

Discourse 61

*“VaEtchanan El HaShem... -
I implored of HaShem...”*

Shabbat Parshat VaEtchanan, Shabbat Nachamu,

16th of Menachem-Av, 5725

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

1.

The verse states,¹²⁹⁰ “I implored (*VaEtchanan*-ואתחנן) of *HaShem*-יהו"ה etc.” Now, it states in Sifri,¹²⁹¹ “Two good benefactors arose for Israel, Moshe and Dovid, king of Israel – who could have based their requests of *HaShem*-יהו"ה on their good deeds, but only asked of the Ever Present One to give them out of freely (*Chinam*-חנם) given grace (*Chein*-חן) etc.”¹²⁹² If this was so of them... how much more is it so [of us,] that we should not ask of the Ever Present One except that he give us out of freely (*Chinam*-חנם) given grace (*Chein*-חן).

Another meaning of the words ‘I implored-*VaEtchanan*-ואתחנן *HaShem*-יהו"ה,’ is that prayer is called by ten names etc.,” as also stated in Midrash Rabba,¹²⁹³ “Prayer is called by ten terms, and these are them etc. Now, out of all ten, Moshe prayed with the term ‘imploping-*Tachanunim*-תחנונים.”

¹²⁹⁰ Deuteronomy 3:23

¹²⁹¹ Sifri Devarim 26:6

¹²⁹² Also see Rashi to Deuteronomy 3:23 which is explained at length in the Sichah talks of this gathering.

¹²⁹³ Midrash Devarim Rabba 2:1

(The Midrash continues there stating), “Why did Moshe only come with the term ‘imploing-*Tachanunim*-תַּחֲנוּנִים...’? The Holy One, blessed is He, said to Moshe:¹²⁹⁴ ‘I shall give grace (*v’Chanoti*-וְחָנוּתִי) to whomever I shall give grace etc.’ That is, “With a person who has no [credit] with Me ‘I shall give grace-*v’Chanoti*-וְחָנוּתִי,’ – I will act [kindly] with him as a freely given gift (*Chinam*-חִנָּם) etc.”

The explanation¹²⁹⁵ is that according to Midrash Rabba, that “I implored-*VaEtchanan*-וְאֶתְחַנַּנְתִּי” is one of the ten terms by which prayer is called, the general matter [of prayer] (as it should be in the first place, according to the Torah of Truth) is bound with one’s service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, and his merits etc.

[To point out, the word “prayer-*Tefillah*-תְּפִלָּה” is of the same root as, “one who binds-*Tofel*-הַתּוֹפֵל,” indicating bonding,¹²⁹⁶ in that there must be a bond and relationship with the One to whom he prays, being that “He is the Craftsman who made him,”¹²⁹⁷ and he also has merits etc.], which is why it is fitting for his request to be fulfilled.

Nevertheless, a person should not demand of the Holy One, blessed is He, and base his prayer on his own merit.¹²⁹⁸ For, as known, even what the Holy One, blessed is He, grants by way of reward, it not because He is obligated to do so. This

¹²⁹⁴ Exodus 33:19

¹²⁹⁵ In regard to the coming section see Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 24 p. 28 and on.

¹²⁹⁶ Torah Ohr, Terumah 79d; Sefer HaMaamarim 5709 p. 79 and see the note of the Rebbe there.

¹²⁹⁷ See Talmud Bavli, Taanit 20b

¹²⁹⁸ See Talmud Bavli, Brachot 10b

is as stated,¹²⁹⁹ “Yours, O’ Lord-*Adona*” אדניי-י is kindness.” That is, even when He repays a person according to His deeds, this is the **kindness** of the Holy One, blessed is He.¹³⁰⁰

[This is because the entire matter of arousal from below awakening arousal from Above, is only because so it arose in *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Supernal will, blessed is He.¹³⁰¹ Moreover, even after the arousal of His will, that (as a result of His will) our toil in serving Him affects an arousal Above, has been actualized in reality,¹³⁰² nonetheless, it only is because of His kindness, blessed is He.]

It thus is (both applicable and) necessary to pray to the Holy One, blessed is He, such that one’s prayer is of **the term** “imploing-*Tachanunim*-תחנונים,” as though we ask for a free gift (even though in truth, it is not a free gift, being that the one praying is fitting of this because of his toil in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, and because of his merits).

