

Discourse 40

*“VeHayah Eem Shamo’ah... -
It shall be that if you listen...”*

Delivered on the 4th day of the week of Parshat Eikev,

20th of Menachem-Av, 5728

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

1.

The verse states,²⁵¹³ “It shall be that if you listen-
Vehayah Eem Shamo’ah etc.” This is the first verse of the
second paragraph of the *Shema* recital (in the Torah portion of
Eikev) which is called such because it comes after the first
paragraph “Listen Israel-*Shema Yisroel* etc.” (in the Torah
portion of Va’etchanan).²⁵¹⁴ This is as in the teaching of our
sages, of blessed memory, in Mishnah,²⁵¹⁵ “Rabbi Yehoshua
ben Karcha said: Why did the portion of *Shema* precede the
portion of *Vahayah Eem Shamo’ah*? So that one will first
accept the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven upon himself, and
only then accept the yoke of the *mitzvot* upon himself.”

It can be pointed out that since the Torah was stated both
in general and particular,²⁵¹⁶ therefore, more particularly, the
first paragraph also includes the yoke of the *mitzvot* in it, this

²⁵¹³ Deuteronomy 11:13

²⁵¹⁴ Deuteronomy 6:4

²⁵¹⁵ Mishnah Brachot 2:2

²⁵¹⁶ Talmud Bavli, Chagigah 6b

being the meaning of,²⁵¹⁷ “You shall teach them” (referring to the study of Torah)²⁵¹⁸ “and you shall bind them etc.,”²⁵¹⁹ (referring to Tefillin and Mezuzah).

Likewise, the second paragraph also has the matter of accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven in it, this being the general matter of “you shall surely listen,” as well as the general matter of serving Him, [in that it states],²⁵²⁰ “to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul” (even though it does not say “with all your more”)²⁵²¹ the matter of which is the acceptance of the yoke of the Master - the acceptance of the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven.

However, generally, the primary matter of the first paragraph is the acceptance of the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the primary matter of the second paragraph is the acceptance of the yoke of the *mitzvot*.

Now, the change between the first paragraph and the second paragraph is not just in their general matters, but in all their particulars, for in the first paragraph it mentions the matter Torah before the matter of *mitzvot*. That is, it first states, “You shall teach them... and you shall speak of them,” and then states, “and you shall bind them etc.,” this being the *mitzvah* of Tefillin, which relates to all the *mitzvot*, as in the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory,²⁵²² “The entire Torah (meaning, **the *mitzvot*** of the Torah) is equated to the Tefillin.” In contrast,

²⁵¹⁷ Deuteronomy 6:7

²⁵¹⁸ See Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 30a

²⁵¹⁹ Deuteronomy 6:8

²⁵²⁰ Deuteronomy 11:13

²⁵²¹ See at length in the Sichah talk that followed the discourse (Torat Menachem, Vol. 53 p. 384 and on).

²⁵²² Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 35a; See Likkutei Sichot Vol. 9 p. 79, note 3

the second paragraph mentions the matter of *mitzvot* before the matter of Torah, in that it first states,²⁵²³ “You shall bind them etc.,” and then states,²⁵²⁴ “You shall teach them... to discuss them.”

About this, it is explained in the teachings of Chassidus, (in the discourses of the Alter Rebbe,²⁵²⁵ the Mittler Rebbe,²⁵²⁶ and at great length in the discourses of the Tzemach Tzedek in Ohr HaTorah²⁵²⁷ on these verses) that the difference between the two paragraphs of the *Shema* recital, is similar to the two views in Talmud²⁵²⁸ as to whether study is greater (“Torah study is greater”)²⁵²⁹ or whether performance is greater.

In other words, the order of the first paragraph, in which the matter of Torah study precedes the *mitzvot*, accords to the view that study is greater, whereas the order of the second paragraph, in which the matter of the *mitzvot* precedes the matter of Torah, accords to the view that performance is greater. Now, based on what is known, that they weighed this and concluded that study is greater, this is specifically as it is nowadays. However, in the coming future, performance will be greater.²⁵³⁰

²⁵²³ Deuteronomy 11:18

²⁵²⁴ Deuteronomy 11:19

²⁵²⁵ See the discourse entitled “v’Sheenantam Levanecha” in Maamarei Admor HaZaken 5567 p. 304 and on.

²⁵²⁶ Imrei Binah, Shaar HaKriyat Shema, Ch. 90 and on.

