

Discourse 15

“*Vayechi Yaakov... -
Yaakov lived...*”

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Vayechi,

11th of Tevet, 5727

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

1.

The verse states,¹¹⁵⁸ “Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; and the days of Yaakov – the years of his life – were seven years and one hundred and forty years.” Now, we must understand why the Torah found it necessary to tell us the years that Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt. Did it not already state that when Yaakov stood before Pharaoh he was one-hundred and thirty years old?¹¹⁵⁹ Thus, since the totality of the years of his life were one hundred and forty-seven years, it is self-understood that he lived in Egypt for seventeen years.¹¹⁶⁰

We also must understand generally why the Torah makes a distinction between the years he lived in Egypt and the other years of his life,¹¹⁶¹ from which it is derived that these were the best years of his life.¹¹⁶² For, at first glance, how does

¹¹⁵⁸ Genesis 47:28

¹¹⁵⁹ Genesis 47:9

¹¹⁶⁰ Also see Ohr HaChayim to the beginning of Parshat Vayechi.

¹¹⁶¹ Also see the beginning of the discourse entitled “*Vayechi Yaakov*” 5628 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5628 p. 50).

¹¹⁶² As per the commentary of the Baal HaTurim.

it apply that the best years of our forefather Yaakov's life, who was the choicest of the forefathers,¹¹⁶³ could be the seventeen years that he lived in Egypt, "the nakedness of the land"¹¹⁶⁴ (as the Tzemach Tzedek asked his grandfather, the Alter Rebbe).¹¹⁶⁵

We also must understand¹¹⁶⁶ why in specifying the count of the years of Yaakov's life, it states, "seven years and one hundred and forty years." Why does it separate the lesser number of seven years, from the larger number of one-hundred and forty years, and not simply state "one hundred and forty-seven years?" Additionally, why does it give precedence to the lesser number over the larger number, unlike the enumeration of the years of Avraham's life, about which the verse states,¹¹⁶⁷ "one hundred years, seventy years, and five years." Similarly, about Yitzchak the verse states,¹¹⁶⁸ "one hundred years and eighty years." That is, it gives precedence to the larger number over the lesser number.¹¹⁶⁹

¹¹⁶³ Shaar HaPesukim to Genesis 27:25; Also see Midrash Bereishit Rabba 76:1; Zohar I 119b; 147b

¹¹⁶⁴ Genesis 42:9; 42:12; See Midrash Kohelet Rabba 1:4

¹¹⁶⁵ Igrot Kodesh of the Rebbe Rayatz, Vol. 5 p. 373 (copied in HaYom Yom for the 18th of Tevet); Also see Likkutei Sichot Vol. 18 p. 160 and on.

¹¹⁶⁶ Also see the beginning of the discourse entitled "*Vayechi Yaakov*" 5628 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5628 p. 50).

¹¹⁶⁷ Genesis 25:7

¹¹⁶⁸ Genesis 35:28

¹¹⁶⁹ Also see Ohr HaChayim to the beginning of the Torah portion of Vayechi, cited in Ohr HaTorah, beginning of Vayechi (352b); Also see the beginning of the discourse entitled "*Vayechi Yaakov*" 5652 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5652 p. 13).

Now, the explanation is that [the name] Yaakov-יעקב divides into “Yod-י [in the] heel-Eikev-עקב.”¹¹⁷⁰ The Yod-י refers to the soul as it is Above, in the aspect of “she is pure” (*Tehorah Hee*-טהורה היא),¹¹⁷¹ meaning, in the world of Emanation-*Atzilut*, the matter of which in the *Sefirot*, is the *Sefirah* of Wisdom-*Chochmah*, which is the Yod-י of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה.

The “heel-Eikev-עקב,” which is the base of the foot indicates the descent of the soul to the lowest level, this being the aspect of the “heel-Eikev-עקב.” That is, initially there is the descent of the soul within the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*) itself, from the *Sefirah* of Wisdom-*Chochmah* to the *Sefirah* of Kingship-*Malchut*, which is called “the heel-Eikev-עקב.”¹¹⁷²

It then descends to the worlds of Creation, Formation, and Action (*Briyah, Yetzirah, Asiyah*), as indicated by [the continuing words], “You created her, You formed her, You blew her [into me],” corresponding to the three letters *Hey-Vav-Hey*-הו"ה of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה, through which there is the matter of coming into being (*Hithavut*-התהוות).

