

Discourse 30

*“B’Sha’ah SheHekdeemoo... -
At the time that they gave precedence...”*

Delivered on 1st night of Shavuot (toward morning), 5726

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

1.

It states in Talmud,¹⁸⁵¹ “At the time that Israel accorded precedence to ‘We will do’ over ‘We will listen,’¹⁸⁵² six-hundred thousand ministering angels came and tied two crowns on each member of the Jewish people, one corresponding to ‘We will do’ and one corresponding to ‘We will listen.’” It also states [there], “At the time that Israel accorded precedence to ‘We will **do**’ over ‘We will **listen**,’ a Divine Proclamation came out and said to them, ‘Who revealed this secret to My children that the ministering angels use? As written,¹⁸⁵³ ‘Bless *HaShem*-יהוה O’ His angels; the strong warriors who **do** His word, to **listen** to the voice of His word.’”

Now, even according to the simple explanation, that “We will do” (*Na’aseh*-נעשה) refers to the matter of accepting the yoke [of His Kingship] (whereas “We will listen” (*Nishma*-נשמע) refers to the matter of understanding and comprehension), we must understand what the novelty is, in this that the Jewish people accorded precedence to “We will do” over “We will listen,” such that a Divine Proclamation came out and said, “Who revealed this secret to My children?”

¹⁸⁵¹ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 88a

¹⁸⁵² Exodus 24:7

¹⁸⁵³ Psalms 103:20

What secret is there here? Is it not readily understood that fulfilling Torah and *mitzvot* must specifically stem from accepting the yoke of *HaShem* 's-יהו"ה Kingship, as the decree of the King, and not out of our own human intellect and understanding? That is, Torah and *mitzvot* are the intellect and the command of the Creator Himself, blessed is He, and because of the distance between the created relative to the Creator, it does not apply for the created to grasp matters of the Creator, altogether. Rather, it utterly is inapplicable for the created to have any understanding or comprehension [in this] etc.

Now, this in itself is the matter of the secret (meaning that which is wondrously beyond and mysterious) which is only out of *HaShem* 's-יהו"ה kindness toward us, in that He revealed a little of the reasons of the verses to us, and a little of the reasons of the *mitzvot* to us. However, without this, it would be utterly inapplicable for us to have any understanding or comprehension whatsoever etc. The above being so, it is readily understood that the Torah cannot be received except by way of accepting the yoke (*Kabbalat Ol*) [of His Kingship] and [moreover] this is not a secret.

Furthermore, even according to the simple meaning, that “We will listen” (*Nishma*-נשמע) refers to understanding and comprehension, we still must understand why every Jew was also given a crown corresponding to “We will listen.” For, it makes sense that a crown was given corresponding to “We will do,” being that “We will do” (*Na'aseh*-נעשה) is the matter of accepting the yoke (*Kabbalat Ol*) of His Kingship, which transcends intellect. Thus, corresponding to this, they were given a crown, the crown being that which is above the head and surrounds and encompasses it [from above].

However, how does it apply that they were given a crown (above the head) corresponding to “We will listen” (*Nishma*-נשמע), which is the matter of understanding and comprehending

(this being something that applies in the head [itself], which is the aspect of intellect (*Mochin*))?

It therefore must be said that “We will listen” (*Nishma-נשמע*) is also a matter of accepting His yoke (*Kabbalat Ol*) and transcends intellect, and this why they were (also) given a crown corresponding to “We will listen,” except that accepting the yoke of “We will do” (*Na’aseh-נעשה*) is higher and deeper, and is the aspect of a “secret.”

This may be understood from the continuation of the teaching of our sages, that “this is a secret that the ministering angels use, as in the verse, ‘Bless *HaShem*-יהו"ה O’ His angels; the strong warriors who **do** His word, to **listen** to the voice of His word.” From this it is understood that the matter of the Jewish people giving precedence to “We will do” over “We will listen” is comparable to what the verse states about the angels, “The strong warriors who **do** (*Osei-עושי*) His word, to **listen** (*Lishmo’a-לשמע*) to the voice of His word.”

Now, based on the explanation in Zohar¹⁸⁵⁴ on the words, “Who do His word (*Osei Dvaro-עושי דברו*) to listen to the voice of His word (*Lishmo’a b’Kol Dvaro-לשמע בקול דברו*),” it states, “who do His word (*Osei Dvaro-עושי דברו*) – It certainly is so, in that they affect the repair of the word, (that [“do His word” means that] they make the word), and from here on, since it already is made and repaired, they come to hear what [His voice] says.”

From this it is understood that the same applies to the Jewish people giving precedence to “We will do” over “We will listen.” That is, the meaning of “We will do” (*Na’aseh-נעשה*) is (not merely the acceptance of the yoke, to do and fulfill Torah and *mitzvot*, but also) that the Jewish people “make His word (*Osei Dvaro-עושי דברו*),” meaning that they actualize and bring about the revelation of His word, blessed is He, at the giving of the Torah,

¹⁸⁵⁴ Zohar III 191a

in the Ten Commandments, which are inclusive of all 613 commandments and the entirety of Torah.¹⁸⁵⁵

After the matter of “We will do” (*Na’aseh*-נעשה) – “who make His word” (*Osei Dvaro*-עושי דברו) – we then come to the matter of “to listen to the voice of His word (*Lishmo’a b’Kol Dvaro*-לשמע בקול דברו),” which is the matter of “We will listen” (*Nishma*-נשמע).

However, we must better understand how it truly is that the Jewish people can “make His word (*Osei Dvaro*-עושי דברו),” meaning, that they actualize and bring about the general matter of the revelation of the Torah at the giving of the Torah.

2.

Now, to understand this, we first must preface¹⁸⁵⁶ with [an explanation of] the general matter of the giving of the Torah with the Ten Commandments, whereupon *HaShem*-ה' descended upon Mount Sinai with great commotion, thunder and lightning etc.¹⁸⁵⁷ Now, at first glance, most of the Ten Commandments are simple matters that are even necessitated by human intellect. This being so, why the great commotion, with thunder and lightning etc?

