

Discourse 3

“Shuvah Yisroel Ad HaShem Elokecha - Return, Israel, until HaShem your God”

Delivered on the third day of the week,

6th of Tishrei, 5727

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

1.

The verse states,²²⁴ “Return, Israel, until *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God.” The next verse continues,²²⁵ “Take words with you and return to *HaShem*-יהו"ה,” and concludes, “let our lips substitute for bulls.” Now, our sages, of blessed memory, established that we recite these verses as part of the Haftorah of Shabbat Shuvah (regardless of whether the Torah reading is the Torah portion of Ha’azinu or the Torah portion of Vayeilech.

In other words, notwithstanding the difference between the content of these Torah portions, we always read “*Shuvah Yisroel* – Return, Israel” as the Haftorah).²²⁶ This is because it is the general matter of the ten days of repentance, as understood from the teachings of our sages, of blessed memory, and the explanations in the teachings of Chassidus on this verse.

However, we must understand the connection and relationship between this verse with the superiority of

²²⁴ Hosea 14:2

²²⁵ Hosea 14:3

²²⁶ See Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 428:8

repentance (*Teshuvah*) during the ten days of repentance, which must be a higher repentance. This is as Rambam writes,²²⁷ “[Even though repentance and calling out to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, are desirable at all times, nonetheless, during the ten days between Rosh HaShanah and Yom HaKippurim] they are even more desirable and are accepted immediately, as the verse states,²²⁸ ‘Seek *HaShem*-יהו"ה when He is to be found.’”

That is, since the Holy One, blessed is He, Himself, is in a state of closeness (“when He is to be found... when He is near”), or in the language of [the teachings of] Chassidus that,²²⁹ “the Luminary comes close,” it therefore does not apply for there be intermediary matters that distract or obstruct etc., and it follows automatically that one’s repentance (*Teshuvah*) is immediately accepted (within time, just as closeness is within space, so to speak).

The essential point of the matter is the verse, “Return, Israel, **until-Ad עד** etc.,” which comes to explain **until where** (“*Ad Heichan*-עד היכן” meaning, until what extent (“*Ad Kamah*-עד כמה”)) the matter of repentance (*Teshuvah*) must be. About this, the verse states, “Return, Israel, until *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God.” That is, the repentance must be until *HaShem*-יהו"ה **will be** your God-*Elo"hecha*-אלהיך,²³⁰ this being the level of repentance and return (*Teshuvah*) as it is in its perfection during the ten days of repentance.

²²⁷ Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 2:6

²²⁸ Isaiah 55:6; Also see Talmud Bavli, Rosh HaShanah 18a

²²⁹ Derech Chayim, translated as The Path of Life 21b, 24d and on (Ch. 11); Sefer HaMaamarim 5651 p. 53; 5697 p. 58; 5698 p. 2.

²³⁰ See the discourse entitled “*Shuvah*” in Likkutei Torah, Drushim L’Shabbat Shuvah (65a); Discourse entitled “*Shuvah*” 5698 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5698 p. 34); 5704 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5704, p. 15).

2.

The explanation is that the difference between *HaShem*'s יהו"ה title²³¹ God-*Elohi*"מ-אלהי and His Name *HaShem* יהו"ה is that the title God-*Elohi*"מ-אלהי is in the plural,²³² indicating division. That is, there division in time, [such as] past, present, and future, and there is division in space, up to and including the general matter of division.

In contrast, the Name *HaShem* יהו"ה means "He was and He is and He will be-*Hayah* ו' *Hoveh* ו' *Yihyeh* ויהי"ה as One."²³³ In other words, besides the fact that, in actuality, we observe the past as being unto itself, the present as being unto itself, and the future as being unto itself, and this does not stem from the side opposite holiness, but even on the side of holiness there must be the order of past, present and future, to the extent that the divisions of different times impacts many Torah laws, in that there necessarily must be matters that are sequential, and not in reverse order (and according to some opinions, not even all at once, but specifically in a sequence of one following the other),²³⁴ all this stems from the parameters of the world etc. However, the matter of *HaShem* יהו"ה is in a

²³¹ See Ginat Egoz of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as *HaShem Is One*, Vol. 1, The Gate of Intrinsic Being (*Shaar HaHavayah*) and The Gate of His Title (*Shaar HaKinuy*).