However, according to the Sifri, [the term] “I implored-*VaEtchanan*-ואתחנן” is not included as one of the ten terms by which prayer is called, ([in that prayer is] connected to one’s toil and merits etc.), but is rather a level in which one senses that he has no merits by which it would be fitting for the Holy One, blessed is He, to fulfill his request. This is why he only pleads that the Holy One, blessed is He, should grant his request with grace (*Chein*-חן) as a freely (*Chinam*-חנם) given gift.

¹²⁹⁹ Psalms 62:13,

¹³⁰⁰ See the citations to Ohr HaTorah, Shir HaShirim (Vol. 2) p. 749 and on, and elsewhere; Also see Shulchan Aruch of the Alter Rebbe, Orach Chayim 98:5

¹³⁰¹ Likkutei Torah, Shmini Atzeret 83b; Shir HaShirim 12a, and elsewhere. See at length in the discourse entitled “*Adon Olam*” 5703, Ch. 6.

¹³⁰² See Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 4, p. 1,133, note 13.

Now, we should add, that it is explained in Chassidic discourses¹³⁰³ that the ten terms of prayer are the ten *Sefirot* of Kingship-*Malchut*, that the plea for a freely given gift is the aspect of the Crown-*Keter* of Kingship-*Malchut*, and that from the perspective of this aspect, before Him all is as nothing.

Now, perhaps it can be said that the two above-mentioned manners of the “free gift” (*Matnat Chinam*-מתנת חנם) correspond to the two aspects of the Crown-*Keter*. That is, from the perspective of the externality (*Chitzoniyut*) of the Crown-*Keter* (the Long Patient One-*Arich*), in which importance and consideration is granted to the creatures and their service, the matter of the free gift only relates to the manner and language by which it is prayed for by the one who prays.¹³⁰⁴ In contrast, from the perspective of the inner aspect (*Pnimiyyut*) of the Crown-*Keter* (the Ancient One-*Atik*) before Whom all is literally considered as nothing, it only is possible to request a gift that truly is freely given.

2.

Now, it can be said that the matter of prayer in a way of a freely given gift, is the matter of the prayers of Shabbat. This is because Shabbat is a freely given gift, as our sages, of blessed

¹³⁰³ Ohr HaTorah, Va’etchanan p. 118

¹³⁰⁴ It is for this reason that it is included in the ten terms of prayer. For, the externality of the Crown-*Keter* is the close encompassing light (*Makif HaKarov*), and beyond this, it manifests within the ten *Sefirot*. To elucidate, **every** prayer is the matter of “may it be desirable [before You],” [meaning, the elicitation of a] novel desire – this being the Crown-*Keter*. It thus is automatically understood that its perfection is when it is in a way of [serving *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He] “with all your more” (*Bechol Me’odecha*).

memory, stated,¹³⁰⁵ “I have a good gift in My treasure house and Shabbat is its name.”

More specifically, even the prayers of the mundane days of the week are in the aspect of Shabbat, as known that this is the radiance of Shabbat as it is drawn into the mundane days of the week.¹³⁰⁶

Based on this, we can say that the two above-mentioned ways of explaining the word “I implored-*Va’etchanan*-וְאֶתְחַנֵּן” - that it is a prayer that only is said and prayed in the form of a plea, as **though** one is pleading for a free gift (as in the explanation of Midrash Rabba) or that the prayer is an actual plea for a free gift (as in the explanation of Sifri) - are the two matters, the prayers of the mundane days of the week and the prayers of Shabbat.¹³⁰⁷

To explain, when it comes to the prayer of the mundane days of the week, even though it is the aspect of Shabbat, nevertheless, it is the aspect of Shabbat as it is in the mundane days of the week. Therefore, the prayer is in a way of toil and labor, and there also is the matter of reciting the supplication of *Tachanun* in it etc.

In contrast, on the day of Shabbat prayer is not in a way of toil and labor etc., nor do we not recite “Forgive us” (*Selach Lanu*-סֶלַח לָנוּ) (since on Shabbat evening, all judgments are already removed from it etc.).¹³⁰⁸ Rather, the prayer is in the way of a gift, and this is true both of the prayers of Shabbat evening, and in an even loftier way on the day of Shabbat,

¹³⁰⁵ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 10b

¹³⁰⁶ See Torah Ohr, Vayakhel 88a; Likkutei Torah, Behar 41a

¹³⁰⁷ See *Hemshech* 5672 Vol. 2, p. 1,128 and on; Also see p. 1,092 and p. 1,096.

¹³⁰⁸ Zohar II 135b

especially on Shabbat afternoon [the time of] “the desire of all desires” (*Ra’ava d’Raavin*),¹³⁰⁹ at which time there is the primary matter of the gift of the day of Shabbat.¹³¹⁰

3.