For, as known, the general coming into novel being of the entire chaining down of the worlds (*Hishtalshelut*) is through the four letters of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה, the matter of which is restraint (*Tzimtzum*-י), spreading forth (*Hitpashtut*-

¹¹⁷⁰ Pardes Rimonim, Shaar 23 (Shaar Erchei HaKinuyim) section on Yaakov-יעקב; Etz Chayim, Shaar 3 (Shaar Seder HaAtzilut) Ch. 2; Torah Ohr, Vayeitzei 21a; Veyeishev 27b; 29a, and elsewhere.

¹¹⁷¹ See the liturgy of the “*Elo"hai Neshamah*” in the morning blessings.

¹¹⁷² Pardes Rimonim *ibid*.

ה), drawing down (*Hamshachah*-ו), and expression (*Hitpashtut*-ה).¹¹⁷³

Moreover, this descent is through the *Sefirah* of Kingship-*Malchut* of each world, this being the matter of the “heel-*Eikev*-עקב,” until there comes to be the descent into the actual aspect of the “heel-*Eikev*-עקב,” meaning, this physical and lowest world.

About this the verse states, “Yaakov lived-*Vayechi* *Yaakov*-ויהי יעקב.” That is, the descent of the soul from the aspect of the *Yod*-י to the aspect of the “heel-*Eikev*-עקב” (indicated by the name Yaakov-יעקב), is so that there thereby will be the matter of “[Yaakov] lived-*Vayechi*-ויהי.” That is, specifically through its descent to below, the soul comes to the level of “and he lived-*Veyechi*-ויהי.”

Now, this must be better understood. For, how can it be that through the descent of the soul to below, it should come to the matter of “and he lived-*Vayechi*-ויהי” (similar to the above-mentioned question of the Tzemach Tzeddek)? For, at first glance, the opposite is true, that it specifically is Above where the true matter of life is, as the verse states,¹¹⁷⁴ “As *HaShem*-יהוה lives... before whom I stood,” referring to the soul as it is Above, before its descent to below.

¹¹⁷³ See Likkutei Torah, Beshalach 1a and elsewhere.

¹¹⁷⁴ Kings I, 17:1

3.

This may be better understood with a preface¹¹⁷⁵ explaining the teaching of the Mishnah,¹¹⁷⁶ “One hour of repentance and good deeds in this world is better than all the life of the coming world.” That is, even though it states (in the continuation of the very same Mishnah), “One hour of pleasure in the coming world is better than all the time in this world,” nevertheless, “One hour of repentance and good deeds in this world is better (not than the life of this world, and not just than one hour of pleasure in the coming world, but better) than all the life of the coming world.”

Now, we must understand this.¹¹⁷⁷ For, is it not known that the general toil in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, through fulfilling Torah and *mitzvot* (“repentance and good deeds”) is to make garments for the soul, by which it will be capable of delighting in the radiance of His Indwelling Presence (the *Shechinah*) in the Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*)?

This is as stated in Zohar¹¹⁷⁸ on the verse,¹¹⁷⁹ “Now, Avraham was old, coming on in years,” [and it likewise states about Dovid,¹¹⁸⁰ “King Dovid was old, coming on in years,” in continuation to which it states,¹¹⁸¹ “Dovid’s days drew near to die” as we read in the Haftorah,¹¹⁸² similar to what is stated in

¹¹⁷⁵ See the discourse entitled “*Vayechi Yaakov*” 5628.

¹¹⁷⁶ Mishnah Avot 4:17

¹¹⁷⁷ Also see Torah Ohr, Chayei Sarah 16a

¹¹⁷⁸ See Zohar I 224a; Also see 129a there.

¹¹⁷⁹ Genesis 24:1

¹¹⁸⁰ Kings I 1:1

¹¹⁸¹ Kings I 2:1

¹¹⁸² Of the Torah portion of Vayechi

the Torah portion,¹¹⁸³ “The time approached for Yisroel to die], that “this refers to those Supernal days etc.,” which are the garments of the Torah and *mitzvot*, and that “he was not lacking any garment etc.”