²⁵²⁷ Ohr HaTorah, Va’etchanan p. 238 and on; p. 249 and on; p. 252 and on; Vol. 5 p. 2,009 and on; p. 2,012 and on; Also see Derech Mitzvotcha, Shoresch Mitzvat HaTefillah, Ch. 47 and on.

²⁵²⁸ Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 40b

²⁵²⁹ Talmud Bavli, Bava Kamma 17a

²⁵³⁰ Maamarei Admor HaZaken 5567 *ibid.* (p. 309; p. 317); Ohr HaTorah, Va’etchanan *ibid.* (p. 247 and on; p. 276 and on; p. 280 and on; p. 302 and on); Ohr HaTorah, Bereishit p. 40b; Also see the beginning of Vayigash there.

We thus find that the order of the first paragraph (in which the matter of Torah precedes the matter of *mitzvot*, “study is greater”) refers to our current time period, whereas the order of the second paragraph (in which the matter of the *mitzvot* precedes the matter of Torah, “performance is greater”) refers to the time period of the coming future.

2.

Now, all this can be explained (based on what the explanation in the above-mentioned discourses) by prefacing with the explanation of the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory, “Study is greater,” the reason being because “study brings to performance.” That is, this is not just precedence in time, in that it is impossible to properly fulfill the *mitzvot* according to their laws etc., without having studied all the laws to know them etc.²⁵³¹ Rather, it also is a precedence in level.

This is proven by the precedence itself. That is, since the precedence is according to Torah, in that “God made (man upright),”²⁵³² it thus is understood that the precedence in time is connected to the precedence in level. In this itself, the precise wording is “Study is **greater-Gadol-גדול**,” meaning that it not only is equal to all the *mitzvot* (as in the language of the Alter Rebbe in Hilchot Talmud Torah,²⁵³³ founded on the language of Rambam),²⁵³⁴ but it specifically is “greater.”

²⁵³¹ As per the language of the Alter Rebbe in Hilchot Talmud Torah 4:2

²⁵³² See Ecclesiastes 7:29

²⁵³³ Hilchot Talmud Torah 4:2 *ibid*.

²⁵³⁴ Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Talmud Torah 3:3

3.

The explanation is that the verse states,²⁵³⁵ “Great is *HaShem*-יהו"ה and much praised in the city of our God.” About this our sages, of blessed memory stated,²⁵³⁶ “When is He great? When He is in ‘the city of our God-*Eer Elo*”*heinu*-עיר אלהי"נו,’ being that a King without a Queen is not a king and is not called great etc.”²⁵³⁷ As known, “the city of our God-*Eer Elo*”*heinu*-עיר אלהי"נו” refers to the aspect of Kingship-*Malchut* as she becomes the source for the worlds of Creation, Formation, and Action (*Briyah*, *Yetzirah*, *Asiyah*), and specifically through this, there is the revelation of His greatness, blessed is He.

This matter is one of the reasons given for the creation. This is as stated at the beginning of *Etz Chayim*,²⁵³⁸ that the purpose of the creation of the world was to reveal the perfection of His powers, His deeds, and His names etc. (That is, even though before [the creation] all the powers were present etc., they nevertheless were concealed, and through the creation they come forth into actualization and revelation, through which we behold the perfection of His powers etc.)²⁵³⁹

It is for this sake that “the Holy One, blessed is He, traveled a distance of five-hundred years to acquire a Name for Himself,”²⁵⁴⁰ meaning, that there should be the revelation of the

²⁵³⁵ Psalms 48:2

²⁵³⁶ See Zohar II 235a; Zohar III 5a; Zohar Chadash, Tisa 44a; Chukat 51a

²⁵³⁷ Zohar III 5a *ibid*.

²⁵³⁸ *Etz Chayim*, Shaar 1 (Drush Iggulim v'Yosher) Anaf 1

²⁵³⁹ Also see *Hemshech* 5666 p. 5

²⁵⁴⁰ Midrash Kohellet Rabba 7:1 (2)

Name (which is the matter of the *Sefirot*),²⁵⁴¹ beginning with the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה, "the mystery of the Holy Name,"²⁵⁴² which is the matter of "Great is *HaShem*-יהו"ה."

In other words, the matter of "Great is *HaShem*-יהו"ה" is brought about through "the city of our God-*Eer Elo*"*heinu*-עיר אלהינו," which, in general, is the order of the chaining down of the worlds (*Seder Hishtalshehut*) and particularly this physical world, which is the ultimate intent of novel existence, being that "the Holy One, blessed is He, desired a dwelling place for Himself in the lower worlds."²⁵⁴³

Now, as known, the matter of "a dwelling place in the lower worlds," meaning, the revelation of Godliness in the world ("Great is *HaShem*-יהו"ה") is brought about specifically through the performance of the *mitzvot*.

