

Discourse 21

“v’Keebel HaYehudim... -
The Jews undertook...”

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Ki Tisa,
Shushan Purim Katan, 5727
By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

The verse states,¹⁴⁸⁹ “The Jews undertook that which they had begun to do.” His honorable holiness, my father-in-law, the Rebbe, explains in his discourse by this title, said on Purim Katan forty years ago¹⁴⁹⁰ (in the last year he was in that country, while he was alive in this world), that it was now, during the time of exile, that they undertook that which they had begun to do at the time of the giving of the Torah. This is as our sages, of blessed memory, stated¹⁴⁹¹ on the verse,¹⁴⁹² “The Jews undertook upon themselves,” that, “They undertook that which they already had accepted upon themselves at the time of the giving of the Torah.”

He questions this, since, at first glance, this is astonishing, being that at the giving of the Torah the Jewish

¹⁴⁸⁹ Esther 9:23

¹⁴⁹⁰ Printed in Kuntres 89 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5711 p. 180 and on) and subsequently in Sefer HaMaamarim 5687 p. 110 and on; Also see the letter of the 25th of Adar Rishon of this year, 5727 (Igrot Kodesh, Vol. 24 p. 304 and on).

¹⁴⁹¹ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 88a

¹⁴⁹² Esther 9:27

people were on the ultimate state of elevation and Godliness was openly revealed to them, literally! [This is as the verse states,¹⁴⁹³ “*HaShem*-יהוה descended upon Mount Sinai,” and in a way that (not only had an effect on the children of Israel, but) had an effect on the entire existence of the world.

This is as our sages, of blessed memory, taught,¹⁴⁹⁴ “The voice emerged from all four directions of the world, and from above and below,” in a way that “no bird chirped, no fowl flew... the entire world was quiet and silent etc.”¹⁴⁹⁵ indicating its great nullification (*Bittul*). This is because when there is any motion it indicates the existence of sense of self (*Yeshut*) etc.]

In contrast, during the time of the exile the very opposite is so, literally. This was especially so in the days of Haman who sought etc., at which time the exile was so dominant, such that there was a decree against “all the Jews, from young to old, children and women, in one day,”¹⁴⁹⁶ “in all the king’s provinces.”¹⁴⁹⁷ (That is, the decree was such that it was impossible to flee etc.)¹⁴⁹⁸

Now, based on the known matter that everything is physically because of how it is spiritually, in that “there is no judgment without the Judge,”¹⁴⁹⁹ it therefore is understood that Above, in spirituality, there also is a matter of descent etc. In

¹⁴⁹³ Exodus 19:20

¹⁴⁹⁴ See Midrash Shemot Rabba 5:9; Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 22 (64b); Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 36 (46a).

¹⁴⁹⁵ Midrash Shemot Rabba 29:9

¹⁴⁹⁶ Esther 3:13

¹⁴⁹⁷ Esther 8:5

¹⁴⁹⁸ Also see Likkutei Sichot Vol. 1 p. 214

¹⁴⁹⁹ See Midrash Bereishit Rabba 26:6

other words, at that time, the Jewish people were in the ultimate state of lowliness.

Thus, at first glance, it is not understood how specifically at that time they undertook upon themselves that which they already had accepted at the giving of the Torah. How can it be that specifically during the time of exile there can be a matter that is higher than the giving of the Torah, at which time they only “began to do,” meaning that it only was the beginning. This is like the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory,¹⁵⁰⁰ “From here there is a substantial caveat to the Torah” (in that it was accepted unwillingly, through coercion).¹⁵⁰¹ In contrast, the complete and full acceptance specifically took place in the time of the exile and the decree etc.

2.

He explains in the discourse¹⁵⁰² that it specifically was during the time of the exile, when Haman rose against them etc., that they stood steadfastly with self-sacrifice (in a revealed way). This is as explained by the Alter Rebbe in Torah Ohr,¹⁵⁰³ that had they been willing to renounce their faith, Haman would have done nothing to them, being that he only issued the decree against the Jews. Nevertheless, they gave themselves up unto death with self-sacrifice for an entire year, without even taking

¹⁵⁰⁰ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 88a

¹⁵⁰¹ See Rashi to Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 88a *ibid*.