Now, all this may be connected to the Alter Rebbe’s explanation in Likkutei Torah,¹³¹¹ in regard to the word “I implored-*Va’etchanan*-וַאֲתַחֲנֶן” which solely indicates [the request for] a freely (*Chinam*-חִנָּם) given gift. That is, by his entering the land (“Let me now come across and see the good land”)¹³¹² Moshe wanted to affect a level in the Jewish people that is impossible to reach through the toil of created beings in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, this being the aspect of arousal from Above that utterly transcends the arousal from below. In other words, “a free gift” (*Matnat Chinam*-מַתְּנַת חִנָּם), means “free of *mitzvot*,”¹³¹³ meaning, a level that utterly transcends the aspect of *mitzvot*.

Based on this, we can explain the reasoning of Sifri, that the term “I implored-*Va’etchanan*-וַאֲתַחֲנֶן” is not one of the ten terms of prayer (*Tefillah*-תְּפִלָּה). This is because prayer is the matter of toiling (*Avodah*) in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is

¹³⁰⁹ See Zohar II 88b; Zohar III 129a (Idra Rabba); 288b (Idra Zuta); Also see Siddur Im Da”ch 204c; *Hemshech* 5666 p. 545.

¹³¹⁰ See *Hemshech* 5672 *ibid.*; Ohr HaTorah, Vayakhel Vol. 7, p. 2,794; Behar p. 616(7); Sefer HaMaamarim 5630, p. 244; 5679 p. 411; 5700 p. 86.

¹³¹¹ Likkutei Torah, *Va’etchanan* (3a, 3c and on); Also see the discourse entitled “*Va’etchanan*” in Maamarei Admor HaZaken 5564, **and at length** in Ohr HaTorah to the verse.

¹³¹² Deuteronomy 3:25

¹³¹³ Similar to the term used by our sages, of blessed memory (Sifri and Rashi) to Numbers 11:5 – cited in Likkutei Torah 3c.

He, in a way of arousal from below.¹³¹⁴ Therefore, in order to affect that the Holy One, blessed is He, fulfills the request, “Let me now come across and see etc.,” so that he could affect revelation in the Jewish people in a way of arousal from Above, it was necessary for the request to be akin to this.¹³¹⁵ That is, [it was necessary for Moshe] to make his request (not in terms of prayer, which is related to [one’s] merits etc., but rather) as a completely freely given gift (*Matnat Chinam*-מתנת חנם) completely unconnected to merits etc.

However, the reasoning of Midrash Rabba is that the term “I implored-*Va’etchanan*-ואתחנן” is one of the ten terms of prayer too. This may be understood based on the explanation in Likkutei Torah,¹³¹⁶ that Moshe’s request (for arousal from Above that transcends arousal from below) is the matter of Torah. For, through Torah there is a drawing down of the aspect of,¹³¹⁷ “I am who I am-*Anochi Mi SheAnochi*-אנכי מי שאנכי,”

¹³¹⁴ This is as is also explained in Likkutei Torah here (2c, 4a), and at length in Ohr HaTorah (p. 51 **and on**).

¹³¹⁵ This may also be further elucidated by what is stated at the end of the discourse entitled “*Va’Etchanan*” 5673 (in *Hemshech* 5672), in regard to the reason that he (Moshe) said, “to show Your servant,” in a way of humility and lowliness. See there.

¹³¹⁶ Likkutei Torah *ibid.* 2d, and at length in Ohr HaTorah *ibid.*

¹³¹⁷ See Likkutei Torah, Pinchas 80b; Re’eh 31d; Zohar I 167b, Zohar III 11a – In explanation of the verse (Exodus 3:14), “I shall be as I shall be-*Eheye”h Asher Eheye*-אהייה אשר אהייה,” Zohar (III 11b) states, “The first name is *Eheye*-אהייה (which refers to *Keter*), which is concealed (and transcends grasp). This is like a person who says [to another] I am who I am (*Ana Man d’Ana*-אנא מאן דאנא), but [to the other] it is not yet known who He is. Subsequently [the verse states], “*Asher Eheye*” [referring to *Chochmah*, which is called *Rosh*-ראש-Head and shares the same letters as *Asher*-אשר, and *Binah* which is likewise called *Eheye*-אהייה-I will be.] That is, I am destined to become revealed within these other crowns. For at first, I was concealed [in the crown-*Keter*], but will subsequently be revealed, until there is a complete revelation of the Holy Name.” The Zohar then continues and explains, “When was it revealed? When the continuing verse (Exodus 3:16) states, “Go and gather the elders of Israel and say to them, ‘*HaShem*-הויה, the God of your

which utterly transcends arousal from below, and comes in a way of a gift (*Matanah*-מתנה).