For example, in regard to the *mitzvah* of Tefillin, the Torah portions are written with physical ink upon physical parchment made from the hide of an animal, and they are placed in chambers made from the hide of an animal, and then a Jewish male dons them on his head and arm.

The same is so of the other *mitzvot*, [all] of which are equated to Tefillin. That is, through this we draw down the revelation of the limitless light of the Unlimited One from Above to below, to manifest in the physicality of this world, in something that initially was under the dominion of the shiny husk (*Kelipat Nogah*) etc., referring all the pure and permissible

²⁵⁴¹ See Ohr HaTorah, Shemot p. 29 and on, and elsewhere; Also see Shaarei Orah of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as Gates of Light.

²⁵⁴² See Torah Ohr 49d; 67d; 79c; Ohr HaTorah, Shemot ibid., and elsewhere.

²⁵⁴³ See Midrash Tanchuma Bechukotai 3; Naso 16; Bereishit Rabba, end of Ch. 3; Bamidbar Rabba 13:6; Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 36, and elsewhere.

things (that are not bound in the hands of the forces of externality etc.),²⁵⁴⁴ with which a *mitzvah* is performed. This is as our sages, of blessed memory, taught,²⁵⁴⁵ “That which is suitable for the service of Heaven is only that which is pure and permitted in your mouth,” as explained at length in Tanya.²⁵⁴⁶

This then, is the matter of “performance is greater,” since through the performance of the *mitzvot* there is caused to be the matter of “*HaShem*-יהו"ה is great... in the city of our God-*Eer Elo*"*heinu*-עיר אלהינו,” meaning, a dwelling place in the lower worlds.

4.

However, “they weighed it and concluded that study is greater, since study brings to performance.” The explanation is that just as specifically through study it is possible to come to fulfill the *mitzvot*, this likewise is so as matters are spiritually. That is, the effect of the *mitzvot* drawing down the revelation of Godliness into the physicality of the world can only come about after the [study of] Torah has had its effect. About this the verse states,²⁵⁴⁷ “He don’s light as a garment,” referring to the Torah, which is the garment of the Holy One, blessed is He. That is, He is garbed in the garment of Torah, and through this, there is a drawing down of the revelation of Godliness in the world.

²⁵⁴⁴ See Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 7

²⁵⁴⁵ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 28b

²⁵⁴⁶ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 37

²⁵⁴⁷ Psalms 104:2

In other words, the Torah is the intermediary medium between the limitless light of the Unlimited One and the worlds. Thus, it only is after there first is the matter of Torah, that there then can also be the matter of a *mitzvah* (מצוה), which is of the same root as “adhesion-*Tzavta* (צוותא)” indicating a bond,²⁵⁴⁸ through which the dwelling place for Him in the lower worlds is made.

More specifically, in Torah itself there also is the matter of having traveled and descended etc., from level to level etc., until it manifested etc., in the combinations of the physical letters of ink in the book etc.,²⁵⁴⁹ just like the manifestation in the physical performance of the *mitzvot*.

In addition, even in the study of Torah there is a matter of action, being that “the movement of the lips is an action.”²⁵⁵⁰ Moreover, even in regard to the understanding and comprehension of Torah within thought, it must be in a way that it is absorbed in the physical brain, to the point of affecting change in the physical substance of the brain, in that folds and creases are made in it etc.²⁵⁵¹ However, all this is from the aspect of the *mitzvot* of the Torah, in that Torah study is counted as one of the *mitzvot* of the Torah.

However, there also is Torah study that brings to the performance of the *mitzvot* (including studying the laws of

²⁵⁴⁸ Likkutei Torah, Bechukotai 45c; Sefer HaMaamarim 5698 p. 52

²⁵⁴⁹ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 4

²⁵⁵⁰ Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 65a

²⁵⁵¹ See Sefer HaMaamarim 5697 p. 254

the Torah in order to know how to fulfill the *mitzvah* of learning Torah).

The substance of this as it is spiritually, is that the Torah, which is the intermediary medium between the limitless light of the Unlimited One and the worlds, affects a refinement of the worlds, so that it is made fitting to be a receptacle for Godliness through the fulfillment of the *mitzvot*. This is because, in and of itself, the physicality of the world cannot be a receptacle for Godliness, and this only is possible after the change affected in it through drawing down the Torah.