¹⁵⁰² Ch. 3 and Ch. 15

¹⁵⁰³ Torah Ohr, Megillat Esther 97a

such a matter into consideration,¹⁵⁰⁴ Heaven forbid, not in thought, not in speech, nor in action.

In other words, each one stood with self-sacrifice, ready to give up his soul and not to do any action that contradicts faith in “*HaShem is One-HaShem Echad*” יהוה אחד,¹⁵⁰⁵ such as bowing to an idol, even though in his heart, he does not at all believe in it (as the Alter Rebbe wrote in Tanya).¹⁵⁰⁶ As explained elsewhere,¹⁵⁰⁷ this self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) brought about that “*HaShem*” יהוה” awoke like one who had been sleeping,”¹⁵⁰⁸ [as the verse states],¹⁵⁰⁹ “That night the King’s sleep was disturbed,” by which the decree was nullified.

Thus, since at the time of the decree they had the matter of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*), therefore at that time, “the Jews undertook that which they had begun to do,” meaning that they undertook that which they already accepted at the giving of the Torah.

This is as explained in the discourse¹⁵¹⁰ about the three general divisions of the body: the head, the torso, and the feet. That is, even though the feet are the lowest level in man, there nevertheless is an advantage to the feet in that they uphold and uplift [the torso and] even the head. The same is so of the Jewish people in general, as the verse states,¹⁵¹¹ “Six-hundred-thousand foot-soldiers are the people in whose midst I am.”

¹⁵⁰⁴ Also see Hosafot to Torah Ohr, Megillat Esther 120d

¹⁵⁰⁵ Deuteronomy 6:4

¹⁵⁰⁶ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, end of Ch. 19.

¹⁵⁰⁷ See the discourse entitled “*Balaylah HaHoo*” 5700 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5700 p. 9).

¹⁵⁰⁸ Psalms 78:65; See Yalkut Shimoni to Esther, Remez 1,054

¹⁵⁰⁹ Esther 6:1

¹⁵¹⁰ Ch. 5

¹⁵¹¹ Numbers 11:21

That is, there is a superiority to the level of the “foot-soldiers” of the Jewish people, (literally meaning) “the feet of the people-*Ragli HaAm* רגלי העם,” through which “I-*Anochi* אני” am caused to be “in their midst.” This refers to the revelation of the aspect of the Crown-*Keter* (“I-*Anochi* אני”) within Wisdom-*Chochmah* (the level of Moshe).

This then, is the general superiority of the time of exile, especially in the generation of “the footsteps of Moshiach,” which is the aspect of the “feet,” at which time there is great concealment, hiddenness, and persecution etc. It specifically is then, that there is an even greater revelation of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*), this being the matter of bonding with faith (*Emunah*) that transcends intellect (*Sechel*),¹⁵¹² without understanding and comprehension etc.¹⁵¹³

As he explains in the discourse,¹⁵¹⁴ the faith of the Jewish people is primarily in the level of the light of *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, that transcends and surrounds all worlds (*Sovev Kol Almin*). This is because His light that fills all worlds (*Memaleh Kol Almin*) is in the aspect of grasp (in a way of inner manifestation (*b’Pnimitiyut*)), as though one sees etc. It therefore does not apply for there be such a degree of faith (*Emunah*) in this.

Rather, faith (*Emunah*) is primarily in the aspect of the light of *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, that transcends and surrounds all worlds (*Sovev Kol Almin*), which is neither grasped nor sensed. (This is unlike the nations of the world, for

¹⁵¹² See Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 18

¹⁵¹³ There is a small portion of the discourse missing here.