We also must understand what the novelty of the giving of the Torah is in general. For as known, even before the Torah was given our forefathers fulfilled the entire Torah. This is as our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹⁸⁵⁸ “Our forefather Avraham fulfilled the entire Torah before it was given,” because¹⁸⁵⁹ he studied the entire Torah, and he certainly taught it to his son

¹⁸⁵⁵ See Rashi to Exodus 24:12 and elsewhere.

¹⁸⁵⁶ In regard to the coming section, see the discourse entitled “*b’Sha’ah SheHeekdeemoo*” in *Ohr HaTorah*, Bamidbar (Shavuot) p. 156 and on.

¹⁸⁵⁷ Exodus 19:16-20

¹⁸⁵⁸ Talmud Bavli, Yoma 28b; Kiddushin 82a in the Mishnah.

¹⁸⁵⁹ See Torah Ohr, Yitro 67d

Yitzchak, and Yitzchak taught Yaakov and his sons, (as in the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory,¹⁸⁶⁰ “Avraham, our forefather, was an Elder who sat in Yeshivah (the study hall)... Likewise Yitzchak... and likewise Yaakov”). Thus, he [certainly] also bequeathed the fulfillment of the whole of Torah to them. This being so, what is novel about the giving of the Torah?

3.

Now, this is as explained elsewhere at length,¹⁸⁶¹ that at the giving of the Torah, empowerment was granted to be able to draw down holiness and have an effect on the physical things with which the *mitzvot* are done. In contrast, this was not so before the Torah was given. That is, even though our forefathers also fulfilled the *mitzvot* with physical things, such as the mode of the service of Avraham in welcoming guests, which he did physically and in the most literal sense, (as related in the Written Torah,¹⁸⁶² and at greater length in the Oral Torah),¹⁸⁶³ and likewise Yitzchak’s mode of service was through the digging of the wells,¹⁸⁶⁴ and Yaakov’s mode of service was with the sticks,¹⁸⁶⁵ all of which was done physically and in the most literal sense, nonetheless, through their toil with the physical things, they only caused spiritual drawings forth, but no change was brought about in the physical things themselves etc.

This then, is the novelty brought about at the giving of the Torah, that through fulfilling the *mitzvot* we draw down holiness into the physical thing with which the *mitzvah* is performed. This

¹⁸⁶⁰ See Talmud Bavli Yoma 28b *ibid*.

¹⁸⁶¹ See Sefer HaMaamarim 5678 p. 170 and on, and elsewhere.

¹⁸⁶² Genesis 18:2 and on

¹⁸⁶³ Talmud Bavli, Bava Metziya 86b and elsewhere.

¹⁸⁶⁴ Genesis 26:18 and on

¹⁸⁶⁵ Genesis 30:37 and on; Zohar I 162a (Sitrei Torah); See Maamarei Admor HaZkaen 5562 Vol. 1, p. 12; Torat Chayim, Bereishit 45d and elsewhere.

likewise is so of Torah, which itself is written with [physical] ink on [physical] parchment, that the ultimate purpose of Torah is to be grasped and understood in the physical brain of the one who studies it.

About this our sages, of blessed memory, stated¹⁸⁶⁶ that at first, “there was a decree that the upper ones must not descend to the lower ones, and the lower ones must not ascend to the upper ones, but at the giving of the Torah the decree was nullified.” This is because the novelty of the giving of the Torah is that there should be the drawing down of holiness into physical things [themselves], this being the matter of “the lower ascending to the upper,” through “the upper descending to the lower.”

This also is why the Torah was specifically given below. This is as our teacher Moshe responded to the angels who argued [against giving the Torah to man, and said, ¹⁸⁶⁷ “Set Your majesty over the heavens.” Moshe answered them, ¹⁸⁶⁸ “Did you descend to Egypt? Is there an evil inclination amongst you?” Thus, the Torah “is not in the heavens,”¹⁸⁶⁹ but the contrary is true, that “the companions listen to your voice etc.,”¹⁸⁷⁰ in that the upper ones listen to the novel Torah insights of the lower ones. This is as our sages, of blessed memory, stated, ¹⁸⁷¹ “The Holy One, blessed is He, says to the ministering angels, ‘I and you shall go and listen to the legal ruling of the lower court.’” That is, the Torah study above is specifically drawn from the Torah study below.

With the above in mind, we can also understand why there was such great commotion at the giving of the Torah, with thunder and lightning etc. This is because of the great novelty of the giving

¹⁸⁶⁶ Midrash Tanchuma Va’era 15; Shemot Rabba 12:3

¹⁸⁶⁷ Psalms 8:2

¹⁸⁶⁸ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 88b and on.

¹⁸⁶⁹ Deuteronomy 30:12; See Talmud Bavli, Bava Metziya 59b

¹⁸⁷⁰ Song of Songs 8:13

¹⁸⁷¹ Midrash Shemot Rabba 15:2; Devarim Rabba 2:14

of the Torah, that the upper are drawn down below and the lower ascend above.

Now, this must be better understood. For, at first glance, how could it actually be that the upper descend to the lower and the lower ascend to the upper? However, the explanation is that the verse states,¹⁸⁷² “*HaShem*-יהו"ה is a God of knowledges (*De'ot*-דעות),” [in which the word “knowledges-*De'ot*-דעות” is in the plural],¹⁸⁷³ in that there are two opposite knowledges (*De'ot*-דעות).¹⁸⁷⁴ That is, there is the lower knowledge (*Da'at Tachton*), from [the perspective of] below to Above, in that to us it appears that below is “something” (*Yesh*) and Above is “nothing” (*Ayin*), about which we say that the creation is “from nothing to something” (*MeAyin L'Yesh*). And there is the upper knowledge (*Da'at Elyon*), from [the perspective of] Above to below, which is the very opposite view, that Above is something (*Yesh*) and below is literally like nothing.

This then, is the general difference between the upper beings (who have the upper knowledge – *Da'at Elyon*) and the lower beings (who have the lower knowledge – *Da'at Tachton*), in a way that there is a decree that the upper will not descend to the lower and the lower will not ascend to the upper.

However, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, includes both knowledges (*De'ot*-דעות). That is, He transcends both, and there thus can be a bond and union between the upper knowledge (*Da'at Elyon*) and the lower knowledge (*Da'at Tachton*). In other words, being that He transcends both the upper and the lower He can nullify the decree and bring about that the upper descend to the lower and the lower ascend to the upper. Through this there thus can be the bond between the two, in a way that the Highest, beyond

¹⁸⁷² Samuel I 2:3

¹⁸⁷³ See Tikkunei Zohar, beginning of Tikkun 69.

¹⁸⁷⁴ See Torah Ohr, Yitro 68a; Likkutei Torah, Re'eh 23d; Shmini Atzeret 83a; Shir HaShirim 47b, and elsewhere.

which there is no higher, descends to the lowest, beyond which there is no lower, and through this, even the lowest, of which there is no lower, ascends to the Highest of which there is no higher.

This is as hinted in the Ten Commandments themselves, which begin with the word “I-*Anochi*-אֲנִי,”¹⁸⁷⁵ “I - meaning who I am-*Anochi*; *Mee SheAnochi*-מִי שְׁאֲנִי,” who is not hinted in any letter or thorn [of a letter] whatsoever.¹⁸⁷⁶ This revelation is then drawn down into the most simple things that are discussed in the continuation of the Ten Commandments.

4.

Now, to awaken the drawing down and revelation of the above-mentioned loftiest aspect, the service of *HaShem*-יהוה of the Jewish people must have a similarity and likeness to this, in that they give precedence to “We will do” over “We will listen.”

This may be understood¹⁸⁷⁷ by prefacing with the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory, in the Mishnah. They stated,¹⁸⁷⁸ “Why did the portion of ‘*Shema*’ precede that of ‘*VeHayah Im Shamo’ah*’? So that one will first accept upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, and only then accept upon himself the yoke of the *mitzvot*,” (and the yoke of Torah study is also included in this, in that the portion of “*VeHayah Im Shamo’ah*” also discusses the matter of Torah study). This is like the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory, in Mechilta,¹⁸⁷⁹ “When the Jewish people asked the Holy One, blessed is He, to decree decrees upon

¹⁸⁷⁵ See Likkutei Torah, Pinchas 80b; Re’eh 31d; Zohar I 167b, Zohar III 11a-b, in explanation of the verse (Exodus 3:14), “I shall be as I shall be-*Eheye”h Asher Eheye”h*-אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה.”

¹⁸⁷⁶ See Likkutei Torah, Pinchas 80b; Re’eh 31d ibid.

¹⁸⁷⁷ Also see the beginning of the discourse entitled “*b’Sha’ah SheHeekdeemoo*” in Ohr HaTorah ibid. p. 138.

¹⁸⁷⁸ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 13a (in the Mishnah)

¹⁸⁷⁹ Mechilta Yitro 20:3

them, He said to them, ‘First accept My Kingship and then I will decree decrees upon you.’”

The explanation is that the yoke of the *mitzvot* (which follows accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven) is also by way of accepting the yoke (*Kabbalat Ol*). This is as emphasized by the teaching in Mechilta, “I will decree decrees upon you,” specifying “decrees-*Gzeirot*-גזירות.” This is similar to,¹⁸⁸⁰ “I have decreed a decree, and I have issued an edict, and you have no right to question it.”¹⁸⁸¹

However, the difference between the yoke of the *mitzvot* and the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven is that the acceptance of the yoke of the *mitzvot* is the matter of nullification of self (*Bittul*) to *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Supernal desire (*Ratzon HaElyon*), whereas accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven is the matter of nullification of self (*Bittul*) to the One who desires it (*Baal HaRatzon*). This matter is the acceptance of the yoke (*Kabbalat Ol*) in general, in that there first must be acceptance of the yoke (of the Kingdom of Heaven) before there can be acceptance of the yoke (of the *mitzvot*), which are the particulars.

This also is the matter of their giving precedence to “We will do” over “We will listen.” This is as explained in Likkutei Torah, in the discourse entitled “*Tze’ena u’Re’ena*,”¹⁸⁸² that the self-nullification (*Bittul*) of “We will listen” (*Nishma*) is the self-nullification (*Bittul*) to *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Supernal desire (*Ratzon*), whereas the self-nullification (*Bittul*) of “We will do” (*Na’aseh*) is the self-nullification (*Bittul*) to the One who desires (*Baal HaRatzon*), the source of all desires called, “The Desire of all desires” (*Ra’ava d’Kol Ra’avin*), from which there is a drawing

¹⁸⁸⁰ Midrash Tanchuma, Chukat 3, Chukat 8; Bamidbar Rabba 19:1 and elsewhere.

¹⁸⁸¹ See Talmud Bavli, Yoma 67b; Rashi to Numbers 19:2

¹⁸⁸² Likkutei Torah, Shir HaShirim 22a

down of the particular desires in all 248-רמ"ה positive *mitzvot* and 365-שס"ה prohibitive *mitzvot*.

In other words, the meaning of “We will listen” (*Nishma-נשמע*) is that one accepts upon himself to keep and do each particular *mitzvah* of the 613-תר"ג *mitzvot*, through which he bonds to *HaShem* 's-ה"ה particular desire in that *mitzvah*, which is a particular drawing down from the Desire of all desires (*Ra'ava d'Kol Ra'avin*) mentioned above.

However, the matter of giving precedence to “We will do” (*Na'aseh-נעשה*) over “We will listen” (*Nishma-נשמע*) is that they said,¹⁸⁸³ “Everything that *HaShem*-יהו"ה has said we will do.” That is, we are prepared to do whatever He wants. This is a bond with [the One who desires (*Baal HaRatzon*), the source of all desires called] the Desire of all desires (*Ra'ava d'Kol Ra'avin*), the source that transcends the revelation of the desire (*Ratzon*), from where there can be a drawing down of many aspects of desire etc.

