

Discourse 34

“VaEheyeh Etzlo Amon - I was with Him as His nursling”

1st night of the holiday of Shavuot,¹⁷⁵⁶ 5724

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

1.

The verse states,¹⁷⁵⁷ “I was with Him as His nursling... My delights are with the children of man.” The indication of this verse is that even when the Torah descended to be given to man below, to be [the aspect of] “My delights are with the children of man,” it nevertheless remains on its true level of elevation, as it is in and of itself, “I was with Him as His nursling,” which specifies, “with Him-*Etzlo*-אצלו.”

However, we must understand this. For, our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹⁷⁵⁸ “At the time that Moshe ascended on high, the ministering angels said before the Holy One, blessed is He... ‘set Your majesty over the heavens.’¹⁷⁵⁹ The Holy One, blessed is He, said to Moshe, ‘You respond to them etc.’ He [Moshe] said to them, ‘Did you descend to Egypt...? Is there an evil inclination among you...?’ They immediately submitted to him etc.”

¹⁷⁵⁶ Toward morning.

¹⁷⁵⁷ Proverbs 8:30-31

¹⁷⁵⁸ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 88b

¹⁷⁵⁹ Psalms 8:2

About this, it is explained¹⁷⁶⁰ that the angels are called “those who stand” (*Omdeem*-עומדים),¹⁷⁶¹ since they do not have the aspect of mobility. They therefore requested that the Torah be given to them. This is because the letters (*Otiyot*-אותיות) of the Torah are called “horses” (*Susim*-סוסים),¹⁷⁶² like a horse which transports and carries its rider by trotting in a way that is beyond gradation [to the rider], by which he reaches a distance that he would be incapable of reach on his own.

So likewise, there are letters (*Otiyot*-אותיות) that cause ascent from below to Above in a way that is not according to gradation, and there are letters (*Otiyot*-אותיות) that drawn light down from Above to below in a way that is not according to gradation etc. Thus, had the Torah been given to the angels, through the letters of the Torah they would be able to ascend to the category of walkers (*Mahalchim*-מהלכים).

It is about this that he answered them, “Did you descend to Egypt...? Is there an evil inclination among you...?” In other words, this matter, that through the Torah there is a drawing down of a much higher light, in a way that is beyond gradation etc., specifically is through the descent of the Torah to below, to affect the refinements (*Birurim*) of the world of Chaos-*Tohu* etc. This therefore only applies to the Jewish people, who descended to Egypt, and in whom there is an evil inclination etc. In contrast, there is no benefit in giving the Torah to the angels.

¹⁷⁶⁰ See Maamarei Admor HaZaken, Hanachot HaRav Pinchas p. 77; Ohr HaTorah, Beshalach p. 646 and on.

¹⁷⁶¹ Zachariah 3:7; Torah Ohr, Vayeishev 30a and on, and elsewhere.

¹⁷⁶² See introduction to Tikkunei Zohar 8a; Torah Ohr, Beshalach 63a, 63d

However, at first glance, how is it possible to align the fact that the primary matter of the Torah is to affect refinements (*Birurim*) etc., with the elevation and superiority of Torah, as it is, in and of itself, which is in the manner [indicated by] “I was with Him as His nursling,” specifying, “with Him-*Etzlo*-עצלו.”

2.

This may be understood by the general difference between Torah and *mitzvot*.¹⁷⁶³ To explain, *mitzvot* are limited to time and place. For example, the *mitzvot* of Sukkah and Pesach are specific to the seven days of the holiday, and have no relation at all to the days that precede or follow them. Likewise, the *mitzvah* of Mezuzah specifically applies to the house that one lives in. Even those *mitzvot* that are not bound to time and place, such as the *mitzvah* of charity and the like, are nonetheless enclothed in physical things, which are limited to time and space.

In contrast, the Torah transcends time and space, as we see by the fact that the *mitzvah* to study Torah includes studying laws that cannot be practiced in our times, such as the laws of the sacrificial offerings [in the Holy Temple], or even by [the fact that a person] can fulfill the *mitzvah* of studying Torah, by learning the laws of Sukkah on Pesach, or learning the laws of Pesach on Sukkot.

¹⁷⁶³ See Maamarei Admor HaZaken 5568 Vol. 1, p. 159 and on; Ohr HaTorah, Emor p. 837 and on; p. 842 and on; Vol. 4 p. 1,075 and on; Sefer HaMaamarim 5626 p. 273 and on; 5638 p. 332 and on; 5656 p. 271 and on; Pelach HaRimon, Vayikra p. 332 and on; Also see the discourse entitled “*uLekachtem Lachem*” 5727 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5727 p. 31 and on).