²³² See Rashi to Genesis 20:13; 35:7; Ginat Egoz translated as *HaShem Is One* *ibid.*; Torah Ohr, Va'era 56b; Sefer HaMitzvot of the Tzemach Tzedek 5b, and elsewhere.

²³³ Zohar III 257b (Ra'aya Mehemna); Ginat Egoz translated as *HaShem Is One*, Vol. 1 *ibid.* and on; Pardes Rimonim, Shaar 1 (Shaar Eser v'Lo Teisha), Ch. 9; Tanya, Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah, Ch. 7 (82a).

²³⁴ See Tziyunim L'Torah (of Rabbi Yosef Engel), Klall 35

way that “He was and He is and He will be-*Hayah v’Hoveh v’Yihyeh*-יהי”ה ויהי”ה ויהי”ה as One.”

This is also the difference between the matter of Torah and *mitzvot* in general and the matter of repentance (*Teshuvah*). For, the matter of Torah and its *mitzvot* in general, is in a way that they are drawn forth with measure and limitation. This is as explained in Iggeret HaKodesh²³⁵ that most *mitzvot* have a constricted measure etc. This is as mentioned above, that there are many matters that according to Torah law must specifically be divided within time and space.

However, there is a form of serving *HaShem*-יהו”ה, blessed is He, that is higher than this, which is serving Him by returning to Him in repentance (*Teshuvah*). That is, even if a person has sinned, blemished, and left the path, Heaven forbid, and is deficient in matters of Torah and *mitzvot*, nonetheless, serving *HaShem*-יהו”ה by returning to Him and repentance (*Teshuvah*) fills all deficiencies and blemishes.

Moreover, not only does it satisfy all lackings, but on the contrary, it brings much greater addition with, “manifold sagacity,”²³⁶ to such an extent that even the perfectly righteous (*Tzaddik Gamur*) cannot bear the great light and revelation present in the place where those who return to *HaShem*-יהו”ה in repentance (*Baalei Teshuvah*) stand.²³⁷

However, at first glance, this is not understood. For, since in the past, he sinned, blemished, and left the path, what benefit is there in that he is remorseful afterwards, and repairs

²³⁵ Tanya, Iggeret HaKodesh, Epistle 10

²³⁶ Job 11:6; Midrash Shemot Rabba 46:1

²³⁷ See Talmud Bavli, Brachot 34b; Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 7:4

and satisfies etc.? This is because what was done in the past is lost (and [seemingly] irreversible).

The explanation is that this is only true as long as the past, present and future are different. However, when we are elevated to the level of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה, (this being the matter of *HaShem*-יהו"ה becoming "your God-*Elo*" *hechalei*ךאלהיך," meaning that your God is *HaShem*-יהו"ה), the substance of which is that "He was and He is and He will be-*Hayah v'Hoveh v'Yihyeh* ויהי"ה והי"ה ויהי"ה as One," therefore, just as about the future, a person has free choice, and in the words of Rambam,²³⁸ "Free will is granted to all men etc.," the same applies to the past. That is, he is the master over the future, the present, and even the past, to repair it etc., such that when repentance (*Teshuvah*) is in its perfect state, this being returning to *HaShem*-יהו"ה out of love (*Teshuvah MeAhavah*), the sin is then uprooted from its very inception.²³⁹

This is why if a man betroths a woman on condition that he has no sins, and he repents and returns to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, out of love (*Teshuvah MeAhavah*), his betrothal is a valid betrothal according to the law in the revealed parts of Torah, and she is betrothed. This is similar to a man who betroths a woman on condition that there are no vows [incumbent] on her [to fulfill] and she goes to a sage who annuls her [vows], she is betrothed, being that the sage uproots the vow from its root and inception (like a person who had no vows incumbent upon her at the time of the betrothal).²⁴⁰ The same

²³⁸ Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 5:1

²³⁹ See Talmud Bavli, Yoma 86a and Rashi there.

²⁴⁰ Talmud Bavli, Ketubot 74b (and Rashi there)

is so of a person who returns to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, out of love (*Teshuvah MeAhavah*), in that his sin is uprooted from its inception (like a person who has never sinned).²⁴¹

3.