About this it states, “Who revealed this secret etc.” For, in order to say, “Everything that *HaShem*-יהו"ה has said we will do,” there must be the arousal of the aspect of the desire (*Ratzon*) of the soul, which transcends the intellect and comprehension, this being the aspect of the singular-*Yechidah* [essence] of the soul. This is hidden and concealed in the intellect and emotions of the animalistic soul, so that it is drawn after them into worldly lusts with which he engages his intellect and emotions, in which case there is no revelation of the above-mentioned desire, for which reason it is called a secret (*Raz-רז*), since it is covered and hidden.

It thus is necessary to bring it out from concealment into revelation, to detest the lusts of this world and to choose *HaShem*-יהו"ה for himself as his portion and lot etc., meaning, the aspect of true freedom, literally etc. Through doing so, he likewise rouses the revelation of the secret (*Raz-רז*) Above, this being the

¹⁸⁸³ Exodus 24:7

revelation of [the One who desires (*Baal HaRatzon*), the source of all desires, called] the Desire of all desires (*Ra'ava d'Kol Ra'avin*), which is what was revealed at the giving of the Torah.

It is specifically through the above-mentioned aspect of the Desire of all desires (*Ra'ava d'Kol Ra'avin*) that transcends the aspect of the chaining down of the worlds (*Hishtalshelut*), that it was possible for there to be the novelty of the giving of the Torah, this being the drawing forth of *HaShem*'s יהו"ה Godliness to below, such that "the upper descend to the lower," through which "the lower ascend to the upper."

5.

Based on this, it is understood that the matter of the Jewish people giving precedence to "We will do" (*Na'aseh*-נעשה) over "We will listen" (*Nishma*-נשמע) is similar to the matter of "Who make His word (*Osei Dvaro*-עושי דברו), to listen to the voice of His word (*Lishmo'a b'Kol Dvaro*-לשמוע בקול דברו)," stated about the angels.

The explanation is that "the word of *HaShem-Dvar HaShem*-יהו"ה דבר," ("His word-*Dvaro*-דברו") refers to the aspect of Kingship-*Malchut*, from which there is the drawing down of vitality to the worlds etc. In other words, it is by the very fact that He is King over them that they live and are sustained.

However, we must understand from where the arousal of the existence of this quality comes from. For, it makes sense with a king of flesh and blood, since there is an existence of a people separate from the king. (For, even though "there is no king without a nation,"¹⁸⁸⁴ nevertheless, the people exist even without the king.) [Thus, it makes sense that] the quality of kingship is roused in him to rule over them and to say, "I will rule etc." (That

¹⁸⁸⁴ Rabbeinu Bachaye to Genesis 38:30; Numbers 22:2; Tanya, Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah translated as The Gate of Unity and Faith, Ch. 7.

is, this comes about through the people awakening the desire to reign within him, since in and of himself¹⁸⁸⁵ “from his shoulders up he is higher than all the people.” It thus is necessary to effect [the desire] in him to lower himself and be king over them.)

However, this is not so of *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Godliness Above. That is, before the existence of the quality of rulership, there was no existence of the people at all,¹⁸⁸⁶ in that it only is through His kingship and reign that they are brought into being from nothing to something. This being so, over who could there be the spreading forth of the quality of rulership, since in reality there is no nation except [if it is brought about] by His rulership?

The explanation is that it is through the roar of the angels, (as stated in the above-mentioned passage from Zohar,¹⁸⁸⁷ “They roar like mighty lions etc.”), this being the aspect of the rebounding light (*Ohr Chozer*), and they thereby rouse the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, Above, to have the desire for the quality of Kingship. This is the meaning of “Who make His word-*Osei Dvaro*-עושי דברו,” meaning that, “they affect the repair of His word-*Davar*-דבר,” in that they bring about the construct of His Kingship-*Malchut*, which is called “The word of *HaShem-Dvar HaShem*-דבר יהו"ה.”

Now, after the construction of the quality of Kingship-*Malchut* through “the roar of the angels,” they then receive bestowal from His Kingship, this being the matter of [the continuation], “to listen to the voice of His word (*Lishmo’a b’Kol Dvaro*-לשמוע בקול דברו-).” (That is, first “they make His word,” and then “they listen to the voice of His word.”)

¹⁸⁸⁵ Samuel I 9:2, explained in *Ohr HaTorah*, Vayera Vol. 4, p. 764b; *Shir HaShirim*, Vol. 2, p. 414 and on.

¹⁸⁸⁶ Also see Ginat Egoz of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as *HaShem Is One*, Vol. 3 (The Letters of Creation, Part 2), The Gate explaining that *HaShem*, blessed is He, is the place-*Makom*-מקום of all beings.

¹⁸⁸⁷ Zohar III 191a *ibid*.

The same is so of the Jewish people, that through giving precedence to “We will do” (*Na’aseh*-נעשה) over “We will listen” (*Nishma*-נשמע), they roused and drew down the Desire of all desires (*Ra’ava d’Kol Ra’avin*), from which there subsequently is the drawing down of the revelation of the particular desires in all the 248-רמ"ח positive *mitzvot* and 365-שס"ה prohibitive *mitzvot*.

We thus find that they first brought about the actualization of the particular desires for the 248-רמ"ח positive *mitzvot* and 365-שס"ה prohibitive *mitzvot* by drawing down from their source, this being the One who desires (Baal HaRatzon), the source of all desires, called the Desire of all desires (*Ra’ava d’Kol Ra’avin*), so that He, blessed is He, should have desire in them, this being similar to those “who make His word” (*Osei Dvaro*-עושי דברו).

Now, after the Jewish people gave precedence to “We will do” (*Na’aseh*-נעשה), they then brought about the drawing down of *HaShem’s*-יהו"ה particular desires in the 248-רמ"ח positive *mitzvot* and 365-שס"ה prohibitive *mitzvot*, and there then was also the matter of “We will listen” (*Nishma*-נשמע), in that they heard and accepted His particular desires, (similar to “listening to the voice of His word (*Lishmo’a b’Kol Dvaro*-לשמוע בקול דברו),” which follows “making His word (*Osei Dvaro*-עושי דברו).”