However, based on this, it is not understood why Moshe's request has not been fulfilled [even] now. For, even now, there indeed is the presence of Torah by which there is a drawing down of arousal from Above without arousal from below.¹³¹⁸

Therefore, the Tzemach Tzeddek explains¹³¹⁹ that Moshe's request was that the drawing down affected through Torah study (which comes in the way of a gift and an arousal from Above, as mentioned before), should have an effect in the world below.¹³²⁰ This is the advantage and novelty of prayer (*Tefillah*) over and above Torah.¹³²¹ This is because the effect

forefathers etc.' It is this Name which is the perfection of everything, and it is here where there is the revelation and bond of the Holy Name etc.'

¹³¹⁸ In Likkutei Torah there (3d and on) it states: However, our sages, of blessed memory, stated [Talmud Bavli, Yevamot 109b], "Whosoever says, 'I only have Torah,' does not even have Torah." For, this drawing forth through the Torah must be brought about through praying first, from man's innerness and the depth of the heart etc., (through which he refines his body and animalistic soul etc.). Even though it is also the case that through Torah alone, without the preface of prayer, there also is caused to be a Supernal drawing forth from the aspect of the arousal from Above alone, nevertheless, and notwithstanding this, it is known that there are levels and gradations to no end in this drawing forth. Therefore, there is no comparison between engaging in Torah study before praying, and engaging in Torah study subsequent to praying. It is in this regard that Abba Binyamin said [Talmud Bavli, Brachot 5b] about his prayer that "it is adjacent to his bed etc." Rather, the primary request of Moshe was to affect a drawing down of the aspect of "sight-*Re'iyah*-ראייה" in the Torah study etc.

¹³¹⁹ Ohr HaTorah, Va'etchanan p. 54 and on.

¹³²⁰ Like the drawing forth of rains by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, which was through [his] Torah [study] (Zohar III 59b, elucidated in Maamarei Admor HaZaken, Et'halech Liozhna (p. 210 and on); Ohr HaTorah, Acharei (Vol. 1), p. 254 and on; Sefer HaMaamarim 5627 p. 267 and on, and elsewhere.) [Also see the discourse entitled "*Hinei Mah Tov*" 5722, translated in The Teachings of The Rebbe 5722, Vol. 2, Discourse 29.]

¹³²¹ See Tanya, Kuntres Acharon, beginning of the discourse entitled "*Lehavin Mah SheKatuv b'Pri Etz Chayim*" (155a).

of Torah is (primarily) above (in the world of Emanation-*Atzilut*) in the upper worlds (this being the matter of “the Holy One, blessed is He, sits and studies opposite him”).¹³²² In contrast, through prayer we elicit changes within the creatures as they are, that the sick are healed, and the rains come down etc. This is because prayer comes from below to Above, and therefore has an effect below, where the prayer stems from. However, Moshe wanted to cause that even the drawing down to below should be by way of arousal from Above (through Torah).

This is why Midrash Rabba reasons that Moshe’s request for a free gift (*Matnat Chinam*) was also a term of prayer, in that Moshe wanted to combine both elements of superiority. That is, even though the drawing down should come as a freely given gift (arousal from Above), nevertheless, it should be drawn all the way down below (the place of prayer). Thus his prayer had both elements of superiority to it, in that it was a term of prayer, but was in a way that it was a request for a freely given gift (*Matnat Chinam*).

4.

Even so, Moshe did not affect this through his prayer. This is because *HaShem*’s יהו"ה ultimate Supernal intent is for all matters to be brought about specifically through toil (*Avodah*). Therefore,¹³²³ because Moshe did not enter the land,

¹³²² See Tanna d’Bei Eliyahu Rabba, Ch. 18; Yalkut Shimoni, Eichah, Remez 1,034.

¹³²³ With respect to the coming section, see Ohr HaTorah, Va’etchanan p. 65 and on.

therefore the entrance into the land was through Yehoshua, who is the face of the moon,¹³²⁴ in which there are changes. It therefore follows automatically that the matter of exile was subsequently possible [which would not have been so had the entrance into the land been through Moshe, in which case, it would have been an eternal redemption (since it would not depend on the toil of those below)].

