

Discourse 38

*“Shir HaMaalot... -
A song of ascents...”*

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Masei,
Shabbat Mevarchim Menachem-Av, 5727
By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

The verse states,¹⁰⁸⁸ “A song of ascents. When *HaShem*-יהו"ה will return the captivity of Tziyon, we were like dreamers.” In his discourse by this title,¹⁰⁸⁹ (which based on the particulars in the discourse, appears to be based on the discourse by this title in Torah Ohr),¹⁰⁹⁰ his honorable holiness, the Tzemach Tzedek, explains that in the coming future, “when *HaShem*-יהו"ה will return the captivity of Tziyon,” all will see that throughout entire exile “we were like dreamers.” Only that presently, during the exile, their eyes have been darkened from seeing this.

He explains that the matter of a dream is that two opposites can bond in a single thing. He brings an analogy for this (a sharp analogy compared to the analogy brought in Torah

¹⁰⁸⁸ Psalms 126:1

¹⁰⁸⁹ It appears that the intention is to the discourse by this title which was subsequently printed in Maamarei Admor HaZaken 5565 Vol. 1, p. 184 and on; Also see the discourse entitled “*Lehavin Inyan HaChalomot*” in Ohr HaTorah Bereishit Vol. 6 p. 1,100b and on.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Torah Ohr, Vayeishev 28c and on

Ohr) that in a dream it is possible for a person to see himself killed or dead, and that then, literally in a single moment, he is alive, or he can dream that he is both here and in Spain at once,¹⁰⁹¹ or the like, and though they are complete opposites from one extreme to the other, during a dream they can bond as one without posing any difficulty whatsoever.

The likeness to this, as it is in the analogue, which is one's service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is that during prayer he can recite the *Shema* with deep devotional intent [in the words], "Listen Israel, *HaShem*-יהו"ה is our God, *HaShem* is One-*HaShem Echad*-אחד-יהו"ה,"¹⁰⁹² and sense that "there is nothing besides Him,"¹⁰⁹³ and then go to his business and engage in worldly matters and the needs of this world as they relate to earning physical livelihood, as the verse states,¹⁰⁹⁴ "By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread," even though this literally is one thing and its opposite, which at first glance, seem to be contradictory. For, since "there is nothing besides Him," how can he be preoccupied with his livelihood and the livelihood of the members of his household? Rather, it is like the analogy of a dream, in which one dreams a thing and its opposite simultaneously, and during the dream this poses no difficulty for him.

¹⁰⁹¹ See Talmud Bavli, Niddah 30b

¹⁰⁹² Deuteronomy 6:4

¹⁰⁹³ Deuteronomy 4:35

¹⁰⁹⁴ Genesis 3:19

2.

In the discourse he continues and states (and this is not mentioned in Torah Ohr) that in truth, one thing does not at all contradict the other. This is because both the thing and its opposite, were caused by Heaven etc. He explains that the dream is rooted in the aspect of the upper encompassing light (*Makif HaElyon*) which surrounds and transcends all worlds equally, and is entirely devoid of division altogether. This is why it includes all opposites simultaneously, in that it transcends both and in relation to it, both are equal. Thus, [both] are nullified in relation to it, with the ultimate nullification, and thus are joined together.

This is as explained elsewhere¹⁰⁹⁵ on the verse,¹⁰⁹⁶ “He makes peace in His heights,” about which our sages, of blessed memory, explained,¹⁰⁹⁷ “Michael is the angel of water, and Gavriel is the angel of fire, but they do not extinguish each other, being that the Holy One, blessed is He, makes peace between them.” This is because of a great revelation of radiance etc. that transcends them both, this being the aspect of the upper encompassing light (*Makif HaElyon*).

On a deeper level, besides the fact that although they are opposites, they nonetheless stand together because of their nullification (*Bittul*), like two ministers who stand nullified

¹⁰⁹⁵ See Tanya, Iggeret HaKodesh, Epistle 12; Likkutei Torah, Tazriya 23c; Also see Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 22.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Job 25:2

¹⁰⁹⁷ See Midrash Bamidbar Rabba 12:8; Shir HaShirim Rabba 3:11; Tanchuma Vayigash 6

before the king, even though they are opposites of each other, beyond this, they are not at all opposites of each other.

An example of this is the emotions (*Midot*). As they are in their revealed state, they are divided into the lines of right and left, (and more specifically, they are divided into six emotions) that are opposites of each other. However, as they are included within Understanding-*Binah*, which is the source of all the encompassing lights (*Makifim*), as known,¹⁰⁹⁸ they are not at all opposites.¹⁰⁹⁹

This then, is how during the time of exile “we were like dreamers.” This is because the exile is the matter of the gestation (*Ibbur*) of *Zeir Anpin* in the womb of the Mother-*Imma* [Understanding-*Binah*] of the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*), at which point it is in a state of “three within three” etc.¹¹⁰⁰ Therefore, during exile, when *Zeir Anpin* is in a state of gestation (*Ibbur*) in the womb of the Mother-*Imma* [Understanding-*Binah*], “we were like dreamers,” literally, such that there is the union of opposites one with the other. This is because the Mother-*Imma* [Understanding-*Binah*] of the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*) is the upper encompassing light (*Makif HaElyon*) that unifies all opposites, in that they are included there in true unity, without any division whatsoever.