This then, is the meaning of the statement (in the Haftorah of the Shabbat of the ten days of repentance), "Return, Israel, until *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God." That is, for the repentance (*Teshuvah*) to come to its ultimate perfection, such that he also is the master over the past (in that his sin is uprooted from its inception), this is specifically when the repentance (*Teshuvah*) is such that it is "until (*Ad*-עד) *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God-*Elo*"*hecha*-אלהיך," in that *HaShem*-יהו"ה becomes **your** God-*Elo*"*hecha*-אלהיך, meaning that he ascends to the level of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה, who "was and is and will be-*Hayah v'Hoveh v'Yihyeh*-והי"ה והו"ה ויהי"ה as one." He therefore even becomes master over the past, just as he is over the present and the future.

This is also why repentance (*Teshuvah*) during the ten days of repentance is accepted immediately. For, since the repentance (*Teshuvah*) is such that it is until *HaShem*-יהו"ה becomes your God-*Elo*"*hecha*-אלהיך, meaning that he ascends to the level of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה, which transcends the measures and divisions of time, it therefore does not apply for

²⁴¹ See Likkutei Sichot Vol. 17, p. 185; Also see the discourse entitled "*Vayihyu Chayei Sarah*" 5745 (Torat Menachem, Sefer HaMaamarim Cheshvan p. 288 and on).

there be any delay within time for his repentance to be accepted, but his repentance (*Teshuvah*) is accepted immediately.

4.

Now, this comes about through the continuation of the verse, “Take words with you.” This is connected to Rosh HaShanah, which is the time of the construct (*Binyan*) of the world of speech (*Olam HaDibur*) (as explained in Kabbalah and Chassidus).²⁴² This also is so in the simple sense. This is because Rosh HaShanah is “a remembrance of the first day,”²⁴³ to strengthen the act of creation, which is bound to the matter of speech (*Dibur*). This is because the creation of the world came about through the speech of the Holy One, blessed is He, [as the verse state],²⁴⁴ “God said etc.,” and as our sages, of blessed memory, stated,²⁴⁵ “The world was created with ten utterances (*Ma’amarot*-מאמרות).”

Now, in regard to the fact that here it states, “Take words-*Devarim*-דברים with you,” and does not use the word “utterance-*Ma’amar*-מאמר,” this is to indicate that the strengthening of the ten utterances (*Ma’amarot*-מאמרות) is through the “words-*Devarim*-דברים” (“take words (*Devarim*-דברים) for yourselves”), referring to the Ten Commandments (“*Aseret HaDevarim*-עשרת הדברים”).²⁴⁶

²⁴² See Likkutei Torah, Re’eh 31c; Drushim L’Rosh HaShanah 60a, and elsewhere.

²⁴³ Musaf liturgy of Rosh HaShanah, based on Talmud Bavli, Rosh HaShanah 27a

²⁴⁴ Genesis 1:3 and on.

²⁴⁵ Mishnah Avot 5:1

²⁴⁶ Exodus 34:28

This is as known from the teaching of the Zohar²⁴⁷ (explained in various places) on the verse,²⁴⁸ “Each ladle was ten, ten (*Asarah, Asarah*-עשרה עשרה) [of the sacred *shekel*].” That is, the [double mention of] “ten, ten-*Asarah, Asarah*-עשרה עשרה” hints to the Ten Commandments (*Aseret HaDibrot*) and the Ten Utterances (*Asarah Ma’amarot*), in that the Ten Commandments strengthen the Ten Utterances by which the world was created.

This is like what our sages, of blessed memory, taught in Tractate Shabbat,²⁴⁹ “What is the meaning of the verse,²⁵⁰ ‘The earth feared and was silent etc.’? At first it feared, but in the end it was silent... for Reish Lakish said: What is the meaning of that which is written,²⁵¹ ‘And there was evening and there was morning, **the** sixth day (*Yom HaShishi*-יום הששי)’? Why do I require the letter *Hey*-ה which seems to be superfluous? It teaches that the Holy One, blessed is He, established a condition with the act of creation, and said to them, ‘If Israel accepts the Torah, you will exist etc.’” (In other words, the verse “And there was evening and there was morning” stated at the conclusion of the act of creation, depends on “**The** sixth (*HaShishi*-הששי) day,” [with the definitive article (*Hey*-ה *HaYediyah*)], implying “the sixth” specified elsewhere in Torah, this being the sixth day of Sivan when the Torah was

²⁴⁷ Zohar III 11b

²⁴⁸ Numbers 7:86; Also see Sefer HaMaamarim 5659 p. 146 and on; 5704 p. 75 and on; Also see the discourse entitled “*b’Sha’ah SheHeekdeemoo* – At the time that they gave precedence” of the 1st night of Shavuot of last year, 5726, Discourse 30.