Nonetheless, it is specifically through this that the toil has a greater superiority [as in the verse],¹³²⁵ “He desires the work of your hands,” which causes the drawing down of an even loftier light,¹³²⁶ (even loftier than light that is drawn down as a freely given gift).

This will be revealed below with the true and complete redemption, through our righteous Moshiach, who also is connected with our teacher Moshe, being that, “the first redeemer is the last redeemer.”¹³²⁷ May he come and redeem us speedily, in our days, in the most literal sense, and in both ways stated about this, both in a way of “in its time,”¹³²⁸ through the fact that the Holy One, blessed is He, “set an end to darkness,”¹³²⁹ or in a way of “I will hasten it,”¹³³⁰ through “the Jewish people returning in repentance (*Teshuvah*) and immediately being redeemed.”¹³³¹

¹³²⁴ Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 75a

¹³²⁵ Job 14:15

¹³²⁶ See Ohr HaTorah ibid. p. 87, p. 109 and on.

¹³²⁷ See Midrash, Shemot Rabba 2:6; Zohar I 256a; Shaar HaPesukim, Parshat Vayechi; Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 11 p. 8 and on; Sefer HaSichot 5752 Vol. 1, p. 98 and on.

¹³²⁸ Isaiah 60:22; Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 98a

¹³²⁹ Job 28:3

¹³³⁰ Isaiah 60:22 ibid; Sanhedrin 98a ibid.

¹³³¹ See Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 7:5

Moreover, this should be in a way that there will be both matters with all the elements of superiority in each of them.¹³³² Moreover, all this is actualized on the day of Shabbat, which has the aspect that even transcends the freely given gift (*Matnat Chinam*).^{*} Through this, we can nullify all decrees etc., including the three oaths etc.,¹³³³ so that they not push off the end [of the exile].¹³³⁴ So shall it be for us, speedily in our times!

¹³³² See Shaarei Orah of the Mittler Rebbe 87a and on.

^{*} The following is a short-hand note from the Rebbe that was published at the end of this discourse:

The ten terms of prayer – [are] the ten *Sefirot* (most probably as they are in their root in the Long Patient One-*Arich Anpin*).

The “free gift” (*Matnat Chinam* מתנת חנם) – [is] the Crown-*Keter* [see before at the end of Ch. 1] (most probably the Holy Ancient One-*Atika Kadisha* which relates to (and is manifest in) the Long Patient One-*Arich Anpin*. [In regard to a gift] it “gives Him satisfaction” (see *Hemshech* 5672 *ibid.* [and p. 1,068 there]) which (at the least) is similar to the arousal from below. The oath manifests and by oath causes the ten powers of the soul “to fulfill – so that it is **they** who fulfill – the *mitzvah*.”)

Loftier than the above – [meaning] than giving a gift to another – is when one gives to one who is “**himself**” – (**similar**) (and to a greater degree) than the superiority of giving a gift to one who is worthy of being his inheritor) – [hinted by the verse (Psalms 47:5)] “**He will choose** for us” ([this being the aspect of] the Holy Ancient One-*Atika Kadisha* which transcends manifestation within the Long Patient One-*Arich Anpin*, [meaning], the three upper *Sefirot* of the Holy Ancient One-*Atika Kadisha*, and even higher than this etc.)

In the revealed parts of Torah we can say: [There is] **the nullification** of the oath (see Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 74a). [Likewise], repentance is effective even for sins related to an oath. [Additionally], it is commanded in the **revealed** parts of Torah “do not give up hope [on account of] retribution” (and see Rashi there to Avot 1:[7]) – this being **absent of limitations**.

It is possible that we can thus explain the difference in regard to Shabbat ([Talmud Bavli, Shabbat] 10b): “One who gives a gift to another [must inform him]... [I have] a **good gift** (*Matanah Tovah* מתנה טובה) and Shabbat is its name.” [That is,] there are two matters in Shabbat (1) a gift (*Matanah* מתנה), and (2) a good gift (*Matanah Tovah* מתנה טובה), ([further] explained in... [this word is not legible in the handwriting]).

¹³³³ This therefore does not contradict what was stated before (in the Sichot of this gathering (Torat Menachem, Vol 44 p. 183, note 22)) that the “free gift” (*Matnat Chinam*) is not effective in nullifying an oath, since what we are discussing here is an aspect that transcends even a “free gift” (*Matnat Chinam*).

¹³³⁴ See Talmud Bavli, Ketubot 111a