Now, because of the precedence of study over performance, there is the matter of “study is greater.” This is because in the order of the **drawing down** of “Great is *HaShem*-יהוה” from Above to below, as it is in the Name *HaShem*-יהוה, the letter *Vav*-ו is first, and refers to the general totality of the Torah, which is the voice of *HaShem*-יהוה drawn down from Above to below, similar the shape of the letter *Vav*-ו.²⁵⁵² More specifically, the letter *Vav*-ו-6 hints at the six orders of Mishnah.²⁵⁵³

The final *Hey*-ה comes afterwards, which refers to the performance of the *mitzvot*,²⁵⁵⁴ through which we have an effect in this world that was created with the letter *Hey*-ה, as the verse states,²⁵⁵⁵ “When they were created-

²⁵⁵² See Sefer HaMaamarim 5631 Vol. 1 p. 82 and on; 5678 p. 425.

²⁵⁵³ See Sefer HaMaamarim 5631 and 5678 *ibid*.

²⁵⁵⁴ Tanya, Iggeret HaTeshuvah, end of Ch. 4

²⁵⁵⁵ Genesis 2:4

b'Heebaram-בהבראם," meaning,²⁵⁵⁶ "With the *Hey* He created them-*b'Hey Baram*-בה' בראם," so that there is a revealed recognition in it that its existence, vitality, and sustainment is from the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה, this being the matter of "Great is *HaShem*-יהו"ה in the city of our God-*b'Eer Elohei*"nu-בעיר אלהינו."

However, the greatness of Torah study is that it brings to the deed. From this it is understood that as matters are inwardly (*b'Pnimityut*), performance is greater, since it specifically is through doing [the *mitzvot*] that the Supernal desire of the Holy One, blessed is He, for a dwelling place in the lower worlds comes about. That is, the study [of Torah] is only the medium by which it is possible to come to fulfill His Supernal desire, but the fulfillment of His Supernal desire itself (through which pleasure (*Taanug*), which is higher than the desire-*Ratzon*, is caused)²⁵⁵⁷ is specifically in the doing (*Ma'aseh*). Even so, there also must be the matter of study.

An example of how this is in man, is that even though desire (*Ratzon*) is higher than all the inner manifest powers [of the soul], nevertheless, when it comes to the actualization [of the desire], the desire must be drawn down to manifest in the inner powers, and on the contrary, it is through the inner manifest powers that the desire is properly drawn down, such that the good and true intention is fulfilled.

The same is so of the matter of study and performance - Torah and *mitzvot* - in that Torah is the wisdom (*Chochmah*) of

²⁵⁵⁶ Talmud Bavli, Menachot 29b

²⁵⁵⁷ See Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 26; *Hemshech* 5666 p. 63 and on; p. 69 and on.

the Holy One, blessed is He, and the *mitzvot* are the matter of His desire (*Ratzon*), in that so it arose in His desire, blessed is He, “I issued a decree,²⁵⁵⁸ and you have no right to question it.”²⁵⁵⁹ In this, the order is that first there is a drawing down of the desire (*Ratzon*) that is under the intellect (and the intellect (*Sechel*) is greater than it, “study is greater”) and through this, the receptacle is caused for the revelation of the true Supernal desire, as it is fulfilled and revealed through doing the *mitzvot* - “performance is greater.”

5.

With the above in mind, we can understand why in our times the ruling is that study is greater, whereas in the coming future, performance will be greater. The explanation is that since the matter of “performance is greater” is because it specifically is through doing *mitzvot* that the matter of “Great is *HaShem*-יהוה” comes to be - that is, a dwelling place for Him, blessed is He, in the lower worlds - it thus is understood that it is not possible for there to be the matter of “performance is greater” as long as the world has yet to be refined to become a dwelling place for Him in a revealed way.²⁵⁶⁰ This is because the matter of the revealed dwelling place is analogous to the palace of a king, that it is not enough to merely clean the filth from the place where the king sits, but the entire chamber of the

²⁵⁵⁸ Midrash Bamidbar Rabbah, beginning of Chukat; Tanchuma Chukat, and elsewhere.

²⁵⁵⁹ Rashi to Numbers 19:2 citing Talmud Bavli, Yoma 67b

²⁵⁶⁰ See Ohr HaTorah, Balak p. 997

king must be cleaned and the entire palace of the king, in that they [all] must be completely clean.