The explanation is that the Torah is rooted in the aspect of the Primordial Wisdom (*Chochmah HaKedooma*) of the Essential Self of the Emanator, as the verse states, “I was with Him as His nursling,” and it was there that it was determined and decided how and in what manner the drawing down would be within the order of the chaining down of the worlds (*Seder Hishtalshehut*), with lights (*Orot*) and vessels (*Keilim*), this being the matter of the *mitzvot*, in that they are the receptacles (*Keilim*) below by which there is a drawing down and revelation of the light (*Ohr*).

In other words, it was thus decreed in the Primordial Wisdom (*Chochmah HaKedoomah*) of the Emanator, that when the performance of the *mitzvah* be done specifically in such and such a way, this causes a drawing down and bond of the light of the Emanator with the emanated etc. The same is so of the particular drawings forth caused by each particular *mitzvah* etc.

This is why the *mitzvot* are limited to time and space, being that they are the receptacles (*Keilim*) by which the light (*Ohr*) is drawn below. In contrast, the Torah transcends limitation, since its root is in the Essential Self of the Emanator, to decree how and in what manner the drawing down should be etc., according to how it arose in His Supernal will. However, He Himself is not limited by this.

3.

With the above in mind we can also understand why the Torah is written as a narrative, that “such is the deed that *HaShem* יהוה spoke to Moshe,” (like a third person

narrator),¹⁷⁶⁴ that “such and such must be done, and such and such is forbidden to be done,” but not in the form of a [direct] command.

The explanation is that the Torah is rooted in the Essential Self of the Emanator, as the verse states, “I was with Him as His nursling.” Thus, when Torah states, “*HaShem*-יהוה spoke to Moshe etc.,” it is relating the words of the Essential Self of the Emanator, blessed is He. This is analogous to a person who tells to his friend what he already has decided within himself, not as a command, but as relating what he has decided within himself is the fitting and appropriate thing to do etc.

The analogue for this is that Torah is the matter of relating of the words of the Essential Self of the Emanator, about what already has been decided within Himself, as to how there will be a bond and manifestation of the light of the Emanator within the emanated. Thus, since this is what already preceded in His Essential Self, it therefore is not in the way of a [direct] command, but is like relating a narrative etc.

With the above in mind, we can also understand why at the conclusion of many Torah portions it states, “I am *HaShem-Ani HaShem*-יהוה אני.” This is because the name *HaShem*-יהוה indicates the ten *Sefirot* (the *Yod*-י is Wisdom-*Chochmah*, the first *Hey*-ה is Understanding-*Binah*, the *Vav*-ו is the [six] emotions, and the final *Hey*-ה is Kingship-*Malchut*)¹⁷⁶⁵ and is

¹⁷⁶⁴ See the introduction of the Ramban to his commentary on Torah.

¹⁷⁶⁵ See Zohar III 17a (Ra’aya Mehemna); Etz Chayim, Shaar 3 (Shaar Seder Atzilut of Rabbi Chayim Vital), Ch. 1; Shaar 42 (Shaar Drushei ABY”A), Ch. 1-2.

the root and source that enlivens and brings the worlds into being.¹⁷⁶⁶

However, the word “I-*Ani*-אני,” refers to the Essential Self of the Emanator. However, it is through the Torah that a bond is caused between the light of the Emanator and the emanated, to illuminate within them (as explained before). Thus, about this the verse states, “I am *HaShem-Ani HaShem-יהוה אני יהוה*.” In other words, “I-*Ani*-אני” Myself (the Essential Self of the Emanator) bond and illuminate with the Name *HaShem-יהוה* of the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*) through the *mitzvot* stated in that Torah portion.

This is also why the verse states,¹⁷⁶⁷ “These are the appointed festivals of *HaShem-יהוה*... these are My appointed festivals (*Mo’adai*-מועדי).” This is because the “appointed festivals” (*Mo’adim*-מועדים) are times when there is a bond and drawing down of the light of the Emanator with additional light and illumination etc. In other words, the Essential Self of the Emanator relates [to us] about the establishment of times, for there to be “appointed festivals of *HaShem-יהוה*,” and concludes, “these are My appointed festivals (*Mo’adai*-מועדי).” This is because this is what was decreed in the Essential Wisdom of the Emanator, that at these appointed times there will be a drawing forth of the light of the Emanator etc.

¹⁷⁶⁶ See Tanya, Shaaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah translated as The Gate of Unity and Faith, Ch. 4, and elsewhere.

¹⁷⁶⁷ Leviticus 23:2

4.

With the above in mind, we can understand the superiority of Torah study, even over and above prayer. To preface, our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹⁷⁶⁸ “We may not transmit the secrets of the Torah except to one whose heart is worried within him.” However, at first glance, this is not understood. That is, what relation is there between worrying in the heart and the receiving of the secrets of the Torah?

