cessation.”

²⁶⁴ See Likkutei Torah, Eikev; Maamarei Admor HaEmtza’ee, Devarim Vol. 1, p. 302; Ohr HaTorah, Tehillim (Yahal Ohr) p. 120, and elsewhere.

²⁶⁵ See Nehemiah 8:9 and on (regarding Rosh HaShanah); Isaiah 58:13 (regarding Yom HaKippurim, see Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 119a).

Now, everything that was said above, that through fulfilling the *mitzvot* in actuality, a bond of the soul with the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is caused, this is specifically from the aspect of the soul. However, when the arrival of our righteous Moshiach, the righteous redeemer, when the prophecy, "All flesh together will see [that the mouth of *HaShem*-יהו"ה has spoken]" will be fulfilled, there then will be a bond of the Essential Self of the limitless light of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, with the body, to the degree that even the soul will be sustained by the body.²⁶⁶ May it be His will that this will happen in the near future, and in the most literal sense, with the coming of our righteous Moshiach, speedily in our days!

²⁶⁶ See Torat Menachem, Sefer HaMaamarim Nissan p. 168