This also applies as it relates to the dwelling of the King, King of kings, the Holy One, blessed is He, meaning, not only the Holy of Holies, the Holy Sanctuary, or the courtyard [of the Temple], but the **entire** world etc., so that it is in a state that “evil shall not dwell with You,”²⁵⁶¹ as appropriate to the hall of the King.

This matter will take place in the days of Moshiach, at which time there will be the fulfillment of the verse,²⁵⁶² “I will remove the spirit of impurity from the earth,” and as the verse states,²⁵⁶³ “Saviors will ascend Mount Zion to judge the Mount of Esav, and the kingdom will be *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה,” [and],²⁵⁶⁴ “On that day *HaShem*-יהו"ה will be One and His Name One,” and it is written,²⁵⁶⁵ “The glory of *HaShem*-יהו"ה will be revealed and all flesh will see etc.” It then will be seen in open revelation that the world has been made to be a dwelling place for Him, blessed is He, through the performance of the *mitzvot*, (as mentioned above) for which reason performance (*Ma’aseh*) will then be greater.

However, as long as there has not yet been the fulfillment of the Supernal desire for be a dwelling place for Him in the lower worlds, study is greater, since there still is the need for the effect of Torah on the world, this being the matter of drawing down from Above to below, through which it is

²⁵⁶¹ Psalms 5:5

²⁵⁶² Zachariah 13:2

²⁵⁶³ Obadiah 1:21

²⁵⁶⁴ Zachariah 14:9

²⁵⁶⁵ Isaiah 40:5

possible for the world to be a receptacle for Godliness, to the point of being a dwelling place for the King, King of kings, the Holy One, blessed is He.

6.

This is also the difference between the first paragraph and the second paragraph of the *Shema* recital. The explanation is that the *Shema* recital explains the order of conduct of the Jewish people, as began at the giving of the Torah, at which time all matters pertaining to Torah and *mitzvot* were given. Then came their entrance into the land of Israel, in which they also are engaged in worldly matters, “you shall gather your grain etc.”²⁵⁶⁶ which is why it is necessary to warn against undesirable matters etc., as explained in the continuation of the second paragraph of the *Shema* recital.

The likeness to this, as it relates to one’s service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, every day, is that there first must be the matter of accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, and afterwards, the matter of accepting the yoke of the *mitzvot*, and similarly, there is the study of Torah and then the performance of the *mitzvot* (including that one “assumes the way of the world in regard to them”²⁵⁶⁷ [earning a livelihood]). This is like the order of the first paragraph, which begins with the matter of Torah first, and then the matter of the *mitzvot*, which is the order of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, as it is right now, in that “study is greater,” as mentioned above.

²⁵⁶⁶ Deuteronomy 11:14

²⁵⁶⁷ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 35b

However, the second paragraph first states the matter of the *mitzvot* (“You shall bind etc.”) and then the matter of the Torah (“You shall teach etc.”). This is because these verses come after relating the order of things, similar to the coming future. In other words, there will be a state and standing in which “you turn astray and serve gods of others etc.,” beginning with a refined form of alien worship, meaning, “worship that is alien to Him,”²⁵⁶⁸ from which room is given for that which is more severe etc.

Then afterwards, there also will be the punishment for this, “You will be banished etc.,” in that “because our sins we were exiled from our land,”²⁵⁶⁹ through which the sin is repaired. That is, through serving Him with repentance (*Teshuvah*) the matter of “our sins” is caused to be nullified and there thereby is automatically also the nullification of “we were exiled from our land,” and the Jewish people will then ascend to the ultimate level of ascent. They then will have the order in which the matter of the *mitzvot* precedes the matter of the Torah, [first] “You shall bind etc.,” and then, “You shall teach etc.,” this being the order of the coming future in which performance is greater, as explained above.

There then will also be completeness in entering the land of Israel, “a land that... the eyes of *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year,”²⁵⁷⁰ which was given to each and every Jew, the children of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, this being His

²⁵⁶⁸ See Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 110a

²⁵⁶⁹ See the liturgy of the Musaf prayer of the holidays.

²⁵⁷⁰ Deuteronomy 11:12

permanent place. It is for this reason that the obligation to affix the Mezuzah (as in the end of the paragraph, “You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and upon your gates”) is immediate.²⁵⁷¹ So shall it be for us with the coming of our righteous Moshiach, speedily and in the most literal sense!

²⁵⁷¹ See Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Mezuzah 5:10; Tur and Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De’ah 286:22