¹⁵¹⁴ Ch. 5 & Ch. 9

whom [even] the matter of the light of *HaShem*-יהו"ה that fills all worlds (*Memaleh Kol Almin*) is in a way of faith, whereas they altogether have no relation whatsoever to the light of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, that transcends all worlds (*Sovev Kol Almin*).¹⁵¹⁵ Likewise, the self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) of the Jewish people transcends intellect, understanding, and grasp etc.

3.

Now, this discourse was said by his honorable holiness, my father-in-law, the Rebbe, in that country (in which the teachings of Chassidus were generally founded, especially the teachings of Chabad Chassidus, by which it is drawn down into Wisdom-*Chochmah*, Understanding-*Binah*, and Knowledge-*Da'at*, the primary aspect of which, is for it be drawn down into the "therefore"¹⁵¹⁶ as it relates to actual deed), with openly revealed self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*).

That is, the history of those days is well-known, namely, that there was persecution in matters connected to Torah and *mitzvot*. Yet, even so, when he was in the capital of that country, where the very root and source of the opposition was etc., his honorable holiness, my father-in-law, the Rebbe, said the above-mentioned discourse.

¹⁵¹⁵ See Siddur Im Da"Ch 284c, 287b and on; Sefer HaMitzvot of the Tzemach Tzedek 23a; [Also see the discourse entitled "*Bati LeGani* – I have come to My garden" 5713, translated in The Teachings of The Rebbe 5713, Discourse 9.]

¹⁵¹⁶ See Sefer HaMaamarim 5691 p. 326.

Moreover, besides saying the discourse in the synagogue, which is a miniature Holy Temple,¹⁵¹⁷ this matter was also recognizable outside in the marketplace, in which there was “the foot-traffic of the people of Tarmod,”¹⁵¹⁸ as related in detail in the letter¹⁵¹⁹ printed together with the discourse.¹⁵²⁰

Even though it was “after sunset,”¹⁵²¹ both literally, as well as in the inner aspect (*Pnimityut*) of things, the synagogue was well lit with many lights, and when they asked “what is different between today and yesterday?” the response was that the shepherd of Israel is expounding from the pulpit, amongst tens of throngs of Jews who came to hear the word of the Holy One, blessed is He, who “revealed His secrets to His servants the prophets,”¹⁵²² and upon the cessation of prophecy, this was [revealed] through the leaders of each and every generation, and he speaks openly and publicly, stating,¹⁵²³ “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, You have established strength, because of Your enemies, to silence foe and avenger.”

¹⁵¹⁷ Ezekiel 11:16; Talmud Bavli, Megillah 29a

¹⁵¹⁸ See Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 21b; Emek HaMelech, Shaar Kiryat Arba, Ch. 111 (108a); Kehillat Yaakov, section on “Tarmod-תרמוד.” (The name Tarmod-תרמוד shares the same letters are “rebellious-*Moredet*-מורדת.”)

¹⁵¹⁹ “From one of the Rabbi’s and community activists that was then in Russia which gives insight, even if only in small measure, to the relations toward Judaism by the government that was then in power, and of the impending danger in saying a discourse such as this in those days, and especially publicly and with great publicity.” (The words of the Rebbe in the introduction to the aforementioned pamphlet (Kuntres).)

¹⁵²⁰ In the aforementioned pamphlet (Kuntres), (Sefer HaMaamarim 5711 p. 195 and on; Sefer HaMaamarim 5687 p. 288 and on).

¹⁵²¹ See Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 21b *ibid.*

¹⁵²² Amos 3:7

¹⁵²³ Psalms 8:3; See the above-mentioned discourse, Ch. 2

That is, there is no need to be agitated by the enemy etc., but rather, we must bring about the matter of “establishing strength (*Oz-עוז*),” [about which it states],¹⁵²⁴ “Strength (*Oz-עוז*) only refers to Torah,” and not only by those who are eighteen years of age, (as in the restrictive decrees of the government against teaching Torah to minors under the age of eighteen etc.),¹⁵²⁵ and not only for thirteen year olds, but even for “babes and sucklings.” Through this we cause the “silencing of foe and avenger” etc.