Now, just as the matter of “making His word,” as it is in the angels, was brought about through their “roar” in the aspect of the rebounding light (*Ohr Chozer*) etc., the same is so of the Jewish people. That is, that which roused and brought about the revelation of the Desire of all desires (*Ra’ava d’Kol Ra’avin*) Above, was the constraint and oppression of their exile and servitude in Egypt that preceded it, (as known about the iron crucible of Egypt, that it brought the refinement of the Jewish people about, thus making them fitting to receive the Torah.)¹⁸⁸⁸ For, it was through this that they came to have a cry in the aspect

¹⁸⁸⁸ See Torah Ohr, Yitro p. 74a and on.

of the rebounding light (*Ohr Chozer*), as the verse states,¹⁸⁸⁹ “The children of Israel groaned... and they cried out, and their outcry went up to God.” In other words, they were in a state of total constraint, without any spreading forth whatsoever, except for the essential point of life etc.¹⁸⁹⁰

This caused the matter of constraint (*Meizar*-מִיָּצָר) Above in *HaShem*’s-יְהוָה Godliness, such that He set everything aside and constrained and lowered Himself to descend, so to speak, to manifest in the particular desires of the *mitzvot*, as well as in the Wisdom-*Chochmah* of the Torah, even though, in and of Himself, He transcends the aspect of desire (*Ratzon*), as well as the aspect of Wisdom-*Chochmah*. (This is as explained in Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah,¹⁸⁹¹ on the verse,¹⁸⁹² “You made them all with Wisdom-*Chochmah*,” that in comparison to Himself, blessed is He, the level of Wisdom-*Chochmah* is like the level of action (*Asiyah*).)

6.

Now, the greatness of the aspect of the Desire of all desires (*Ra’ava d’Kol Ra’avin*), which the Jewish people drew down through giving precedence to “We will do” over “We will listen,” is that this is the source of all His particular desires in the 248-רמ"ח positive *mitzvot* and 365-שס"ה prohibitive *mitzvot*. This is like the greatness of Torah over and above the *mitzvot*.

The explanation is that, as known, the Torah is called “man-*Adam*-אָדָם,” as the verse states,¹⁸⁹³ “This is the Torah – man

¹⁸⁸⁹ Exodus 2:23

¹⁸⁹⁰ See Zohar III 191a *ibid*.

¹⁸⁹¹ Tanya, Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah, translated as The Gate of Unity and Faith, Ch. 9.

¹⁸⁹² Psalms 104:24

¹⁸⁹³ Numbers 19:14; See Zohar II 117b; Zohar III 29b (*Ra’aya Mehemna*), and elsewhere.

(*Adam*-אדם).” That is, it is in the aspect of the form of man, having 248-רמ"ה limbs and 365-שס"ה sinews, these being the *mitzvot* of the Torah. For, as known, the 248-רמ"ה positive *mitzvot* and 365-שס"ה prohibitive *mitzvot* correspond to the 248-רמ"ה limbs and 365-שס"ה sinews.¹⁸⁹⁴ However, the primary reason for the name “man-*Adam*-אדם” is because of the “blood-*Dam*-דם” that is in the limbs, being that the word “man-*Adam*-אדם,” is “*Aleph*-א blood-*Dam*-דם.”¹⁸⁹⁵

Now, what we observe in the matter of blood (*Dam*-דם) is that even though it manifests within all 248 limbs [of the body] that differ from each other, nonetheless, the essential being of the blood in all the limbs is equal, in that there is no difference between the blood in the head and the blood in the foot, and it flow equally in all the limbs. This is as known about the spreading out and flow of the vitality that manifests in “the blood, [which] is the soul (*Nefesh*),”¹⁸⁹⁶ which comes out of the heart and circulates through all the limbs and then returns to the heart etc.,¹⁸⁹⁷ (as explained in medical books).

As this matter relates to the analogue, which is the Torah, this is the radiance and drawing forth of the aspect of the Desire of all desires (*Ra'ava d’Ra’avin*), which transcends the divisions into particular desires in the 248-רמ"ה positive *mitzvot* and 365-שס"ה prohibitive *mitzvot*, which correspond to the 248-רמ"ה limbs and 365-שס"ה sinews.

This is also why Torah transcends the divisions of time and space. This is as our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹⁸⁹⁸

¹⁸⁹⁴ See Zohar I 170b

¹⁸⁹⁵ Shnei Luchot HaBrit 21a

¹⁸⁹⁶ Deuteronomy 12:23

¹⁸⁹⁷ Also see Tanya, Iggeret HaKodesh, Epistle 31

¹⁸⁹⁸ Shulchan Aruch of the Alter Rebbe, Orach Chayim, Mahadura Tinyana end of Siman 1; Mahadura Kamma 1:11; Hilchot Talmud Torah 2:11; Similarly, see Baal HaTurim to the beginning of the Torah portion of Tzav; Rabbeinu Bachaye to the end of the Torah portion of Vayakhel, and Tzav (Leviticus) 7:37; Also see Talmud Bavli, Menachot 110a

“Whosoever engages in the study of the Torah of the burnt offering (*Olah*), it is as though he has offered a burnt offering (*Olah*),” even though he studies this at night, outside [the Holy Temple], and is not a Priest (*Kohen*), in a way that it is impossible to [actually] fulfill the *mitzvah* of sacrificing a burnt offering (*Olah*). However, even so, through his study of Torah it is as though he brought a burnt offering (*Olah*). This is because the Torah is the aspect of the desire of the heart (*Re’uta d’Leeba*) which transcends division etc.