About this the verse states,¹¹⁰¹ “I clothe the heavens in blackness, and make sackcloth their garment.” The explanation

¹⁰⁹⁸ Torah Ohr, Vayishlach 26b and elsewhere.

¹⁰⁹⁹ See Torat Chayim, Noach 46d and on; 57c and on; 58a and on.

¹¹⁰⁰ See Zohar II 50a (Tosefta); Etz Chayim, Shaar HaKlallim Ch. 2-3; Also see Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 30 and the notes there.

¹¹⁰¹ Isaiah 50:3

is that “the heavens,” referring to the upper encompassing lights (*Makifim*), are enclothed in other garments to conceal and hide them with great concealment and hiddenness. That is, they are enclothed in a garment of sackcloth, which is the dream below, within which there is the manifestation of the upper encompassing light (*Makif HaElyon*) in a concealed and hidden way, and it thus is possible for two opposites to unite.

Similarly, during the time of exile, the upper encompassing light (*Makif*) of Understanding-*Binah* of the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*) is enclothed within garments that cover it, within which it is concealed and hidden. It is because of this that “we were like dreamers,” in that a person can pray with deep devotional intent (*Kavanah*) etc., but immediately after praying, can go and engage in the physical needs of the livelihood of his household, even though this is one thing and its opposite.

However, in truth, the one does not at all contradict the other, since both come about from Heaven, meaning that (in addition to the simple meaning, that the Heavenly Supernal intent is for a person to pray with devotional intent and also engage in earning a livelihood etc.) this is because the upper encompassing light (*Makif HaElyon*) of the Mother-*Imma* (Understanding-*Binah*) unifies them as one.

This is to such an extent that because of the concealment of the garments, which enclothe the upper encompassing light (*Makif HaElyon*), we have no sense that we are dreaming. However, in the coming future, when the garments will be removed, we will grasp and realize how throughout the entire exile “we were like dreamers.”

However, we must understand the meaning of the words, “When *HaShem*-יהו"ה will return the captivity of Tziyon.” What is this matter of the return (*Teshuvah*) of Tziyon?

The explanation is that our sages, of blessed memory, stated¹¹⁰² that repentance (*Teshuvah*) and the days of Moshiach, preceded the world. That is, “the world-*Olam*-עולם” refers to the entire order of the chaining down of the worlds (*Seder Hishtalshelut*), from the beginning of the Line-Kav to its end, it being the source of all the lights (*Orot*) that manifest within the vessels (*Keilim*) etc.

However, repentance (*Teshuvah*) preceded the world. [That is, it not only is higher than Understanding-*Binah*, which is the source of all the encompassing lights (*Makifim*) (as mentioned above) but it also is higher than the entire chaining down of the worlds (*Seder Hishtalshelut*).] This is because the Line-Kav is from the Impression-*Reshimu* of the limitless light of the Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, that remained in the void and empty space¹¹⁰³ from the aspect [called] Coming and not Coming (*Mati v'Lo Mati*),¹¹⁰⁴ which even transcends the beginning of the Line-Kav. This is why no vessel (*Kli*) is capable of containing the light (*Ohr*) of

¹¹⁰² See Talmud Bavli, Pesachim 54a; Nedarim 39b, and Shitah Mekubetzet there.

¹¹⁰³ See Etz Chayim, Shaar 1 (Drush Iggulim v'Yosher) Anaf 2; Also see Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, [end of Ch. 11 and] Ch. 12-13.

¹¹⁰⁴ Also see *Hemshech* 5672 Vol. 1 p. 456 and elsewhere.

repentance (*Teshuvah*), since it transcends the source of the lights (*Orot*) and vessels (*Keilim*), which is the beginning of the Line-Kav.

This is why our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹¹⁰⁵ “In the place where those who return in repentance (*Baalei Teshuvah*) stand, even the perfectly righteous (*Tzaddikim Gemurim*) cannot stand.” This is because the perfectly righteous (*Tzaddikim Gemurim*) draw from the inner manifest light (*Ohr Pnimi*) which the vessels (*Kelim*) are capable of containing, this being the entire order of the chaining down of the worlds (*Seder Hishtalshehut*) starting from the beginning of the Line-Kav etc. However, those who return in repentance (*Baalei Teshuvah*) draw from the Impression-*Reshimu* brought about by the aspect of Coming and not Coming (*Mati v’Lo Mati*), which even transcends the beginning of the Line-Kav.