Now, although all this relates to the state of affairs in the year 5687 (1927), when the matter of “silencing” was in regard to an openly revealed “foe and avenger,” nonetheless, from this we also can understand how it relates to studying this discourse now. To preface, one must study the discourse in a way that it becomes “his Torah,”¹⁵²⁶ meaning that it does not remain as something unto itself, and he simply is learning a discourse of the Rebbe, but it must be in a way that “the Jews undertook,” as in the title of the discourse, which indicates the theme of the discourse.

(This is like what the Alter Rebbe wrote in *Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah*,¹⁵²⁷ that the name by which something is called in the Holy Language (*Lashon HaKodesh*) is the vitality of the thing called by it. The same is so of the names of

¹⁵²⁴ See Sifri to Deuteronomy 33:2; Midrash Vayikra Rabba 31:5

¹⁵²⁵ See *Igrot Kodesh* of the Rebbe Rayatz, Vol. 1, p. 258, p. 338, p. 569 and on.

¹⁵²⁶ See at length in the Sichah talk of the 10th of Shvat of this year, 5727, Ch. 16 and on (*Torat Menachem*, Vol. 49 p. 42 and on).

¹⁵²⁷ Tanya, *Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah*, translated as *The Gate of Unity and Faith*, Ch. 1.

matters in Torah teachings, especially a name that is accepted in many Jewish communities.

This is as understood by what Rambam wrote¹⁵²⁸ about Torah decrees and edicts that have issued amongst all Jews, in that they bear the full strength of positive *mitzvot* and prohibitive *mitzvot*, as the verse states,¹⁵²⁹ “You shall do according to the law that they will instruct you, you shall not deviate from everything that they tell you.”) In other words, one’s study should penetrate his entire being and be unified with him, to become one being.

In the words of the Alter Rebbe in Tanya [about the study of Torah],¹⁵³⁰ “It is a most wondrous unity, there is no unity similar or parallel to it physically whatsoever, that they should actually become one and united from every angle and side.”

Moreover, the saying of his honorable holiness, my father-in-law, the Rebbe, is well known,¹⁵³¹ namely, that it is not enough to learn the discourse, but rather, the discourse must **teach him** in regard to his personal conduct etc. Thus, since there is the command to learn the discourse, certainly empowerment is also granted for the study to be in the above-mentioned manner, both in regard to the general matter of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*), as well as in regard to the matter of “silencing the foe and avenger.”

¹⁵²⁸ Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Mamrim, Ch. 1

¹⁵²⁹ Deuteronomy 17:11

¹⁵³⁰ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 5

¹⁵³¹ See Sefer HaMaamarim 5701 p. 54 and elsewhere.

The explanation is that even when we find ourselves in a time of expansiveness etc., there can and must be the matter of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) in the study of Torah. To preface with what is explained in the discourse,¹⁵³² our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹⁵³³ “One who causes others to do (*Me’aseh*-מעשה) [meritorious deeds] is greater than the one who does (*Oseh*-עושה) [them].”

This is known about those who support Torah learning (such as Zevulun and Yissachar, as the verse states,¹⁵³⁴ “Rejoice, O’ Zevulun, in your excursions, and Yissachar in your tents.” That is,¹⁵³⁵ “Zevulun and Yissachar entered a partnership. Zevulun would engage in commerce and earning a profit, and would provide sustenance for Yissachar, who sat and engaged in the study of Torah. This is why the verse mentions Zevulun before Yissachar, in that Yissachar’s Torah knowledge was because of Zevulun.”) In other words, one who causes his fellow to support Torah scholars is greater than the one who does so himself.

Now, just as this is so in the act of giving charity for the sake of upholding the study of Torah, this likewise is so of the study itself. That is, one who causes his fellow to study Torah is greater than the one who studies himself, because through this, he bestows kindness to his soul.