However, the explanation is that to the degree that one delves and contemplates deeply in his mind to grasp the exaltedness of the limitless light of the Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, to that degree will he come to worry in his heart about how distant his grasp is etc.¹⁷⁶⁹ For example, in grasping a deep intellectual matter, the more one comes to have a small measure of grasp of it, the more he grasps his distance from the depth of the matter. In contrast, one who has no grasp at all will have no concern in his heart, being that he is not even aware that there is a deep intellectual matter here etc.

This then, is the meaning of [the teaching], “We may not transmit the secrets of the Torah except to one whose heart is worried within him.” This is because the worry in his heart indicates that he has a relationship and closeness to the matter, which is why his heart is concerned about his distance from

¹⁷⁶⁸ Talmud Bavli, Chagigah 13a

¹⁷⁶⁹ See Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 6.

Him. As a result it is fitting to bestow the secrets of the Torah to him.

Now, the worry of the heart is in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, during prayer (*Tefillah*), for because of his contemplation (*Hitbonenut*) and grasp of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness etc., he thereby will come to have increased worry in his heart out of the sense of his awesome distance from the exaltedness of the limitless light of the Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. This is why prayer (*Tefillah*) is called "the outpouring of the soul" (*Shefichat HaNefesh*),¹⁷⁷⁰ as the verse states,¹⁷⁷¹ "I poured out my soul before *HaShem*-יהו"ה." This is because to the degree of one's grasp, the greater will be his grasp of his distance in comparison etc., as a result of which his thirst will increase, to the point of becoming lovesick etc.¹⁷⁷²

However, through studying Torah after prayer, healing is drawn down for the lovesickness brought about by the prayer. This is because the Torah is literally rooted in the Essential Self of the Emanator, as the verse states, "I was with Him as His nursling etc.," in the aspect of the Essential Delights (*Sha'ashu'eem HaAtzmiyim*). From there, there is a drawing down for there to also be "My delights are with the children of man," by which the soul finds solace and respite etc. This is because the Essential Self of the Emanator literally dwells within the Torah.

¹⁷⁷⁰ See Pri Etz Chayim, beginning of Shaar HaTefillah

¹⁷⁷¹ Samuel I 1:15

¹⁷⁷² See Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah 2:2

With the above in mind, we can also understand what our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹⁷⁷³ “Happy is he who arrives here with his studies in his hand.” However, at first glance, this is not understood. For, in this world the studies relate to action, whereas in the Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*) action is inapplicable. This being so, why would he bring his studies there?

We also must understand the matter of studying Torah in the Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*). For, as we find in the Talmud,¹⁷⁷⁴ “The [sages] of the Heavenly Academy were in disagreement etc., and they said, ‘Who can arbitrate?’ [They agreed that] Rabba bar Nachmeini can arbitrate.” However, at first glance, “the superiority of study is that it brings to action,”¹⁷⁷⁵ whereas in the Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*) action is inapplicable.

However, the explanation is that even though it does not relate to action, the study in the Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*) is like the *mitzvah* to study Torah, which even applies to learning Torah laws that we cannot practiced in our times, (as explained in chapter two). This is because it is speaking (*Dibur*) the words of Torah that draws the Essential Self of the Emanator forth, (which is not so of the *mitzvot*, which only are the vessels for drawing the light (*Ohr*) down to below). This is why in the Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*) there also is the study of Torah,

¹⁷⁷³ Talmud Bavli, Pesachim 50a

¹⁷⁷⁴ Talmud Bavli, Bava Metziya 86a

¹⁷⁷⁵ Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 40b

and on the contrary, since in the Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*) the soul is completely divested of physicality, it has a greater ability to draw down the Essential Self of the Emanator, blessed is He, through speaking in Torah. However, this specifically is when he learns that which he learned in this world, while his soul was still in a body, being that there is a “superiority of light that comes out of darkness etc.”¹⁷⁷⁶

6.

This then, is the meaning of, “I was with Him as His nursling etc.,” that the root of the Torah is in the Essential Self of the Emanator as He transcends being the source for the chaining down of the worlds (*Hishtalshelut*) etc. Nevertheless, our sages, of blessed memory, expounded,¹⁷⁷⁷ “(Do not only read it as) ‘nursling-*Amon*-אָמון,’ (but read it as), ‘craftsman-*Uman*-אָומן.’ The Torah says, ‘I was the craftsman’s tool of the Holy One, blessed is He etc.’ That is, the Holy One, blessed is He, gazes into the Torah and creates the world.”

This is because in the Essential Self of the Emanator, it was already determined and decided how and in what way the chaining down of the worlds (*Hishtalshelut*) would be etc. However, this matter is not in a way of inner manifestation (*Hitlabshut*), and therefore, it does not contradict the statement, “I was with Him as His nursling etc.”

¹⁷⁷⁶ See Ecclesiastes 2:13

¹⁷⁷⁷ Midrash Bereishit Rabba 1:1