This is also as stated by the Alter Rebbe in Iggeret HaKodesh,¹¹⁸⁴ that the indispensability and need for these garments is explained in Zohar,¹¹⁸⁵ namely, that “it is impossible for any created being to attain any grasp of the Creator, and even after *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, has radiated of His light etc., it is not possible for the *Nefesh* or *Ru'ach* etc., to endure the light on account of its goodness etc., were it not that from this very light there will chain and be drawn down of some small radiance etc., until a single garment is created of it, which is akin to the being of this light, by way of which it is possible for it to delight in the radiance of this light. This is analogous to a person viewing the sun through a fine and lucid speculum etc.”

Based on this, it is understood that the entire matter of Torah and *mitzvot* is not primary, but only is like something secondary, the ultimate purpose of which is that through [Torah and *mitzvot*] the soul will receive the revelation of the coming world. Accordingly, it is not understood how it could be said that “one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world is better than all the life of the coming world.” For, is it not so, that the entire matter of repentance and good deeds is secondary to the revelation of the coming world?

¹¹⁸³ Genesis 47:29

¹¹⁸⁴ Tanya, Iggeret HaKodesh, Epistle 29

¹¹⁸⁵ Zohar II 210b; 229b

However, the explanation is that, in truth, the primary receipt of reward is not in the Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*), but in the coming world, in the world of the Resurrection (*Olam HaTechiyah*), specifically for souls who are [manifest] within bodies. In other words, the revelation of the Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*) is only a ray of their Torah and service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, meaning that it only is a ray and glimmer of radiance, rather than the essence of the *mitzvah*.

In contrast, the primary reward of the *mitzvah*, is as in the teaching,¹¹⁸⁶ “The reward of the *mitzvah* is the *mitzvah*,” in that the reward of the *mitzvah* is the *mitzvah* itself.¹¹⁸⁷ In other words, the essence of the light drawn down through the *mitzvah* will specifically be revealed in this world in the coming future.

In other words, when it states that in the coming world they delight in the ray of the Indwelling Presence (the *Shechinah*),¹¹⁸⁸ this is a ray and glimmer of radiance, in that even the coming world (*Olam HaBa*-עולם הבא) is called a “world-*Olam*-עולם,” which is of the same root as “concealment-*He'elem*-העלם.”¹¹⁸⁹ Rather, the revelation of the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is specifically in this world.¹¹⁹⁰

[Nevertheless, so that in the coming future the soul will be capable of receiving the essence of the light drawn down though the *mitzvah*, it first must receive the radiance and ray revealed in the Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*). However, since

¹¹⁸⁶ Mishnah Avot 4:2

¹¹⁸⁷ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 39

¹¹⁸⁸ See Talmud Bavli, Brachot 17a

¹¹⁸⁹ Likkutei Torah, Shlach 37d and elsewhere.

¹¹⁹⁰ Also see Tanya, end of Ch. 4; Likkutei Torah, Devarim 1b

[the soul] is in the aspect of a novel creation, it cannot receive the revelation of the light of the Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*) except by way of the garments of the *mitzvot*. However, even so, the *mitzvot* themselves are much higher than the ray drawn down by them in the Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*), since they primary are for the sake of the revelation of the essence of the light in the coming future.]

4.

With the above in mind, we can understand the matter of “Yaakov lived,” and that the true matter of life (*Chayim*-חיים) is in Yaakov-יעקב, [this being] “the *Yod*-י [in the] heel-*Eikev*-עקב.” This refers to the descent of the soul below to engage in Torah and *mitzvot* (repentance and good deeds). For, through doing so, there is a drawing down of the primary reward, this being the revelation of the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He.