This is also the meaning of what our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹¹⁰⁶ that our teacher Moshe merited repentance (*Teshuvah*) before his death. This is because Moshe was perfectly righteous (*Tzaddik Gamur*) and is therefore from the aspect of the inner manifest lights (*Orot Pnimiym*) that manifest within the vessels (*Keilim*) and it only was before his death that he merited the aspect of repentance (*Teshuvah*), which transcends the parameters of the vessels (*Keilim*) and preceded the world, as mentioned before.

In the same way, the days of Moshiach also preceded the world. Therefore, in the coming future we will come to the aspect of repentance (*Teshuvah*) that preceded the world. In

¹¹⁰⁵ Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 7:4

¹¹⁰⁶ See Zohar III 278a (Ra’aya Mehemna)

other words, the matter of repentance (*Teshuvah*) and the matter of the days of Moshiach are one and the same.

4.

This then, is also the meaning of [the continuation of the Psalm],¹¹⁰⁷ “Then they will declare in the nations, ‘*HaShem*-יהו"ה has done greatly with these.’” This is because the matter of repentance (*Teshuvah*) specifically comes from the opposite, this being the matter of refining the sparks of holiness from the external husks (*Kelipot*). (As known, this matter specifically reaches the aspect of *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Supernal delight (*Taanug*), for which reason it is specifically “then-*Az*-”¹¹⁰⁸ that “our mouths will be filled with laughter.”)¹¹⁰⁹

Therefore, in the coming future, upon the conclusion of all the refinements (*Birurim*), “they will declare in the nations, ‘*HaShem*-יהו"ה has done greatly with these.’” That is, the magnification of His Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה comes entirely from the opposite, these specifically being the sparks that were refined from them.¹¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰⁷ Psalms 126:2

¹¹⁰⁸ Psalms 126:2 *ibid.*; [Also see Shaarei Orah of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as Gates of Light, Gate Eight (*Binah*).]

¹¹⁰⁹ See Talmud Bavli, Brachot 31a

¹¹¹⁰ This concludes the content of the discourse of the Tzemach Tzedek.

Now, we can connect this to the Torah portion of Masei, [which begins],¹¹¹¹ “These are the journeys of the children of Israel etc.” In Rashi’s commentary it states, “Why are these stations recorded? To make known the loving acts of the Ever Present One, in that although He had decreed upon them that they would move about and wander in the desert, do not think that they wandered and moved about ceaselessly from one station to another during all the forty years, and that they had no respite etc.” He then adds another explanation, “This is analogous to a king whose son was ill and he took to a distant place to cure him. When they returned home, the father began recounting all the places, saying to him, ‘Here we slept, here you had the headache etc.’”

Now, the theme of both explanations (which, at first glance, are opposites) is that even in an undesirable matter [such as] “here you had the headache etc.,” the intention is that it be transformed “to make known the loving acts of the Ever Present One.”

This is also like what took place with the imprisonment and redemption of the 12th and 13th of Tammuz, which initially was an undesirable matter that began through Jews who were in a state of “here you had the headache” (meaning, the Yevsektiya)¹¹¹² and subsequently the matter was transformed from one extreme to the other extreme, in that he went out to

¹¹¹¹ Numbers 33:1

¹¹¹² The Yevsektiya was the Jewish branch of the Bolshevik party in the Soviet Union, whose main focus was to stamp out Judaism.

freedom “with an upraised arm,”¹¹¹³ and “with great wealth”¹¹¹⁴ (relatively speaking). This was to such an extent that the very same people who imprisoned him were the one’s who freed him, and in a way that all the peoples of the earth saw that *HaShem* יהו"ה acted wondrously and greatly in the earth,¹¹¹⁵ just as in the redemption of the Alter Rebbe on the 19th of Kislev.

This also grants empowerment to each and every Jew right now, to transform the cause of the exile, which is “because of our sins,”¹¹¹⁶ in a way that “willful sins are transformed to be as merits for him,”¹¹¹⁷ and when the cause of the exile is nullified, there automatically is the nullification of the effect as well, and there will be the fulfillment of the prophecy,¹¹¹⁸ “Then the redeemed of *HaShem* יהו"ה will return and come to Tziyon with glad song, with eternal gladness upon their heads.”

¹¹¹³ See Exodus 14:8

¹¹¹⁴ Genesis 15:14

¹¹¹⁵ See Igrot Kodesh of the Alter Rebbe 230 and on.

¹¹¹⁶ See the Musaf liturgy of the holidays

¹¹¹⁷ Talmud Bavli, Yoma 86b; See Tanya, Ch. 7

¹¹¹⁸ Isaiah 35:10; 51:11