

Discourse 22

*“Lehavin... SheHaOtiyot... -
To better understand... that the letters...”*

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Bo,
6th of Shvat, 5725
By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

To better understand¹⁰⁸⁷ why it sometimes states that the letters (*Otiyot*-אותיות) of the Torah are on a loftier level than the content being discussed, and it sometimes states the opposite, that the content being discussed is on a loftier level than the letters (*Otiyot*-אותיות), in that they only are vessels (*Keilim*).

The explanation is that both are true. This may be understood based on what it states in Etz Chayim¹⁰⁸⁸ in regard to the matter of the skull, which is over the brain, that the bone of the skull (*Gulgolet*-גלגלת) is what covers over the brain (*Mo'ach*-מוח), this being the aspect of the Crown-*Keter*. Now, at first glance, this seems questionable, being that the bone of the skull is just an inanimate physical object, whereas the brain in the skull has spiritual vitality within it. For, as known about the matter of [animals] which are rendered unfit [for

¹⁰⁸⁷ The Rebbe Shlita said that this discourse is from one of the booklets [of manuscripts] that was recently released from captivity, (and was subsequently printed in Maamaarei Admor HaZaken, HaKetzarim p. 559).

¹⁰⁸⁸ See Etz Chayim, Shaar 23 (Shaar Mochin d'Tzelem), Ch. 1; See Likkutei Torah, Nitzavim 49c

consumption] (*Treifot*), a puncture in the [membrane of the] brain renders it unfit, even if it is the slightest size,¹⁰⁸⁹ whereas a puncture in the bone of the skull only renders it unfit if the size of a *sela* is missing.¹⁰⁹⁰ This being so, how does it apply that the bone of the skull is the aspect of the Crown-*Keter*, and is even loftier in level than the brain?

However, the explanation is that the bone of the skull is rooted in the aspect of the Crown-*Keter*, which transcends Wisdom-*Chochmah*, but because of its greatness, cannot descend and manifest inwardly (*b'Pnimityut*), but remains encompassing (*Makif*) over the brain. That which is drawn into the vessel (*Kli*) is only the lowest aspect of the Crown-*Keter*, the aspect of Action (*Asiyah*) of the Crown-*Keter*, which is the bone of the skull. In contrast, this is not so of the aspect of Wisdom-*Chochmah*, for since it is not as lofty in level, it therefore can descend and manifest in the brain of the head.

We thus find that even though the bone of the skull is an inanimate physical object, whereas the brain has spiritual vitality within it, nonetheless, the bone of the skull is greater than the brain, being that it is rooted in the aspect of the Crown-*Keter*, which transcends Wisdom-*Chochmah*.

The same is so in regard to the matter of the letters (*Otiyot*-אותיות) and the content within them. That is, even though the letters (*Otiyot*-אותיות) are only vessels (*Keilim*) for the content, nonetheless, their root is in the aspect of the Crown-

¹⁰⁸⁹ See Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Shechitah 6:1

¹⁰⁹⁰ See Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Shechitah 10:5

Keter, which transcends Wisdom-*Chochmah*.¹⁰⁹¹ Only that because of the great elevation of the level of the Crown-*Keter*, they cannot manifest inwardly (*b'Pnimityut*) in the vessels (*Keilim*). That which comes into the vessels (*Keilim*) is only the externality of the Crown-*Keter*, this being the matter of the letters (*Otiyot*-אותיות). In contrast, when it comes to the aspect of Wisdom-*Chochmah*, the level of which is not as great, it indeed can manifest inwardly (*b'Pnimityut*) and come into understanding and comprehension etc.

This is likewise so of the difference between Torah and *mitzvot*¹⁰⁹² etc.¹⁰⁹³

¹⁰⁹¹ See at length in Ginat Egoz of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as HaShem Is One, Vol. 1, The Foundations, Vol. 2 & 3, The Letters of Creation, Parts 1 & 2, and Vol. 4, The Vowels of Creation.

¹⁰⁹² See Likkutei Torah, Shir HaShirim 22d

¹⁰⁹³ The conclusion of this discourse is missing.