This is also why the verse states, “Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years.” That is, the Torah elucidates the number of years he lived in the land of Egypt, without including them in the other years of his life, but separates them unto themselves. This is because the true matter of life, is specifically through the descent into this world, and in this world itself, specifically into Egypt (*Mitzrayim*-מצרים), beginning, with the constraints (*Meitzarim*-מיצרים) and limitations of the chaining down of the worlds (*Seder Hishtalshelut*), which is the matter of Egypt-*Mitzrayim*-מצרים

(of the root “constraints-*Meitzarim*-מִיצָרִים” indicating limitations) on the side of holiness, up to and including Egypt (*Mitzrayim*) in the literal sense, the Egypt of the side opposite holiness. That is, it specifically is through refining the lower of which there is no lower, that the true matter of “Yaakov lived” comes about, and in a way of “seventeen years,” which is the numerical value of the word “good-*Tov*-טוֹב.”

With the above in mind, we can also understand why in the enumeration of the total number of years of Yaakov’s life, it separates and gives precedence to the smaller number. This is because the smaller number specifically indicates the descent to refine the lower, this being primary, and specifically through this, the true matter of “Yaakov lived” is caused.

5.

This then, is also the meaning of the words, “The days of Yaakov – the years of his life – were seven years and one hundred and forty years.” That is, this number indicates the general matter of service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. The explanation is that the seven years indicate service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה with the seven emotional qualities (*Midot*) that must be refined and changed, this being the meaning of “(seven) years-*Shanim*-שָׁנִים” which is of the same root as the word “change-*Shinuy*-שִׁנוּי,”¹¹⁹¹ meaning, that they must be changed and transformed into holiness. This is why the Torah starts the

¹¹⁹¹ See Shaarei Orah of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as Gates of Light, Gate Five (*Tiferet*).

count with the “seven years” (*Sheva Shanim*-שבע שנים), in and of themselves.

This is because the beginning and primary aspect of the toil in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, (this being the toil of Intermediates (*Beinonim*), as explained in Tanya,¹¹⁹² which is “the measure attainable by every man”) is the refinement and purification of the emotions (*Midot*). As explained elsewhere,¹¹⁹³ the primary toil in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה in our times, is in the emotional qualities (*Midot*), this being the matter of conquering the seven nations.

In contrast, this is not so of the toil of refining the intellectual qualities (*Mochin*), which is very difficult and not every mind can withstand it. Rather, the primary refinement of the intellectual qualities (*Mochin*) will take place in the coming future, at which time there also will be the conquest of the three nations, the Kennite, the Kenizite, and the Kadmonite, which cannot be refined in our times.

Now, through the toil of affecting the refinement of the seven emotional qualities (*Midot*) - the “seven years” - we thereby come to the one-hundred and forty years. The number one-hundred and forty (ק"ל-140) is twice seventy. That is, in addition to the number “seven years,” there also is the number seventy, indicating the seven emotional qualities (*Midot*) as they each include ten, this being the matter of drawing the intellect (*Mochin*) into the emotions (*Midot*), and in this itself, it is twice seventy, which equals one-hundred and forty.

¹¹⁹² Likkutei Amarim, Tanya, Ch. 14

¹¹⁹³ Maamarei Admor HaZaken 5565 Vol. 2, p. 800 and on; p. 1,049 and on; Maamarei Admor HaEmtza'ee, Devarim Vol. 1, p. 4 and on, and elsewhere.

This is explained by his honorable holiness, the Rebbe Maharash, (this year being the hundred year anniversary of his assumption of the leadership), in his discourse entitled “*Vayechi Yaakov*” 5628.¹¹⁹⁴ He begins with the well-known question¹¹⁹⁵ about Dovid, whose lifespan was seventy years. That is, we find¹¹⁹⁶ that Adam, the first man, gave seventy years [of his life] to Dovid. (This is why seventy years are missing from the life of Adam, the first man. For, he was meant to live for one-thousand years, as the verse states,¹¹⁹⁷ “On the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die,” and a day of the Holy One, blessed is He, is one-thousand years,¹¹⁹⁸ as the verse states,¹¹⁹⁹ “For a thousand years in Your eyes is but a bygone day etc.”)

We likewise find¹²⁰⁰ that our forefathers gave Dovid seventy years. (That is, Avraham gave him five years, in that his years should have numbered one-hundred and eighty but are lacking five, and Yaakov gave him twenty-eight years, in that his life should have been one-hundred and seventy-five years like the life of Avraham, and Yosef gave him thirty-seven years, which are missing from his lifespan, which should have been one-hundred and forty-seven years, like the years of Yaakov’s life.)