To further explain, there also is something similar to this in the *mitzvot*, [specifically] in the *mitzvah* of repentance (*Teshuvah*), by which it is possible to repair and satisfy all deficiencies and blemishes in fulfilling the *mitzvot*. This is because it reaches the desire of the heart (*Re’uta d’Leeba*), the source for the drawing down of all the particular desires in the particular *mitzvot*.¹⁸⁹⁹

However, the fact that repentance (*Teshuvah*) is the aspect of the desire of the heart (*Re’uta d’Leeba*) which transcends division, is only so in comparison to the divisions of the rest of the *mitzvot*. However, within the matter of repentance (*Teshuvah*) [itself], there also is a matter of divisions and changes etc.¹⁹⁰⁰ This is as explained in Tanya,¹⁹⁰¹ that repentance (*Teshuvah*) is primarily in the heart, and that in the heart there are many aspects and levels, all of which depends on what kind of a person he is, and on the time and place etc. Therefore, even though a person has already properly repented, it nonetheless is possible that today his repentance has not been accepted etc.

In contrast, the true revelation of the aspect of the desire of the heart (*Re’uta d’Leeba*), which completely transcends

¹⁸⁹⁹ See Likkutei Torah, Drushim L’Shabbat Shuvah 65b and on; Derech Mitzvotecha 39b.

¹⁹⁰⁰ Also see Likkutei Torah, Shir HaShirim 23d.

¹⁹⁰¹ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 29

division, is specifically in the matter of Torah (and it only is because of the inter-inclusion of Torah and *mitzvot* that there also is a likeness to this in the *mitzvot*, in the *mitzvah* of repentance (*Teshuvah*)).

7.

The explanation is that¹⁹⁰² even though the Torah is the aspect of “man-*Adam*-אדם,” since “the Torah came forth from Wisdom-*Chochmah*,”¹⁹⁰³ this is only as it was drawn and came out (“came forth”) from concealment into revelation. However, about the root and source from where it was taken, the verse states,¹⁹⁰⁴ “And from Midbar they went to Mattanah.”¹⁹⁰⁵ This is because the aspect of “the desert-*Midbar*-מדבר” is higher than the aspect of “man-*Adam*-אדם.” For, about the desert (*Midbar*-מדבר) it is written,¹⁹⁰⁶ “a land in which no man passed, and no man settled.” Within man himself, this is the aspect of his forehead

¹⁹⁰² Also see Likkutei Torah *ibid.* 22a, 23b and on.

¹⁹⁰³ Zohar II 62a; 85a; 121a

¹⁹⁰⁴ Numbers 21:19; Talmud Bavli, Eruvin 54a

¹⁹⁰⁵ Talmud Bavli, Eruvin 54a *ibid.* – “What is the meaning of that which is written, ‘And from the desert (*Midbar*-מדבר) they went to Mattanah’? If a person makes himself humble like the desert (*Midbar*-מדבר) upon which everyone treads, his [Torah] study will endure... What is the meaning of that which is written, ‘And from the desert (*Midbar*-מדבר) they went to Mattanah (מתנה); and from Mattanah (מתנה) to Nachliel (נחליאל) and from Nachliel to Bamot (במות), and from Bamot (במות) to the valley’? If a person makes himself humble like the desert (*Midbar*-מדבר), the Torah will be given to him as a gift (*Mattanah*-מתנה), and once it is given to him as a gift (*Mattanah*-מתנה), his inheritance is the Almighty (*Nechalo E”l*-נחלו א”ל), as it is stated, ‘from Mattanah (מתנה) to Nachliel (נחליאל).’ Once his inheritance is the Almighty (*Nechalo E”l*-נחלו א”ל), he rises to greatness (*Gedulah*-גדולה), as it is stated, from Nachliel (נחליאל) to Bamot (במות) [meaning, ‘heights’]. If he becomes haughty, the Holy One, blessed is He, lowers him, as it is stated, ‘from Bamot (במות) [meaning ‘heights’] to the valley (*HaGai*-הגיא).’ If he repents, the Holy One, blessed is He, raises him [back] up, as it is stated (Isaiah 40:4), ‘Every valley (*Gei*-גיא) shall be elevated.’”

¹⁹⁰⁶ Jeremiah 2:6

(*Metzach*),¹⁹⁰⁷ which always is on one level and changes are not recognizable in it, as it is with the [rest of the] face etc.

This is because the forehead (*Metzach*) is the receptacle for the aspect of desire (*Ratzon*),¹⁹⁰⁸ which transcends Wisdom-*Chochmah*, this being the aspect of the Desire of all desires (*Ra'ava d'Kol Ra'avin*) which is above division. About this aspect the verse states,¹⁹⁰⁹ “He is not a man (*Lo Adam*-לֹא אָדָם) that He should relent,” meaning that it is not applicable for any changes to be there, as it is in the aspect of man (*Adam*-אָדָם).

As this matter is in the soul of man, this refers to the aspect of the singular-*Yechidah* [essence] of the soul, which is called singular-*Yechidah* [in the feminine] because it receives from the aspect of the Singular One-*Yachid* [in the masculine],¹⁹¹⁰ the aspect of “You are He who is One but not in enumeration.”¹⁹¹¹ That is, there is no division or multiplicity in the *Yechidah*, and it follows automatically that there also are no changes in it etc. This is because multiplicity and change are one and the same matter.

This then, is the matter of the Torah, in that its root and source is in the aspect of the desert (*Midbar*-מִדְבָּר) “in which no man settled.” It only is because the entire matter of the Torah is to specifically be drawn down below that the Torah is therefore drawn into the aspect of man (*Adam*-אָדָם), this being the meaning of, “The Torah came forth from Wisdom-*Chochmah*.” However, its primary source and root is in the aspect of “no man settled there,” this being the aspect of the desire (*Ratzon*) which transcends Wisdom-*Chochmah* and is the aspect of the Crown-*Keter*.

¹⁹⁰⁷ Also see the beginning of Ohr HaTorah, Bamidbar.

¹⁹⁰⁸ See Zohar III 129a, 136b (Idra Rabba); Also see Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 17 and elsewhere.

¹⁹⁰⁹ Samuel II 15:29

¹⁹¹⁰ See Likkutei Torah, Re'eh 25a; Sefer HaMaamarim 5696 p. 57.

¹⁹¹¹ Introduction to Tikkunei Zohar 17a; Also see Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 10.