¹⁵³² Ch. 6

¹⁵³³ Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 9a

¹⁵³⁴ Deuteronomy 33:18

¹⁵³⁵ Rashi to Deuteronomy 33:18 *ibid*.

For example, when a person establishes public Torah study, especially to teach simple folk, this is much higher etc. Now, it is understood that for him, [teaching simple folk] is a matter of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*), because although his fellow is fulfilling the *mitzvah* of studying Torah, he himself is not fulfilling this *mitzvah*, since he has the capacity to learn in greater depth.

This is as stated by the Acharonim,¹⁵³⁶ that for a person who is capable of learning with greater depth, but only studies superficially etc., it is considered to be the [sin of] dereliction of Torah study (*Bittul Torah*). This is evidenced from the words of Talmud in Tractate Megillah,¹⁵³⁷ that “one cancels his Torah study to hear the reading of the Megillah.”

Even so, he has self-sacrifice and studies with the simple folk, and he even studies with “babes and sucklings,” referring to an infant who does not even know how to speak. (This is because once a child knows how to speak, the obligation to train him (*Chinuch*) already begins, as stated in Hilchot Talmud Torah.)¹⁵³⁸ However, even so, he nevertheless must have the matter of “You have established strength (*Oz-עוז*),” [about which it states],¹⁵³⁹ “Strength (*Oz-עוז*) only refers to Torah.”

The same applies to the matter of the “silencing of foe and avenger.” That is, even though we find ourselves in a time of expansiveness etc., nonetheless, there is the presence of the

¹⁵³⁶ See Shaalot uTeshuvot Beit Ephraim, Orach Chayim, Section 68; Rashash to Megillah 3a

¹⁵³⁷ Talmud Bavli, Megillah 3a

¹⁵³⁸ See the beginning of Hilchot Talmud Torah of the Alter Rebbe.

¹⁵³⁹ See Sifri to Deuteronomy 33:2; Midrash Vayikra Rabba 31:5

“foreign god” that is within you, referring to the evil inclination,¹⁵⁴⁰ who is in the aspect of a “foe and avenger.” That is, sometimes he is like a foe, in that he openly displays his hatred,¹⁵⁴¹ openly telling one to do that which is in opposition to Torah. At other times he like an avenger, who hides his hatred and plans nefarious schemes etc.,¹⁵⁴² telling him to only act according Torah, but in a way etc., (with tricks).

Now, to “silence the foe and avenger” one must serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in the way [indicated by], “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings.” That is, he must place himself in the state of a “babe and suckling” infant, setting his intellect aside etc. This is the matter of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*), the meaning of which is the giving up of his desire (*Ratzon*),¹⁵⁴³ intellect (*Sechel*), emotions (*Midot*) [and actions] in a way that his service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, only stems from accepting His yoke.

5.

Now, the empowerment for this is from our teacher Moshe. This is as he explains in the discourse¹⁵⁴⁴ on the verse,¹⁵⁴⁵ “Now you shall command the children of Israel that they shall take for you clear olive oil... to kindle an eternal flame.” That is, the word “command” (*Tetzaveh*-תצוה) is of the

¹⁵⁴⁰ See Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 105b

¹⁵⁴¹ See the aforementioned discourse, Ch. 2.

¹⁵⁴² See the aforementioned discourse, Ch. 2 *ibid*.

¹⁵⁴³ See Torah Ohr, Mikeitz 36b and elsewhere.

¹⁵⁴⁴ In Ch. 3-4 & Ch. 15.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Exodus 27:20

same root as “to connect-*Tzavta*-צוותה” and bond,¹⁵⁴⁶ which is the matter of connection (*Hitkashrut*). The meaning of “You shall command-*v’Atah Tetzaveh*-וְאַתָּה תְּצַוֶּה” is that Moshe should connect and bond the souls of the Jewish people, and empower them to “kindle an eternal flame,” since he is the shepherd and sustainer of the Jewish people in the matter of faith (*Emunah*), in that he strengthens their faith in *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

The same is so of “the offshoot of Moshe in each generation,”¹⁵⁴⁷ these being “the heads of the thousands of Israel,”¹⁵⁴⁸ who are [called],¹⁵⁴⁹ “The eyes of the community,” in that they are the shepherds of the Jewish people, who strengthen their faith in *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, with self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*).