¹¹⁹⁴ Sefer HaMaamarim 5628 p. 57.

¹¹⁹⁵ See Sefer HaMitzvot of the Tzemach Tzedek, Mitzvat Minuy Melech, Ch. 2; Also see the discourse entitled “*Lehavin... d’Adam Kadamaa Shaal Ayin Shanin*” 5628 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5628 p. 62).

¹¹⁹⁶ Midrash Bamidbar Rabba 14:12; Yalkut Shimoni Remez 41, and elsewhere.

¹¹⁹⁷ Genesis 2:17

¹¹⁹⁸ See Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 99a and Rashi there; 97a; Avot d’Rabbi Nathan, Ch. 42

¹¹⁹⁹ Psalms 90:4

¹²⁰⁰ Zohar I 168a

However, at first glance, since he (Dovid) only lived seventy years, why were two times seventy years necessary - the seventy years of Adam, the first man, and the seventy years of our forefathers? However, the explanation is that the seventy years refer to the drawing down of intellect (*Mochin*) into the emotions (*Midot*), as mentioned above, and the two times seventy are two levels in drawing down the intellect (*Mochin*) into the emotions (*Midot*), these being the matter of the Upper Knowledge (*Da'at Elyon*) and the Lower Knowledge (*Da'at Tachton*), which are the two ways of the sight of the “eye-*Ayin*-עין” (the numerical value of *Ayin*-ע being 70), the Upper Eye and the Lower Eye.

This then, is the difference between the seventy years (*Ayin*-ע-70) of Adam, the first man, and the seventy years (*Ayin*-ע-70) of our forefathers. That is, the seventy years of Adam, the first man, is the matter of the Lower Knowledge (*Da'at Tachton*), which is the Lower Eye (*Ayin Tachton*). The seventy years of our forefathers is the matter of the Upper Knowledge (*Da'at Elyon*), which is the Upper Eye (*Ayin Elyon*).

This then, is why both Adam and our forefathers gave Dovid seventy years. For, through this, he not only received the drawing down of the Lower Knowledge (*Da'at Tachton*), but also the drawing down of the Upper Knowledge (*Da'at Elyon*).

Nonetheless, the [actual] years of his life only numbered seventy. This is because the *Sefirah* of Kingship-*Malchut*, which is the primary matter of Dovid, is the matter of the Lower Knowledge (*Da'at Tachton*). In regard to the fact that there also was a drawing down to him of the Upper Knowledge (*Da'at Elyon*) (this being the seventy years given to him by our

forefathers), this only is the Upper Knowledge (*Da'at Elyon*) as it is drawn down and manifest within the Lower Knowledge (*Da'at Tachton*), but is not the Upper Knowledge (*Da'at Elyon*) as it is, in and of itself.

However, the years of the life of Yaakov were one-hundred and forty-seven years. For, after the toil in affecting the refinement of the seven emotional qualities (*Midot*), he then came to have the drawing down of the intellect (*Mochin*) into the emotions (*Midot*) (the seventy years) in a way that there also was a drawing down of the Upper Knowledge (*Da'at Elyon*) as it is, in and of itself. This is why he lived an additional one-hundred and forty years, twice seventy years, including the Lower Knowledge (*Da'at Tachton*) and the Upper Knowledge (*Da'at Elyon*).

This matter will be revealed in the coming future, with the resurrection of the dead (*Techiyat HaMeitim*), at which time there will be the primary reception of the reward (as mentioned before). About this the verse states,¹²⁰¹ “Eye to eye (*Ayin b'Ayin*-עין בעין) shall they see,” two times “eye-*Ayin*-עין” (70), in that the vision of the Lower Eye (*Ayin Tachton*) will be like the vision of the Upper Eye (*Ayin Elyon*), in the way indicated by [the verse],¹²⁰² “Their faces will see directly,” in that all matters below will be as they are Above, as will soon be in the most literal sense, through our righteous Moshiach!

¹²⁰¹ Isaiah 52:8

¹²⁰² See Psalms 11:7; See Likkutei Torah, Re'eh 23d