This is further elucidated by the well-known matter that “the inner aspect (*Pnimiyyut*) of the Father-*Abba* (Wisdom-*Chochmah*) is the inner aspect (*Pnimiyyut*) of the Ancient One (*Atik*).”¹⁹¹² That is, in general, the Crown-*Keter* is the matter of the desire (*Ratzon*) (in which change is applicable etc.) whereas the inner aspect (*Pnimiyyut*) of the Crown-*Keter*, and particularly the inner aspect (*Pnimiyyut*) of the Ancient One-*Atik*, even transcends the matter of the desire (*Ratzon*), this being the matter of the One who desires (*Baal HaRatzon*), [the source of all desires, called] the Desire of all desires (*Ra’ava d’Kol Ra’avin*). This is the aspect that the Jewish people roused by giving precedence to “We will do” over “We will listen,” this being the matter of nullification of self (*Bittul*) to the One who desires (*Ba’al HaRatzon*), as explained before at length.

8.

Now, we should add to the explanation of the relationship between their giving precedence to “We will do” over “We will listen” and receiving the Torah, which is the aspect of the “desert” (*Midbar*-מדבר) “in which no man settled.” Namely, that this is why the Torah was specifically given in the desert (*Midbar*).¹⁹¹³

To explain, in the desert (*Midbar*) there is no growth. All there is, is the dust of the earth, which is the aspect of the inanimate (*Domem*).¹⁹¹⁴ This is because the strength of the sun burns off and evaporates all the moisture in the dust of the earth, such that it is not fitting to be sown, since nothing will grow there. Even animals are not found there, being that they are incapable of withstanding

¹⁹¹² See Pri Etz Chayim, Shaar HaKriyat Shema, Ch. 15; Ramaz to Zohar III 260b, 276b; Likkutei Torah, Nitzavim 49d; Sefer HaMaamarim 5700 p. 49 and on, and the note of the Rebbe there.

¹⁹¹³ See Likkutei Torah, Shir HaShirim 23b and on; Ohr HaTorah, Bamidbar p. 11 and on.

¹⁹¹⁴ Also see Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar 4a

the intense heat, and because of the absence of any sustenance for them there, and it certainly is inhospitable for people to settle there. (That is, it is unlike fields that even though they are places where man does not settle, there nonetheless are all kinds of growth of herbs, grains, and trees there, and therefore there also are animals there etc.)

Beyond this, even in the earth itself, [in a desert] all that remains is the inanimate (*Domem*) part of it, meaning the inanimate of the inanimate (*Domem SheB'Domem*). In other words, in a concealed way, the earth includes within itself the aspects of the vegetative (*Tzome'ach*), the animal (*Chai*), and the speaker (*Medaber*). For, as the verse states,¹⁹¹⁵ “All originate from the dust,” and they all receive from the earth, which has the power of growth within itself etc., and [moreover] “there is a land that grows sages etc.”¹⁹¹⁶ However, in the desert (*Midbar*), because of the heat of the sun, all the parts of vegetative (*Tzome'ach*), animal (*Chai*), and speaker (*Medaber*) in the earth have been removed from it, meaning that it even lacks the quality of soil, and all that remains in it is the aspect of the inanimate of the inanimate (*Domem SheB'Domem*), from which there is no bestowal whatsoever.

Now, the matter of the desert (*Midbar*), as it is within man, is the matter of the ultimate nullification of self (*Bittul b'Tachlit*), this being the aspect of the constriction and constraint of the totality of one's essential self, such that all that remains of him is his essential point, this being the aspect of the Crown-*Keter* within him. He then is in a state of the inanimate of the inanimate (*Domem SheB'Domem*), such that even to himself, he is not in a state of bestowal whatsoever, but is like the desert (*Midbar*), in that even its earth only possesses the portion of the inanimate (*Domem*).

¹⁹¹⁵ Ecclesiastes 3:20

¹⁹¹⁶ See Zohar I 125a (Midrash HaNe'elam); Sefer HaMaamarim 5692 p. 176.

This may be understood from the analogy of a student who sits before his teacher, as in the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory,¹⁹¹⁷ “Any Torah scholar who sits before his teacher and his lips are not dripping with bitterness etc.,” meaning that he must be in a state of ultimate nullification of self (*Bittul b’Tachlit*), so that all that remains in him is the essential point, meaning that he is a receptacle to receive, in that this itself is his essential self, that he is a recipient. He then is not in a state of bestowing at all, not even to himself, meaning, not even to understand the matter to himself. For, when he sits before his master, he then is occupied in receiving the essential point of the intellect of the teacher, and “while he is occupied in absorbing, he cannot not exude,”¹⁹¹⁸ not only to his fellow, but even to himself.

Only after he departs from his teacher can he then begin to contemplate the intellect he received from his teacher, to understand it to himself, at which point he is not just in the aspect of a recipient, but is in a state of spreading forth, to bestow to himself in understanding the intellect that he received, refining and dissecting the intellect he received from his teacher, so that it will be understood and grasped very well in his intellect, so that he grasps what the essential point is and what are its particulars, what is primary and what is secondary etc.

Then, after he comes to understand and comprehend, he also comes to the aspect of knowledge-*Da’at*, which includes Kindness-*Chessed* and Might-*Gevurah* and mediates between them. It then is drawn into the emotions (*Midot*) of the heart, until [it is drawn] into thought (*Machshavah*), speech (*Dibur*), and actual deed (*Ma’aseh*).

¹⁹¹⁷ See Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 30b; Pesachim 117a

¹⁹¹⁸ See Talmud Bavli, Chullin 108b; Rama to Yore De’ah 70:1; Also see Ohr HaTorah, Bamidbar (Drushim L’Shavuot) p. 110; Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 14.

However, all this does not apply while he is sitting before his teacher. For, in addition to the fact that one who is wise does not speak before those who are greater than himself,¹⁹¹⁹ and how much more so before his teacher, and how much more so when his teacher is incomparably greater than himself, in addition to all this, he is in a state of ultimate nullification of self (*Bittul*) without any spreading forth whatsoever, not even to himself, to understand the intellect he is receiving from his teacher. He rather is in the aspect of an empty vessel,¹⁹²⁰ the aspect of the inanimate of the inanimate (*Domem SheB'Domem*), like a desert (*Midbar*), as explained above.