In our generation, this is his honorable holiness, my father-in-law, the Rebbe, who grants strength and empowerment that the above-mentioned service will be in a constant way (“an eternal flame (*Ner Tamid*-נֵר תָּמִיד)”) as the verse states,¹⁵⁵⁰ “I have set *HaShem*-יהו"ה before me always (*Tamid*-תָּמִיד),” and in a way of, “Whoever is goodhearted celebrates always (*Tamid*-תָּמִיד).”¹⁵⁵¹ This is also connected with the matter of Purim, since “a person is obligated to become intoxicated on Purim until he does not know,”¹⁵⁵² meaning,

¹⁵⁴⁶ Torah Ohr, Tetzaveh 82a

¹⁵⁴⁷ Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 69 (112a; 114a)

¹⁵⁴⁸ Numbers 1:16

¹⁵⁴⁹ Numbers 15:24

¹⁵⁵⁰ Psalms 16:8; Shulchan Aruch, beginning of Orach Chayim

¹⁵⁵¹ Proverbs 15:15; Shulchan Aruch, end of Orach Chayim

¹⁵⁵² Talmud Bavli, Megillah 7b

higher than the matter of intellect, this being the matter of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*).

6.

Now, just as the matter of self-sacrifice (which is the aspect of the feet) brought about that in the days of Purim there was the completion and perfection of the matter of the giving of the Torah, in that “they undertook that which they already accepted upon themselves,” this likewise is so of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) right now, this being the matter of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, by accepting His yoke (the aspect of the “feet”).

That is, not only does this bring about the “silencing of the foe and avenger,” and bring success in all matters relating to service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in the study of Torah, both the revealed parts of Torah, as well as Chassidus, as well as fulfilling the *mitzvot* in a way of beautification, as well as serving Him in prayer, but beyond that, we thereby merit the ultimate perfection of the giving of the Torah, with the revelation of the inner aspects (*Pnimiyyut*) of the Torah in the coming future. For, as known, even though there will not be another giving of the Torah,¹⁵⁵³ nonetheless, the revelation of the inner aspects (*Pnimiyyut*) of the Torah will take place in the coming future, as the verse states,¹⁵⁵⁴ “He will kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.”

¹⁵⁵³ See Sefer HaMaamarim 5647 p. 87; 5656 p. 356; *Hemshech* 5666 p. 23; p. 546.

¹⁵⁵⁴ Song of Songs 1:2 and Rashi there; See Likkutei Torah, Tzav 17a

Now, this matter is depends on our deeds and service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, throughout the time of the exile,¹⁵⁵⁵ which includes the matter of "spreading the wellsprings [of the teachings of Chassidus],"¹⁵⁵⁶ which is a foretaste of the revelation of the inner teachings (*Pnimiyut*) of the Torah of the coming future, through which we come to the matter of "He will kiss me with the kisses of His mouth" in the coming future, at which time there will be the fulfillment of the prophecy,¹⁵⁵⁷ "Your Teacher will no longer be hidden behind His garment," a glimmer of this [revelation] having already been experienced since the time of the giving of the Torah.¹⁵⁵⁸ However, the perfection in this will take place in the coming future. This can even happen now, on Purim Katan, and how much more, so on the holiday of Pesach, at which time we already will be in the holy city of Yerushalayim, with the coming of our righteous Moshiach!

¹⁵⁵⁵ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 37

¹⁵⁵⁶ See the famous letter of the Baal Shem Tov, printed in Keter Shem Tov 1; For a translation see The Way of The Baal Shem Tov, a translation of a compilation of teachings from the Baal Shem Tov – Tzava'at HaRivash.

¹⁵⁵⁷ Isaiah 30:20

¹⁵⁵⁸ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 36