²⁴⁹ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 88a

²⁵⁰ Psalms 76:9

²⁵¹ Genesis 1:31

given.)²⁵² That is, the acceptance of the Ten Commandments (*Aseret HaDibrot*) caused the basis and strengthening of the Ten Utterances (*Asarah Ma'amarot*) and thereby, also the world that was created through them.

5.

The verse concludes, “let our lips substitute for bulls.” The explanation is that even though in addition to repentance (*Teshuvah*), there also must be the matter of bringing a sacrificial offering (*Korban*), and during the time of the Holy Temple it was necessary to also bring a sacrificial offering (*Korban*), and as long as he had not brought the sacrificial offering, this itself was proof that his repentance was imperfect, nevertheless, when the Holy Temple is not standing, “a lion crouches before it [to block his entrance],”²⁵³ such that according to Torah, it is impossible for him to bring the sacrificial offering (*Korban*).

Thus, since he has done everything that is dependent on him, it therefore is in a way that “our lips substitute for bulls.” That is, this is not just in a way that,²⁵⁴ “Whosoever engages in the Torah of the burnt offering (*Olah*) it is **as though** he has offered a burnt offering (*Olah*),” (as stated in Talmud at the end of Tractate Menachot),²⁵⁵ but it rather is in a way that from his angle, the entire matter is already in a state of perfection and wholeness.

²⁵² See Rashi to Shabbat 88a *ibid*.

²⁵³ Talmud Bavli, Eruvin 88b; Shevuot 22b

²⁵⁴ See Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 18 p. 413 and on.

²⁵⁵ Talmud Bavli, Menachot 110a

To explain, even though there also is the matter of “writing in his notebook, that when the Holy Temple will be rebuilt, I will bring a fat sin-offering,”²⁵⁶ this being something that a person can even do now, nonetheless, this also is not the offering of an actual sacrifice (*Korban*), but is also similar to “let our lips substitute for bulls,” except that here, the speech was also drawn into writing, being that this is something that one is liable to forget. However, discounting the matter of forgetfulness, speech alone would be sufficient, by engaging in learning the Torah of the burnt offering (*Olah*) etc., (like all the other particulars enumerated at the end of Tractate Menachot). That is, this it is caused to be in a way that “our lips substitute for bulls.”

6.

This then, is the meaning of the verse, “Return, Israel, until *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God... take words with you and return to *HaShem*-יהו"ה etc.,” and all the other matters enumerated in the continuing verses until the conclusion of the Haftarah. That is, this is the general mode of service that brings all the matters of the ten days of repentance about, up to and including Yom HaKippurim, at which time the matter of,²⁵⁷ “I have forgiven because of your word (*KiDevarecha*-כִּדְבָרֶיךָ)” is brought about, up to the conclusion and signet of the Ne'ilah prayer, when we recite,²⁵⁸ “*HaShem*-יהו"ה, He is the God-*Elohi*”מ-אלהי"ם.” This

²⁵⁶ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 12b; See the Sichah talk of the 6th of Tishrei 5741; Likkutei Sichot ibid. note 51.

²⁵⁷ Numbers 14:20; Also see Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 24 p. 570.

²⁵⁸ Deuteronomy 4:35; 4:39, and elsewhere.

is like the matter of “(Return, Israel, until) *HaShem*-יהו"ה is your God-*Elo*”*hecha*-אלהיך,” such that *HaShem*-יהו"ה and God-*Elohi*”*m*-אלהי"ם are entirely one.²⁵⁹

We then come to [the words], “Next year in Yerushalayim,” which all Jews declare (and cry out) in unison with a singular voice after the sounding the great blast of the Shofar (which transcends all boundaries and is without measure and limit). For as stated in the Holy Books,²⁶⁰ this is similar to the [words],²⁶¹ “Sound the great Shofar for our freedom,” as the verse states,²⁶² “It shall be on that day that a great Shofar will be blown, and those who are lost in the land of Assyria and those cast away in the land of Egypt will come etc.,” may it be speedily in our days, through our righteous Moshiach!

²⁵⁹ See Zohar I 12a; Zohar II 26b; 161a and on; Zohar III 264a (Ra’aya Mehemna)

²⁶⁰ See Likkutei Torah, Drushim L’Rosh HaShanah 60c

²⁶¹ Of the Amidah prayer

²⁶² Isaiah 27:13