This likewise is the matter of giving precedence to “We will do” over “We will listen,” this being the nullification of self (*Bittul*) to the One who desires (*Baal HaRatzon*), blessed is He. This is the the ultimate state of nullification of self (*Bittul b'Tachlit*), which is greater than the nullification of self (*Bittul*) of “We will listen,” in which he accepts to fulfill this particular desire upon himself.¹⁹²¹ It rather is similar to the nullification (*Bittul*) of the desert (*Midbar*), the aspect of the inanimate of the inanimate (*Domem SheB'Domem*).

Therefore, through this they merited to receive the Torah, which is the aspect of the desert (*Midbar*) “in which no man settled,” through which we come to the ultimate state of the nullification of self (*Bittul*) of fear of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, as in the verse,¹⁹²² “*HaShem*-יהו"ה commanded us to do all these decrees, to fear *HaShem*-יהו"ה etc.”

¹⁹¹⁹ Mishnah Avot 5:7

¹⁹²⁰ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 40a; See Sefer HaMaamarim 5634 p. 302 and on; 5679 p. 651 and on; 5691 p. 353 and on; 5693 p. 538 and on.

¹⁹²¹ See the discourse entitled “*B'Sha'ah SheHeekdeemoo*” 5709, Ch. 2 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5709 p. 148 and on).

¹⁹²² Deuteronomy 6:24

This then, is the meaning of [the teaching], “At the time that Israel accorded precedence to ‘We will do’ over ‘We will listen,’¹⁹²³ [six-hundred thousand ministering angels came and tied two crowns on each member of the Jewish people], one corresponding to ‘We will do’ and one corresponding to ‘We will listen.’” This is because “We will listen” is also a matter of accepting the yoke (*Kabbalat Ol*) in a way that transcends intellect, this being the yoke of the *mitzvot*, which is the nullification of self (*Bittul*) to *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Supernal desire (*Ratzon HaElyon*). However, before this is the acceptance of the yoke (*Kabbalat Ol*) of “We will do,” which is the [acceptance of the] yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, this being the nullification of self (*Bittul*) to the One who desires (*Baal HaRatzon*), the aspect of the Desire of all desires (*Ra’ava d’Kol Ra’avin*).

Therefore, it was through giving precedence to “We will do” over “We will listen,” that they awakened the revelation of the aspect of the Desire of all desires (*Ra’ava d’Kol Ra’avin*), and through this, they drew down and revealed the particular desires for the 248-רמ"ח positive *mitzvot* and the 365-שס"ה prohibitive *mitzvot* from there, and then, after having drawn down these desires etc., they listen and fulfill them, this being the matter of “We will listen.” This matter is like what is stated about the angels “to listen to the voice of His word (*Lishmo’a b’Kol Dvaro*-לשמוע בקול דברו) after they “make His word (*Osei Dvaro*-עושי דברו).”

Beyond this, the level of the Jewish people is greater than the level of the angels. For, in regard to the angels who “make His word,” this is only in reference to the aspect of speech (*Dibur*), which is the source for the existence of the worlds, this being the matter of the Ten Utterances by which the world was created.¹⁹²⁴

¹⁹²³ Exodus 24:7

¹⁹²⁴ Mishnah Avot 5:1

In contrast, in regard to the Jewish people who “make His word,” this is in reference to the Ten Commandments, (which are inclusive of the entirety of Torah and *mitzvot*), which correspond to the Ten Utterances, but are higher than them etc. This is as known¹⁹²⁵ about the explanation of the verse,¹⁹²⁶ “Each ladle was ten, ten (*Asarah, Asarah*-עשרה עשרה) of the sacred *shekel*.”

Now, through their rousing and drawing down the aspect of the Desire of all desires (*Ra'ava d'Kol Ra'avin*), there also was caused to be the novelty of the giving of the Torah, that Godliness is drawn to below. That is, the aspect of “I - meaning who I am-*Anochi*; *Mee SheAnochi*-מי שאנכי,” who is not hinted in any letter or thorn [of a letter], is drawn down into the simple things [mentioned] in the continuation of the Ten Commandments, all the way to [the concluding words], “anything that belongs to your fellow.”¹⁹²⁷ That is, in all of them there is a drawing down of holiness, only that it presently is not seen to our eyes, but in the coming future there will be the revelation of that which already has been actualized now.

Now, “these days are remembered and actualized each and every year,”¹⁹²⁸ that on the eve of the holiday of Shavuot there is the matter of giving precedence to “We will do” over “We will listen,” this being the matter of nullification of self (*Bittul*) to the One who desires (*Ba'al HaRatzon*) etc., and in a way of complete abandonment (as in the words of the Tzemach Tzedek in Ohr HaTorah).¹⁹²⁹ That is, he abandons all his matters and throws himself into studying Torah etc. Through this we merit two crowns, one corresponding to “We will do,” and one

¹⁹²⁵ Zohar III 11b

¹⁹²⁶ Numbers 7:86

¹⁹²⁷ Exodus 20:14

¹⁹²⁸ See Esther 9:28; Also see Ramaz in Sefer Tikkun Shovevim, cited and explained in Sefer Lev David of the Chida, Ch. 29.

¹⁹²⁹ Ohr HaTorah *ibid.* p. 165 (cited before in Ch. 4); Also see the beginning of Ohr HaTorah there.

corresponding to “We will listen,” which the ministering angels tied for each and every Jew. Then tomorrow [on the holiday of Shavuot] we will merit the giving of the Torah and the receiving of the Torah, as in the accepted wording – and as in the words of our Rebbes, our leaders – “[May you] receive the Torah with joy and inwardly.”¹⁹³⁰

¹⁹³⁰ Explained in Likkutei Sichot Vol. 4, p. 1,307; Vol. 8 p. 272 and elsewhere.